



Lewes District Council Town and Parish Briefing



September 2023



Lewes District Council

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This briefing is sent to all clerks of town and parish councils in Lewes district. We encourage you to share this with your councillors. If there are any questions arising from the briefing, please let us know.

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Citizens Advice East Sussex Cost of Living Report

Citizens Advice East Sussex has recently published a report looking at the factors impacting the cost of living for local people. It analyses data and adds narrative exploring dynamics of the pandemic and other recent events.

The report also includes information about vital help and support services. It can be downloaded on the [Citizen's Advice website](#) .

Art meets education at new culture centre in Lewes

The partners behind plans to turn former council offices in Lewes into a new public cultural centre visited the building this week to see how work is progressing.

Scheduled to open in mid-September, the old open plan office areas are being transformed into stunning new gallery and learning spaces fit to exhibit significant works of art, including from national collections at the Tate and National Portrait Gallery.

Nathaniel Hepburn, Director of Charleston, showed Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council and Rebecca Conroy, Principal and CEO of East Sussex College (all pictured), around the former council building to see how the real beauty of the original architecture is being revealed.

Nathaniel said: "As we removed some of the adaptations that have been made to the building over the last 80 years, we were delighted to find many of the original features beneath them. When visitors come into the entrance lobby they will see beautiful brick arches, some 1930s glass brick light wells and the original lino chequerboard flooring. We have opened all this up and the building will soon be ready to welcome visitors into what has always been a community owned building."

The initial phase of the redevelopment will see a programme of exhibitions opening this September during which time visitors will be asked to share how they think a new cultural centre can support the town. It is estimated that the new space will generate £4.2m of new visitor spend in the town and extensive educational opportunities.

Rebecca said: "East Sussex College is so excited to be involved in the new centre and partnership with Charleston and Lewes District Council. The space really is inspiring - we can't wait to start delivering courses and developing the skills to enhance the lives of our students - both in terms of adult education and for young people. The new partnerships will add huge value to our community which is so exciting."

One of the main objectives for the new centre is to be at the heart of the town and within walking distance from schools and colleges. Meetings are being held with community groups, education providers and residents' groups to learn about how the building can be used by the town.

Councillor Nicholson said: "I'm absolutely thrilled that education is a core part of our partnership with Charleston and the East Sussex College and looking forward to seeing students absorbing and being inspired by the learning on offer in the new cultural centre. And at a time when our shops and businesses need increased footfall in the town, the prospect of many more visitors coming to Lewes is very exciting."

Charleston has been providing cultural programmes for the district since it was founded in the 1980s.

Nathaniel added: "We are delighted to have already secured some donations towards our learning programme so we can start work this September and to ensure that the building will be entirely free for all young people and students. In fact, the first group of visitors into the building before it opens to the public will be art students from Priory School and fashion students from the college."

The new cultural centre will open to the public on 13th September, featuring two exhibitions around which the learning programme will be designed. 'Bring No Clothes: Bloomsbury and Fashion' will be a ticketed exhibition exploring the clothing of the Bloomsbury Group and its influence on 21st century fashion. Alongside this, 'Jonathan Baldock: through the joy of the senses', is the first museum survey show for this leading contemporary artist and will be free to enter.

Artwave marks 30th birthday with bonanza of creative exhibitions

Running over three weekends from September 2 to 17, Artwave will feature artwork from more than 1,000 creatives at over 180 free exhibitions across Lewes district, including the opportunity to visit artists' private homes as well as more unusual venues such as a windmill, farm and train station.

When it began in 1993, the festival featured the work of 70 artists across 18 events and has steadily grown to become a popular fixture in the region's cultural calendar.

Councillor Johnny Denis, Cabinet Member for Arts, Culture and Tourism and Leisure, said: "I am delighted to welcome back Artwave in its special 30th year and the great breadth of artistic talent it showcases.

"The festival has gone from strength to strength over the last three decades and with the biggest ever number of exhibitions, art lovers are in for a real treat this September."

Printed Artwave guides, which include maps and information about every exhibition, are now available from Lewes and Seaford Tourist Information Centres.

Carole Buchan, who organised the first ever Artwave, said her aim as Lewes District Council's first arts officer was "to make the arts accessible to all".

She added: "Artwave has picked up momentum year-on-year with artists, both established and new, showing work in a variety of venues, including shops, pubs and cafés and in their own homes right across East Sussex.

"It is now a highlight of the cultural year with around a hundred venues open for three weekends in September, attracting visitors from all over the south."

This special anniversary Artwave features the work of artists, such as printer Carolyn Trant and artist Peter Chasseaud, who have taken part in Lewes since the inaugural festival, as well as first-timers like potter Daniel Martin, who will be opening his studio at the iconic Coastguard Cottages at Cuckmere Haven.

Artwave is supported by Lewes District Council, with artists and makers who live or work in Lewes district receiving a subsidised entry fee.

For more details about Artwave visit www.artwavefestival.org

Councillor heralds 'landmark moment' for local biodiversity

A project to create a new wetland habitat in Lewes took a major step forward this week as diggers broke through a riverbank allowing water from the old channel to rush into the new 6.8-hectare wetland area.

Adjacent to the Lewes Brooks, the Cockshut is a 3km long chalk stream that flows from springs at the foot of the South Downs in Kingston, eventually joining The River Ouse before flowing out to sea. The Cockshut became clogged up by a non-native invasive plant called parrot's feather, but having been realigned, the old course of the stream will now be filled in to eradicate the problem plant.

Councillor Emily O'Brien (pictured), Cabinet Member for Climate, Nature and Food Systems at Lewes District Council, visited the site to meet contractors and receive an update on next steps. She said:

"This is a without doubt a landmark moment in the council's drive to improve levels of biodiversity in the district, as well as alleviating the risk of flooding in the area and the creation of a fantastic new wetland that residents, local schools and visitors to the area can take advantage of.

"The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, so to see birdlife already at the water's edge and know that so much other life will soon follow, it's incredibly exciting for everyone involved in this superb project."

With new footbridges installed and contractors working to create a raised walkway all the way around the wetland, there are huge learning opportunities for local school children, people who just want to enjoy a walk in the countryside and those who want to get closer to nature.

Councillor O'Brien added: "I'm amazed how much progress has been achieved in just a few months, so it's a tantalising prospect to imagine what awaits us all when the wetland opens to the public in spring 2024.

"I must also thank our partners - Peter King and the team at the Ouse & Adur Rivers Trust, Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust and the South Downs National Park Authority all deserve great credit for everything they have done and continue to do to make this wetland a reality."

For more information visit www.cockshutstream.org

New Council Chair puts focus on family for term of office

The new Chair of Lewes District Council, Councillor Ian Alexander, has chosen the theme of 'family' for his year in office.

He was elected at the last Annual Council meeting. Councillor Alexander said: "The theme of 'family' applies to a wide variety of families, including blood family, work family, friends, carers and the community. Throughout my term I would like to explore this theme by visiting and providing support to organisations working within Lewes district whose aim it is to help others, for example with the cost of living crisis, supporting families in need, or helping those receiving end of life care."

The new Vice-Chair for 2023/24 is Councillor Lesley Boniface who said: "I'm delighted and honoured to have been elected Vice-Chair by my fellow councillors. I'm looking forward to supporting Cllr Alexander during his very busy year."

Council launches consultation on taxi and private hire licensing

People are being invited to have their say on proposed changes to the licensing of taxi and private hire vehicles across Lewes district.

The consultation, which was launched on Monday, July 31, is in response to feedback from customers and those working within the trade.

After completing the survey at lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LDCtaxiconsultation people can also express an interest in taking part in a focus-group session about the proposals.

Councillor Christine Robinson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, said: "Lewes district taxis and private hire are closely monitored and we regularly update our guidance for the trade, ensuring that customer, driver and vehicle safety is always the number one priority.

"We would like to hear people's views on these proposed changes as part of our ongoing efforts to further strengthen taxi licensing for the benefit of customers, drivers and operators."

Proposed changes to the guidance include:

- Rewording the Penalty Points Scheme to make it easier for licensees to understand and help streamline investigations.
- Introducing a Customer and Driver Charter.
- Consulting on the option to have audio recording of CCTV systems within taxi and private hire vehicles.
- Introducing a requirement for all licensed vehicles to carry a spare wheel or suitable alternative.
- Clarity around vehicles that have been classed a written-off.

The consultation runs until 5pm on Sunday, September 10.

Campaigners celebrate removal of eyesore scaffolding in Seaford

Residents, business owners and councillors are sharing a sense of 'great relief' after the scaffolding which has blighted Talland Parade in Seaford for many years has finally been removed.

After exhausting every other possible legal avenue in their determination to rid Seaford of the scaffolding, Lewes District Council lodged a public nuisance claim with the High Court. As a consequence, the High Court judge ordered Vision Properties to take down the scaffolding by July 25. Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council, visited the site on July 26 and met with fellow councillors, representatives from Seaford Residents' Voice, residents and local business owners.

She said: "It has been a long, painstaking struggle to get rid of this eyesore, so it is a great relief to the many people involved in campaigning for its removal that this day has finally arrived.

"Among those who have worked so hard on this over the years are Seaford Residents' Voice, Seaford Town Council, council officers, our legal team and councillors in the current administration as well as those previously in Cabinet, notably Councillor Stephen Gauntlett and Councillor James MacCleary. My thanks to them all for their efforts and unflinching determination to get this done.

"For such a long time, residents and businesses in Seaford town centre had to endure living under the scaffolding's shadow and we were given countless empty promises by the owners that it would be taken away. The only recourse left to us was to initiate a High Court action and I am pleased this route has given us the result many people fought so diligently for."

Council declares its support for Clean Air Bill

The Leader of Lewes District Council will be writing to local MPs asking them to support a new law that would establish the right to breathe clean air.

The Leader of Lewes District Council will be writing to local MPs asking them to support a new law that would establish the right to breathe clean air.

The move is part of a motion passed unanimously at Full Council last night (July 24) backing the Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill - known as Ella's Law - proposed by Councillor Becky Francomb and seconded by Councillor Isobel Sharkey.

Councillor Francomb said: "I believe our residents have a right to breathe clear air and that we should define clean air not by what is easily achievable, but by the standards scientists say are safe. It is imperative that this bill, which enshrines the human right to breathe clean air in law, is passed in order to protect people's health and save lives.

"Poor air quality poses a huge environmental risk in this country, with traffic being the main source of pollution locally. It is estimated that in East Sussex, around 3,000 life years are lost due to particulate pollution each year.

"Clean air is so fundamental to human health and wellbeing that we might reasonably expect the government would follow the best scientific advice in adopting global standards for air quality. However, sadly this is not the case.

"This bill would require the government to limit the concentration of air pollutants to World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines which are more stringent than most UK limits. There would also be enhanced monitoring and reviewing of pollution limits. This action is urgently needed and supports our four-year goal, as a council, to achieve cleaner air."

Under the motion, the council is also calling on the government to bring out a revised Air Quality Strategy which secures funding for local authorities to take action locally to address air quality issues year-on-year.

In addition, the council's Policy and Performance Committee will consider and review the council's Air Quality Status Report annually.

The Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill has been passed in the House of Lords and its second reading in the House of Commons is scheduled for December 15, 2023.

Lewes District Council awarded funding to tackle the sticky issue of chewing gum on streets

Lewes District Council has successfully applied for a £25,000 grant to remove chewing gum that blights pavements in Lewes district.

The council is one of 56 across the country to be awarded funds from the Chewing Gum Task Force, now in its second year, to clean chewing gum off pavements and prevent it from being littered again. Councillor Wendy Maples, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Wellbeing, said: "These funds are very welcome to help clear the chewing gum scourge.

"In the space of just one square metre at Lewes Railway Station we counted 55 pieces of chewing gum. Chewing gum littering is an eyesore, of course, but if you've ever had to pick and clip gum from a dog's paw, you'll know it's worse than that. Sticky chewing gum can also be a trip hazard for people with mobility difficulties.

"Alongside removing the gum that's been dropped, we will also be looking at methods to prevent chewing gum mess blemishing our streets in the future."

Established by Defra and run by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, the Chewing Gum Task Force Grant Scheme is open to councils across the UK who wish to clean up gum in their local areas and invest in long-term behaviour change to prevent gum from being dropped in the first place.

The Task Force is funded by major gum manufacturers including Mars Wrigley and Perfetti Van Melle.

Monitoring and evaluation carried out by Behaviour Change has shown that in areas that benefitted last year a reduced rate of gum littering is still being observed six months after clean-up and the installation of prevention materials.

Estimates suggest the annual clean-up cost of chewing gum for councils in the UK is around £7 million and, according to Keep Britain Tidy, around 77% of England's streets and 99% of retail sites are stained with gum.

Allison Ogden-Newton OBE, Keep Britain Tidy's chief executive, said: "Chewing gum litter is highly visible on our high streets and is both difficult and expensive to clean up, so the support for councils provided by the Chewing Gum Task Force and the gum manufacturers is very welcome.

"However, once the gum has been cleaned up, it is vital to remind the public that when it comes to litter, whether it's gum or anything else, there is only one place it should be - in the bin - and that is why the behaviour change element of the task force's work is so important."

LGA 'full of positive observations' on council

Cabinet councillors have warmly welcomed a report by the Local Government Association (LGA) into the work of Lewes District Council, with the Leader describing it as a 'huge accomplishment'.

The week-long visit by an independent team reported that staff were hard-working, political leaders gave clear direction and leadership, the chief executive and senior management team is well-respected and other local organisations consider the council a trusted partner. While the process is not mandatory, the council wanted an external perspective on all operations, particularly following the unprecedented impact of the pandemic on the authority.

Following the July 13 Cabinet meeting at which the report was considered, Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council, said:

"This independent inspection report is full of positive observations and feedback, representing a huge accomplishment for the council and previous administration in the face of unprecedented pressures created by the pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

"Kudos to our hard-working staff who have responded brilliantly during these difficult times and continue in their efforts to make life better for Lewes district residents."

The inspection recognised the council's efforts to address the financial challenges created by the pandemic and highlights the current economic climate, cost of living crisis and inflationary pressures as factors the authority will also have to manage.

Council moves forward with plans for 16 new Newhaven homes

Lewes District Council is progressing with plans to build 16 homes on a piece of land being bought from Peacehaven Golf & Fitness.

Cabinet councillors on July 13 approved the purchase and development of the land, including the existing club house, which is no longer fit for purpose, to provide four new two-bedroom and 12 one-bedroom homes.

The sale will enable Peacehaven Golf & Fitness in Newhaven to build a new improved clubhouse on another part of the site.

The homes will be constructed using a fabric first approach, incorporating high sustainability features.

Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of Lewes District Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Community Wealth Building, said: "The creation of these new affordable homes is a welcome prospect and contributes towards the target we set in 2020 to deliver 200 new additional homes by 2024.

"Significantly, this will help meet the increased demands on our housing waiting list and reduce the reliance on temporary and emergency accommodation.

"Our commitment to building new homes has given us many challenges such as soaring construction costs, inflation, supply chain problems and land and property increases but we remain determined to secure more affordable housing options for Lewes district."

Affordable housing projects undertaken by the council include acquisitions, new build council homes in progress such as the site of the former police station in Newhaven and a portfolio of completed homes that are in use, including Saxonbury House in Lewes, Old Brickworks Lane in Hamsey, and Danforth Way in Ringmer delivered via the Aspiration Homes Limited Liability Partnership - a joint arrangement with Eastbourne Borough Council to increase options for providing more affordable homes.

Councillor Chris Collier, Cabinet Member for Innovation, Delivery and People, and Peacehaven West ward councillor, said: ""We will continue to make new council housing a priority for the benefit of residents across Lewes district, increasing the availability of quality homes for low rents and providing accessible flats and houses that have scope for adaptations."

Cabinet councillors welcome progress 'on all fronts'

Cabinet councillors at Lewes District Council have welcomed a report showing how far the council has come in delivering on their key priorities, such as sustainability and climate change, building community wealth, delivering homes and customer service.

The council's priorities are contained in the 2022/2023 corporate plan.

A few of the highlights include 1,197 households registered for the summer 2023 Solar Together Scheme - the highest number of registrations in all local authorities participating in the scheme, 64 electric vehicle chargers being installed in 11 car parks across the district, the recruitment of a zero-carbon community worker, 148 new council homes completed or in progress and a council tax reduction scheme implemented for people on the lowest incomes.

Councillor Chris Collier, Cabinet Member for Innovation, Delivery and People, said:

"The progress we are seeing on all fronts is really welcome, particularly because I know how so many of our residents share the same priorities as we do, be it the climate and environment, prioritising the wealth and wellbeing of local people or increasing the availability of genuinely affordable homes."

Other highlights include the Cockshut Stream Restoration Project, where the council and partners are creating a new wetland, work to bring the Marine Workshops back into use through a mixed hub hosting the marine, education and commercial sector and new public space, the establishment of a modular housing framework with a local contractor to support a substantial programme of works, using modern sustainable construction techniques and a raft of measures to address the cost of living crisis for the most vulnerable in the district.

Councillor Collier added:

"We will soon start work on the next corporate plan, but I can assure everyone that the climate, community wealth and homes for people on our housing register, will continue to be front and centre of everything we do."

Council Leader: 'new chapter in the history of Newhaven is beginning'

Lewes District Council is on course to 'transform' the promenade above West Beach in Newhaven after the next steps in a £10 million redevelopment were agreed by councillors.

Boasting a new 550m² restaurant, two beach volleyball courts, outdoor gym, children's play area and improved pedestrian links, the new promenade will become a magnet for residents and visitors to the town.

Councillor Zoe Nicholson, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Community Wealth Building, said:

"This is a landmark development opportunity for Newhaven that has the potential to transform the West Beach promenade and provide a major boost to the local economy.

"While the plans are yet to be considered by the council's planning committee, I can't help being excited by the prospect of them becoming a reality.

"When you consider this development alongside the council's work to create a new health hub in the town centre and our efforts to reopen The Marine Workshop, there is no doubt a new chapter in the history of Newhaven is beginning."

At the meeting of Cabinet on July 13 councillors were also brought up to date with the progress of work to bring The Marine Workshops back into use to support the regeneration of Newhaven.

Seeing the potential of the building, the council secured £1.3m in grant-funding from the Getting Britain Building Fund with a view to bringing it back into use as a marine, commercial, exhibition and civic space.

With phase one of the work to recommission the building well advanced, phase two improvements will allow full occupation of the building.

Councillor Nicholson added: "I'm delighted that East Sussex College Group is soon to move into The Marine Workshops and we're getting plenty of interest from businesses too.

"We all want this building to become a hive of activity - whether it's education, commerce or the curation of an arts exhibition, I want to give organisations in Newhaven the opportunity to thrive in this incredible building."

Additional Information

Recent LDC press releases can be viewed in full here:

www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/news-room

Useful websites:

- [East Sussex Cost of Living Report August 2023.pdf](#)
- artwavefestival.org
- cockshutstream.org
- lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/LDCtaxiconsultation
- [Clean Air Bill House of Lords](#)

If you have any queries on the issues raised in this briefing, please email:

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