

IOW Councillor Report December 2018 for Chillerton and Gatcombe Parish Council

Empty Houses

Due to the number of empty houses on the Island that get planning permission and then don't build out, I had a discussion with the Leader of the Council Dave Stewart and called a meeting with officers to request that we use our powers to either get them built or revoke their planning permission. This is achieved under the Town and Country Planning Act, section 97. I am very pleased that it was agreed by all and including the Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr Barry Abraham and he is about to make this decision official. I hope that this possible action will start to release some of the Islands empty houses into use for those in need of a home.

Affordable Housing

On another housing issue I am pleased to report that the Cabinet have agreed to set up a company to get affordable houses built rather than wait for developers to agree to do so.

This is the only way we can improve on our appalling record of low numbers year on year. Developers don't like affordable homes because they don't make enough return on them so this is an area of housing that has been overlooked for too long.

This is a bold commercial venture and will deliver council houses for Islanders but without the right to buy element that would mean that we could not get enough return to build more into the future.

I am very hopeful that this will start to increase our numbers of affordable houses going forward and in a sustainable way that will increase year on year.

Protection for Pubs

I am pleased to report that we had a motion brought to our last Full Council to protect the loss of pubs that seems to have been hitting the Island recently and it was agreed unanimously that the council would help however it can in this issue.

In my speech I suggested that all Town and Parish Councils that have a pub should apply for an Asset of Community Value status to give some initial protection and under certain circumstances and if it was financially viable, then the council should even consider the purchase of the pub and become the publicans Landlord in order to give them a fair deal on rent and rates but not tie them to the purchase of products at high prices which is what often puts them into a loss making position.

A lot of pubs could be more successful if they were run on a market rent only deal and buy fresh produce locally for food sales and buy from Island breweries and other micro breweries that are popping up all over the country and at a good price that would mean they could compete and prosper.

Speeding Issues

I have been contacted on a number of speeding issues in and around the village and on the newly surfaced Military Road.

One of these was regarding speeding cyclists who of course with modern bikes can get up to some extreme speeds especially when on a downhill ride and not taking note of warning signs that a junction is coming up.

This report was the third time that a car had been hit by a speeding cyclist who couldn't be seen due to a bend in the road as the car pulled out of the junction, suddenly the cyclist appeared at a very fast rate and clearly a lot more than the 30mph speed limit at this point.

With this in mind I have requested that Cllr Hobart, who's ward borders mine, and I receive an invite to the next Road Safety Forum to discuss the issue further with Police and Fire and Rescue Officers.

Cllr Hobart's main concern is the route from Gatcombe to Newport where there have been numerous accidents over the years especially around the Sandy Lane area.

Visit to Dorset

On the 7th of December Cllr Hobart and I are going to visit Dorset Council as they have been very successful in introducing wild verges to help with wildlife and make their roadways more attractive without affecting safety but making savings on there PFI contract.

We are meeting with council management, Their Cabinet Member for Environment and Butterfly Conservation.

We hope to be able to replicate some of the methods that they have used to make their verges better and save money on the contract as well, hopefully a win, win situation.

We hope to invite them to the Island in the future to give a presentation to our Environmental Forum.

Local Area Coordinators

Members might have heard a lot about LAC'S recently as changes are being made to the service.

I am now part of a cross party Task and Finish Group made up of Scrutiny Members to look at this issue and report back on our findings.

We have Councillors and representatives of the voluntary sector in this group as well as the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health.

I hope we can find an agreeable way forward between all of us and the report will be going to the Local Care Board very soon.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Steve

Councillor Steve Hastings

Isle of Wight Council

Member for Central Wight

Chair of Policy and Scrutiny for Regeneration, Housing,

Planning and The Environment

Steve.hastings@iow.gov.uk

07870127024

Twitter - @cllr_hastings