

## Report from Cllr John Barnes – January '22

- Probably the most important as far as Brightling is concerned is publication of the new Enforcement Plan. There will not be any further consultation on this, but there will be a dissemination event, which no doubt can be turned into a two-way process. I was not aware of any previous document, but this looks to be a helpful development. The problem of under capacity remains, however, and needs to be addressed. I have suggested involving Parish Clerks, where willing and subject to appropriate training, but have heard nothing further on that subject.
- The financial forecast and the budget do not make good reading, although there has been more money from Government than anticipated. The deficit on the budget that has to be bridged by drawing on reserves this year amounts to some £3 million and the savings target was missed. Much is blamed on Covid 19, but I am not altogether convinced that more could not have been done by way of regeneration projects designed to increase income and I was disappointed that the budget to acquire properties to ease the need to place the temporarily homeless in bed and breakfast accommodation was only half spent – hence more revenue money will have to be spent. There will have to be a serious delivery of savings in the next two or three years if we are not to run the reserves right down; they will already go below the £5 million hitherto identified as the minimum desirable.
- The review of progress on the Housing and Homelessness strategy suggested that in general satisfactory progress has been made, and the process to establish a baseline for Rother's carbon output is well advanced.
- The Climate Strategy group is, I am informed, making good progress.
- The good news that I can bring you is that the planning backlog is being diminished quite rapidly and the acting development manager does I think deserve considerable credit – although both he and the additional officers provided by Capita come at a cost.
- Just for the record, although they will have limited interest I suspect, the review of the Rother constitution is well advanced and the financial regulations have been revised.

I think that is all that I would have mentioned. December's Council was cancelled so that at the end of January will be busy.