

## Update for Ringmer Parish Council September 2022

Sorry I am unable to join you at your meeting tonight. I just wanted to update you on a number of issues since your last meeting.

### **1) Sewage**

The government has released its Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan. This plan sets stringent new targets to protect people and the environment and eradicate the use of storm overflows. This will require water companies to deliver the largest infrastructure programme in water company history and is backed by £56 billion of investment.

Water companies will have to achieve targets set out in the plan:

- by 2035, water companies will have to tackle all storm overflows discharging into or near designated bathing waters; and improve 75% of overflows discharging to high priority nature sites
- by 2050, this will apply to all remaining storm overflows covered by our targets, regardless of location

You can find out more details about this in a letter that was sent to all MP's by the Secretary of State: <https://www.mariacaulfield.co.uk/sites/www.mariacaulfield.co.uk/files/2022-08/Dear%20Colleagues%20Storm%20Overflowspdf.pdf>

### **2) 269 extra police officers recruited in Sussex**

I have welcomed the announcement that 269 police officers have been recruited in Sussex since September 2019, bringing the total number of officers up to 3018. The latest figures are part of the Conservative Government's drive to get 20,000 more police officers on the street by March 2023 and puts the Government on track to fulfil its manifesto commitment with 69 per cent of the target now met.

Across the 43 police forces, an additional 13,790 officers have been recruited, bringing the total number of police officers in England and Wales to 142,759 – where they are already having an impact in tackling crime and keeping communities safe.

### **3) Autumn COVID Booster**

The NHS will become the first healthcare system in the world to use the next generation, bivalent COVID vaccine when it kickstarts the autumn booster rollout in early September.

The NHS has now set out plans for the next phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme – the largest and fastest vaccine drive in health service history.

Set to start during the week of 5 September, NHS staff will begin vaccinating care home residents and people who are housebound.

The National Booking Service will also open that week ahead of the wider rollout, due to start on the 12 September, with the NHS inviting those who are most susceptible to serious illness from COVID-19 and those aged 75 and over to book an appointment from that week.

#### **4) Norlington Lane Solar Farm**

I have been supporting residents in the campaign against the proposed solar farm located at Norlington Farm. Despite what Ovesco have previously stated about the quality of the land, this new report shows just what residents have been saying, namely that the site is extremely good for agricultural use. I am pleased that this has now been confirmed, with only a small part of the site deemed to be Moderate Quality Agricultural Land and the rest of it being of higher quality. None of the site has been deemed to be at Poor or Very Poor Quality Agricultural Land.

The fact that the Council's own Cabinet Member for Sustainability has said the report 'calls into question the feasibility of the Ovesco solar farm project' surely means it is time for Ovesco to withdraw plans for this solar farm in Ringmer. It is also time that the Lib Dem and Green run Lewes District Council use the £100,000 of taxpayers' money that was to fund this for something better. An example could be keeping Ringmer Swimming Pool open, something that would benefit local people in the village.

#### **5) Energy Bill Support**

Further support for energy bills was announced by the Prime Minister on the 8<sup>th</sup> September.

The Government will bring forward emergency legislation to establish a new Energy Price Guarantee which will ensure that the average British household pays no more than £2,500 per year for their energy bills for the next two years from October.

This will save the average household at least £1,000 per year – giving certainty on energy prices so people can get through the winter, slowing inflation and making incomes go further. We will fully compensate energy suppliers for the cost of this emergency action – with the Chancellor setting out further details in the fiscal statement later this month. The new guarantee will apply to households in Great Britain, with the same level of support made available to households in Northern Ireland.

As part of the Energy Price Guarantee, we are temporarily suspending green levies – contributing £150 to the £1,000 yearly average saving. At this difficult time, it is right that households do not bear the cost of low-carbon electricity generation, but instead benefit from it.

And we will maintain the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme for everyone, and the £1,200 of support for the most vulnerable households already announced earlier this year.

But I know that not everyone will be eligible for the schemes I have outlined above – especially those living in park homes, or who use heating oil in rural areas in constituencies such as mine. We will set up a discretionary fund to make sure that no one is left behind this winter.

Businesses will be offered an equivalent guarantee for six months for those hit by rising prices, and after those six months we will provide further support for vulnerable sectors, such as hospitality, including our local pubs. We will work with businesses to review where this should be targeted.