

RYE TOWN COUNCIL, 21st JANUARY 2008
REPORT OF ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Udimore Road

Members will recall that Rother's Cabinet concluded, on 8th October, that there was **not** a clear justification to release the allocated site north of Udimore Road for housing development. However, there was a strong warning that the supply of developable housing land remains marginal in relation to Structure Plan requirements: and I said at our meeting on 12th November that we had to remain on our guard. It is most unfortunate that Udimore Road achieved the status of a "reserve site" towards the end of the last Council. Once it did so, the cat was almost out of the bag: and attempts to stop eventual development became very much more difficult.

Nevertheless, it was more than surprising when Cabinet reversed their decision just before Christmas - principally because of delays in implementation of plans for the Bexhill/Hastings Link Road with the associated housing development. The matter will be discussed at full Council on 3rd March. Those of us who hope to take part in that debate must be careful, under Code of Conduct requirements, to enter that meeting without having pre-judged the issue - so I would rather not comment much more except to remind members that it is Government which requires all these tens of thousands of new houses to be built in the South East; and Government which is delaying the necessary funding for the Link Road. If the Link Road gets going, there will be no need to release the Udimore site. And if the various County Council sites come forward quickly, together with other brown-field sites including those within the Rock Channel area, the outlook could change.

De La Warr Pavilion Working Group

The Group has published its final report which will be considered at Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 28th January before Cabinet reaches a decision on future funding. Members can check the report on Rother's web site. There are some proposed changes - with a reduced annual core grant (but not by much) and we will have to see whether members other than the Working Group consider that the recommendations are tough enough. Arts Council England do not expect to confirm their funding before early

February; and they do not propose to make further revenue payments until the delivery of a viable 3 year business plan.

In-house operation of services

Members may be interested that Rother's Building Maintenance service may be about to be brought back in house, having since 1989 been delivered by an external contractor. The handling of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits service has already been brought back in house; and, in these cases, the considerations include value for money and the apparent limitations of previous contractors.

Budget 2008/09

The very poor Central Government settlement has been widely reported, and we will soon know what this means in terms of Council tax for the year beginning in April. One day soon there will have to be root and branch changes in the relationship and funding formula between local and national government such that we enjoy greater autonomy and our residents can see a system which is fair and transparent.

DR 21/01/08