

Cuckfield Annual Parish Meeting
23rd April 2009

Present: Robert Salisbury, Ken Gregory, Jane Revell, Sue Burgess, Ruth Macintyre, Stephen Blanch, Andrea King, Frances Jones (Cuckfield Parish Council), Alice Henstock (Senior MSDC Planning Officer). Claire Tester (Head of MSDC Planning) and approximately 40 members of the public

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Robert Salisbury, welcomed the public to the meeting. Mr Salisbury briefly outlined the work of the parish council and explained the purpose of the meeting and a presentation of the Vice-Chairman's badge of office was made to Mr Gregory. Mr Salisbury then introduced Alice Henstock who had come to the meeting to give a presentation on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) that is currently underway at the District Council.

Ms Henstock gave a presentation of the SHLAA stating that it provided the evidence to support where housing should be delivered in the District. The District had to fulfil the 17,000 government housing requirement within the South East Plan. The SHLAA was an assessment of sites, not an allocations document. The Council has not taken any decisions regarding the sites and the document will be updated on an annual basis. The interim SHLAA had produced a 2,500 shortfall in sites and this had led to further consultation. Full details of the SHLAA and the results were all available on the MSDC website.

Following the presentation Mr Salisbury commented that the Parish Council took a holistic view of the village and future development. In particular, the Council believed that the landscape value of the land to the north of the by-pass currently enabled a view unchanged since mediaeval times, something unique in Sussex. Fortunately, the District Council had taken a similar view. However, it had to be recognised that Cuckfield would have to take further housing and it was important that the community participated in the planning process. It was hoped that a community group would be established, with one councillor and other local people with suitable expertise, to look at the proposals.

Questions were raised from the floor, including a question as to why certain rural communities such as Horsted Keynes were prevented from taking additional housing which was needed in order to keep the village as a viable community. The officers commended that national policy states that development in areas of AONB should only take place for local housing needs. Full details are available in the Rural Issues Background Paper also available on the MSDC website.

The MSDC Officers were thanked for the informative presentation and then left the meeting. The Chairman then gave his annual report on the work of the parish council as well as work planned for the future.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.