

**Bourne Parishes – WSCC Councillor report
Chidham and Hambrook Parish – September 2022**



**Lion park annual resident fees investigation**

Despite several calls and emails there has been no further response from First Port during August re a site visit.

**Road Safety – public consultation**

Speed policies will support all Parish Neighbourhood Plans in speed reductions and 20mph limits outside schools. The Policies have now been approved and go out for public consultation in September and October, delayed from July and August due to low responses during summer holidays. WSCC speed limit policies will include the new Highway code changes related to cycling and pedestrians in particular, Parish requests for lower speeds in towns, villages and on rural roads and updating of current WSCC speed policies. The Policy is now likely to go live in late Nov, early Dec.

The policies will include a range of criteria for reducing speeds (not just current traffic road speed) like the location, neighbourhood, road user mix, cycle route planning, residential housing and the need for rural ‘quiet ways’. It will also look at speed reduction measures like signs, road marking, village gateways, rumble strips, vehicle activated signs (SIDs), timed flashing wig-wags outside schools and road islands, as well as how any reduced speed limits might be implemented and enforced. Parishes will also have the opportunity to add to Highways budgets to push schemes through at a faster pace, a measure that will benefit simple TROs, CHSs and more complex Neighbourhood Plans.

**As yet the public consultation is not yet live, but I would recommend that Parishes start to review what they might want to change based on full or at least partial ratification of speed reduction policies.**

It is already clear that many Parishes need to coordinate with their neighbouring parishes so that any new speed limits proposed are consistent as road users move between parishes, often over a distance of less than a mile. For example, Southbourne is looking at a Stein Road speed reduction to 20mph, yet the top of the road and junction to Westbourne and Woodmancote has a 60 mph national speed limit. So all Parish speed limits will need to be reviewed carefully and in coordination with Neighbourhood Plans, TROs, CHSs etc. I am happy to help facilitate this villages via the Bourne Roads Forum.

**Bus service risks**

Hampshire CC will cease the 28 public bus service in September that goes from Rowlands Castle – Durrants – Leigh Park – Havant – Denvilles – Emsworth. This is because of a lack of passengers that have failed to improve to commercially viable levels post COVID in 2021 and 2022.

The concern is that the 54 bus service funded by WSCC also may be at high risk in Oct 2022, as Gov COVID fund support for this runs out in October and this bus from Petersfield to Chichester is only getting a few passengers a day based on Bourne passengers that use the 54 service. I suspect it will be a tough fight to get the 54 service retained.

**With public buses it is a simple case of ‘use it or lose it’. Parishes are encouraged to advise residents in their newsletters of a risk to their local bus services unless passenger numbers pick up, as commercial bus services may have no choice but to cease any services running at a loss, regardless of any subsidies offered by WSCC.**

**We will be adding in new stops in Sept and Oct for the Bourne Bus to help these passengers living between Westbourne Square and New Brighton Road and, if possible, we will add in stops to try and fill any lost bus stops.**

**Cost of living crisis – WSCC support**

The Warmer Homes programme aims to raise the energy efficiency of low income and low energy performance homes. Funding is available (for eligible households) for energy efficiency measures such as: • roof, underfloor, wall and park home insulation

* air source heat pumps
* solar panels
* storage heaters
* heating controls

The Energy Saving Trust website has a good introduction to the simple, low-cost ways to reduce home energy consumption. It includes savings estimates and links to other resources if you want to learn more about making your home more energy efficient.

Our West Sussex Affordable Energy website has details of home energy advisors, heating and insulation grants and other support within your district or borough council area.

Our West Sussex Wellbeing site also provides advice to residents on keeping warm and saving energy at home.

The Citizens Advice West Sussex Energy Advice Service is a good place to start if you need help with your energy costs and want advice on local and national financial support, dealing with energy debt and making your home more energy efficient.

Residents who are on a low income and vulnerable to the cold could also be eligible for support through the council-endorsed Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP) scheme. By meeting the broad eligibility criteria you can qualify for energy saving advice and energy saving measures, such as LED light bulbs and draught proofing.

LEAP advisors can also help you to access other support, such as grants for central heating if you don’t already have it, a replacement scheme for white goods and help to repair or replace a broken or condemned boiler.

**Resident top tips to cut your carbon emissions**

**Get free smart meters installed by your electricity and gas suppliers so that you can clearly see where and when you’re using energy at home and help identify where you can save energy and money.**

* Significantly reduce heat loss and lower your heating bills by insulating your walls, roof, and floor.
* Help keep your home warm and cosy by fitting better controls to your boiler and radiators, such as timers and thermostats.
* Conserve your hot water by insulating your pipes and cylinder, taking a shower instead of a bath, and using a dishwasher or basin to wash up in rather than a running tap.
* Switch to a renewable or ‘green’ energy tariff – in terms of potential carbon saving, switching to a renewable electricity tariff is probably the simplest and most effective thing you can do.
* Improve the draught proofing in your home – don’t lose precious heat through your roof, chimney, floors, windows and doors.
* Switch to LED lighting if you can. Lighting typically accounts for 15 per cent of household energy costs.
* Turn appliances off standby – a smart meter will show you which appliances use the most electricity. In most cases, appliances can be turned off at the plug without upsetting their programming.
* Wash and dry wisely – put a wash on during the day and hang it outside rather use a tumble dryer. Try washing your clothes at 30 degrees to reduce the amount of energy you use too.
* Only boil enough for your brew - kettles use 6% of electricity in British homes! Only boil the water you need and descale your kettle regularly as it uses more energy to boil the water if it’s full of limescale

**Bourne Community Bus**

We have 11 MIDAS trained volunteer drivers with four more trained on Wed 7th Sept, plus three drivers available to support the hire of the second bus that is jointly run by the SCLT and community Transport Sussex. So far we have also received community bookings for both buses totalling £450, and that all goes towards bus operational costs.

During August, following the leaflet delivery and social media campaigns, passenger numbers rose well. In the last few weeks of August we have seen passenger numbers rise to the point where drivers have reported that the bus has been full on occasion, usually going to Emsworth and Havant, but also the number of people travelling to Chichester is picking up too.

This increase is likely down to a combination of the print of 10,000 timetable leaflets and local parish distribution, the current household cost crisis (a family can travel on the Bourne bus free whilst a day ticket on the 700 bus is nearly £20), plus social media updates highlighting the service. There is also no doubt that word of mouth is also helping, with many passengers travelling for the first time in August and, at the other extreme, one Westbourne resident using it almost every day!

**Whilst there are a few more bus users in Chidham and Hambrook the biggest concern is still the lack of passengers. This is likely down to either the nominated stops being too close to other public transport services, the lack of a need (car owners), lack of knowledge of the service (now unlikely) or lack of suitable destinations (also unlikely). It is therefore important that we come up with a strategy to increase bus users or change stops.**

10,000 leaflets for local timetables have been printed and circulated to all Parishes and communities in Chidham, Southbourne, Westbourne, Emsworth and Thorney Island. Parishes are encouraged to ensure that these are dropped through doors in relevant resident areas and also sites near local bus stops, shops, halls, social centres, libraries.

We now have 11 MIDAS trained drivers on the bus service with a further two being trained in September. Runs are now all planned throughout August which has been tricky due to a number of people being on holiday.

Our second bus, a 15 seat Mercedes Sprinter also with a disabled lift, arrived at Thorney Island on Monday 8th August and is available for local resident or group hire from September at a low cost, from £30 per half day self-drive to £150 per full day with a driver. For bus hire rates and details see [www.bournebus.co.uk/hire-the-bus/](http://www.bournebus.co.uk/hire-the-bus/)

Parishes are reminded of commitments to fund £2,000 per Parish for the Bourne Bus. Most have sent in their contribution but, if you are yet to do so, please contact Southbourne Community Land trust chair David Bangert via email at davidbangert1963@icloud.com to arrange payment.

I will be Project Managing the bus to the end of Dec, to support the bus service launch and ongoing operation and also to ensure that we utilise the second bus for hire effectively, plus gain new grants and funds and marketing.

* The bus website gives all the details of Bourne Bus services, timetables and news and also a bus hire form.
* See [www.bournebus.co.uk](http://www.bournebus.co.uk) for more details. For bus related queries contact andrew4bourne@gmail.com

There are QR codes to scan to donate £1, £2 or £5 and we will also install a Sumup payment system on the bus so that, whilst all travel is free for residents, anyone can donate to bus running costs instantly via card tap and pay.

**Tackling lack of Council tax on second homes**

Questions raised at CDC by Andrew Kerry-Bedell and answer from Cllr Peter Wilding:

Firstly, you say that “Chichester Council does not levy a Council Tax premium on second homes”. Currently in England the maximum that can be charged for a second home is 100% (Note: Wales already levies a 100% charge and it appears to be working to increase Council revenue for local services). Legislation does not currently allow a premia to be charged on second homes, however, the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill currently going through the parliamentary process does include proposals to allow a 100% premium on Second Homes, effectively making the charge payable twice the normal Council Tax rate. The Council will make a decision on this proposal once the final regulations have been set by Government.

In answer to your further questions

* 405 empty properties (0.7%) 2,660 second homes (4.4%) in Chichester district from 59,736 properties
* Bosham Parish has 8 empty properties (0.5%) and 155 second homes (10%) out of a total 1,553 properties
* In Chidham & Hambrook 8 empty properties (0.8%) and 18 second homes (1.8%) from total 1,023 properties
* In Southbourne 17 empty properties (0.5%) and 75 second homes (2.4%) out of a total 3,153 properties

You have asked how many properties had the empty homes Council Tax Premium in each bracket levied in 2021/22, and how that changed from 20/21.

In 21/22 we had:

* 373 properties which were empty for less than two years
* 46 properties that were empty between 2 and 5 years
* 16 properties that were empty between 5 and 10 years
* 15 properties empty over 10 years.
* Total 450 properties.

~In 20/21 we had:

* 431 properties which were empty for less than two years
* 54 properties that were empty between 2 and 5 years
* 31 properties that were empty between 5 and 10 years
* 0 properties empty over 10 years
* Total of 516 properties (-66 homes)

Overall the number of empty properties fell from 516 to 450 over 20/21 to 21/22 and I can confirm the number has reduced further in 22/23 to 405.

Regarding your question about whether the Council will implement a premium for homes left empty for more than one year from 2022/23 I can confirm that the regulations to allow this in the Levelling up & Regeneration bill are not currently finalised or passed through Parliament. Also the premiums have already been set at maximum allowable levels for 22/23. A decision about future financial years will be made in the Autumn as part of the Council’s usual taxbase setting process.

You then raise the issue of second home owners seeking to have their properties reclassified as a business rather than a domestic dwelling to avoid paying Council Tax then claiming small business rate relief.

There are currently 310 properties across Chichester district that are classified as holiday units, up from 186 in 2017.

The government is aware of this issue and from April 2023, second homeowners will have to prove holiday lets are actually being rented out for a min 70 days a year to access small business rates relief, not just available for rent. Holiday let owners will have to provide evidence e.g. website or brochure to advertise the property, letting details and receipts. Properties will also have to be available to be rented out for 140 days a year to qualify for this relief.

Finally you ask whether the Council will implement a 100% Council Tax premium charge for second home owners from 2022/23. **A decision on future years Council Tax premiums will be made in the Autumn.**

**Storm sewage overflows latest**

An article will eb featured in the Chichester Observer in the next week regarding SSOs, and I have passed the contact details of Southern Water’s engagement manager to Observer journalists for their comment. To be honest SW seems to be trying to tackle all of the issues we have raised, but with lack of Government legislation and Environment Agency follow-up the prospect of getting both Storm Sewage Overflows and capacity increases sorted looks tough.

With the lack of any enacted or new policies on sewage and storm sewage overflows, lack of clarity on what is actually going to happen to fix this, and rapidly lengthening deadlines for any action to be taken (moved out again now to 2035 on SSOs), the Government machine has gone into a new spin cycle as can be seen from their recent press release here last Friday – [click here](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/toughest-targets-ever-introduced-will-crack-down-on-sewage-spills)

* “We are the first government to require water companies to take action to address these discharges” (so no Conservative MP voted against the Duke of Wellington’s amendment then?)
* “By 2035, water companies will have to improve all storm overflows discharging into or near every designated bathing water; and improve 75% of overflows discharging to high priority nature sites.” (improve is a woolly term that means little in practical terms to a water treatment works)
* “These plans strike the right balance between the need for investment and the impact on consumers. Under this plan there will be no changes to bills until 2025.” (s

The press release also said “The Government has ruled out options which could add up to £817 a year to average household water bills.” This is a made up figure designed to scare-monger voters, the likely cost is £65 a year but only if ALL of the cost of the improvements was paid for by consumers rather thnn water companies.

The Channel 4 Dispatches program on Monday – <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/britains-water-scandal-dispatches/on-demand/73511-001> indicated that the cost per year for doing the work required is £65 per household, assuming residents are paying for all of the upgrade costs, rather than water companies paying for it from their profits or reducing shareholder dividends and executive pay. The Channel 4 dispatches program also showed:

* The plight in Emsworth and the state of our local harbour from both sewage spills and SSOs
* Every sewage pipe is supposed to have an EA licence but C4 found that 870 pipes do not have EA permits
* 1500 sewage pipes discharge straight into the sea and our coastal bathing waters
* The EA says 70% of our beaches have excellent water quality yet C4 sampling showed otherwise
* There was an accusation that EA picks and chooses when it samples, and ‘bad day’ samples get discarded
* The EA lacks the staff and will and political clout to enforce sufficiently against water companies
* [The Government press release five days ago](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/toughest-targets-ever-introduced-will-crack-down-on-sewage-spills) scaremongering the public into thinking if we fix SSOs then it will cost them £817 each.( C4 indicates it’s actually £65 per year, and that despite investment of £5.5bn in the sewage system from the 12 water companies, they gave their shareholders £1.7bn in dividends that could have gone to fixing capacity and storm sewage overflows)

 **If we can’t get Southern Water to improve sewage capacity before 2025, then the CDC Local Plan is at risk.**

The biggest issue is that, by ruling out any bill changes until 2025, little or no work to improve capacity or resolve storm sewage overflows can be done in the interim. Sewage works like Bosham and Sidlesham were over their EA legal permitted capacity in 2021, and the situation is getting worse.

If new house building plans continue (CDC and HBC still has Government imposed targets of 12,600 houses) then not just Bosham and Sidlesham but Thornham, Tangmere, Pagham and Loxwood will likely be over their Q80 DWF capacity by 2025, as outlined in the CDC Position Statement capacity calculations:

* **70,700 total houses sewage capacity in CDC area (excluding SDNP areas)**
* **12,600 new houses currently in CDC and HBC Local Plans**
* 11,600 new houses capacity based on Q80 DWF (as in CDC Position Statements) **= 1,000 houses short and capacity in the wrong places**
* 18,300 new houses capacity based on Q90 DWF (EA legal limit) **less 12,600 = 8% sewage capacity remaining**
* 14,500 new houses capacity (Q90 DWF) if 2021 CDC increase trend continues (+21% YOY) less 12,600 **= 2.5% sewage capacity remaining**

**Meeting with Southern Water due 19th September**

Despite emails being sent to the Environment Agency to get them to engage on the know capacity issues at Thornham and Bosham, as well as the lack of legislation on storm sewage overflows, they have refused to meet.

Southern Water continues to respond and engage positively with Councillors, which is welcome news.

The meeting involves Toby Willison (SW Engagement Manager), Nick Mills and Paul Rooney (technical managers), to discuss practical capacity solutions at Thornham and Bosham and storm sewage overflows. From our side there will be myself, Adrian Moss, Penny Plant and Jonathan Brown.

These discussions will form part of the SW DWMP and Brava analysis they are currently doing for all of their 380 works, that then goes to Ofwat at the end of 2024 for approval April 2025 onwards.

**Reminder: parishes should contribute to the DWMP by 5th September – see** [**www.southernwater.co.uk/dwmp**](http://www.southernwater.co.uk/dwmp)

SW has already published plans for both works (part of the DWMP submission due 9th Sept) and these will be discussed in detail, together with options for new storm sewage tanks, given the ten-fold increase in storm sewage overflows since 2017. Initial data analysis suggests secondary tanks at both works could reduce storm sewage overflows by 80% to 85%, so we hope that these options will be considered for funding submission to Ofwat.

