

County Councillor Andrew Bowles

October Report: No74



I have been asked by several people, including the Editors of two Parish Newsletters to return to the subject of my last months report, changes to the Planning System and Swale's housing numbers.

Since then the coalition Cabinet has approved the proposals of their Local Plan Panel. Rather than the 217 houses per year proposed under the current Plan the changes are as follows. Out of an anticipated figure of 1,483 houses per annum Faversham is expected to provide 35% and the Rural Parishes another 10.5%. The coalition Cabinet voted almost unanimously to endorse these figures, including the vote of Liberal Democrat Leader Ben Martin who is elected to represent Faversham. Whether this was a factor in 2 of the 5 Liberal Democrat Councillors subsequently resigning from the Group I can only guess. Our own Boughton & Courtenay Borough representative Cllr Alistair Gould (Green) despite not having a vote as a Deputy Cabinet Member chose to attend the meeting and speak in favour of the proposals! This would increase the target for Faversham and our Parishes from 217 house per year to 675, a 200% increase or more than three times as many per houses to be completed each and every year.

I note from the Minutes of the subsequent Graveney Parish Council, which I missed due to date and time clashing with another Parish Council in my Division that our local Borough Councillors were of the opinion that these numbers could be accommodated without the North Street development going ahead as they could all be built East of Faversham. Good news possibly for Sheldwich and Baddesmere but certainly not for Boughton, Dunkirk and Graveney etc.

We must hope that the combined lobbying efforts of Kent County Council and Kent's MPs leads to Government reducing the total numbers although it is purely Swale's Borough Councillors who can allocate the numbers across Swale.

We have recently managed to get away for a few days with our dogs to the Cornish coast, our first break for twelve months. We travelled through Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall with an almost total lack of litter! Why do our roads look so litter-strewn?

After over six months of "online" "meetings, sometimes up to ten hours a day it has been nice to spend one or two days a week Chairing Home to School Transport Appeals. We have given those parents who wish to the opportunity to meet and discuss with the Panel either face to face or via a web link. Far better for the parents and so much easier to arrive at a fair decision.

This will most likely be my last newsletter you will receive in 2020, a year most of us will be pleased to see the back of. Can I therefor pray that you all have a peaceful Christmas and a Covid free New Year.

Andrew Bowles
KCC Member – Swale East