



C/o 2 Cinque Ports Way
Seaford
East Sussex
BN25 3UF

ADD 1
AD 2
TOWN
POSTCODE

3rd November 2015

Dear Councillor ##### ##,

The IFS Buckle car park and other petitions have reflected the dissatisfaction of Lewes District residents in 'New Homes' and other projects in the district.

The New Homes Project raises substantial issues that need urgent attention. We are writing to all elected Lewes District Councillors to ask that you place a motion on the agenda for the next district full council meeting, calling for an independent investigation into the management of the 'New Homes' and other Projects, for the following reasons:

1. A list of proposed development sites to be considered for disposal was kept confidential and exempt from the public domain for 3 years. (Cabinet meeting May 2012).
2. No public consultation took place before the list was released into the public domain, including entering into a partnership agreement, also the appalling lack of consultation with town and parish councils and other relevant stakeholders.
3. A serious lack of proper Scrutiny, and the fact that not one/or few district councillor(s) between 2012 and May 2015 had any knowledge/or acknowledges being advised of this, or consulted, to allow them to raise concerns or opinions from their residents.
4. Asset Management Plan Revised 2009 External Consultation 5.1: If this is current policy and LDC has not consulted on disposal of assets, this could amount to serious maladministration.
5. The Tendering process to attract interest from developers was only advertised in the European Journal and not in the Estates Gazette, clearly keeping the level of interest very limited, this opens up further questions as to whether a developer had already been chosen in 2012.
6. To achieve the 76 apartments for the Buckle Car Park site, district will have to go outside of its own Local Development Plan, if this is to be the case, than district must notify the Secretary of State, so that he can consider whether to 'call in' the planning application for his own determination. It was made quite clear by the Senior Council Officer at a recent meeting, that there is no intention to do this.

7. To avoid a Conflict of Interest, Planning Applications may not be determined by a Committee or Officer responsible for the management of land concerned.
This needs urgent attention as there is a major Conflict of Interest in the way the project is being managed. It is completely inappropriate that the Senior Council Officer in charge of this project should also be the Line Manager for the development Control Officers who will be tasked with preparing the reports to the Planning Application Committee. This Conflict of Interest alone would provide clear grounds for a Judicial Review.
8. It is also very evident that a great deal of weight has been given to commercial market consideration and none at all to the provision of new affordable housing, the stated aim of the project is to meet the target of 40% for affordable housing, however given recent renegeing on affordable elements of a project by developers residents are wary that less than the stated 165 will be built. A similar lack of concern for those needing affordable housing, is the astonishing choice to propose the development of affordable housing on the village green of the isolated hamlet of East Chiltington, where there are no schools, GP's, public transport or employment, or anything accessible within walking distance. A market developer would of course prefer the Buckle Car Park site, but should the Council have given the developer's interest a higher priority than the needs of those unable to access affordable housing where they need it? This choice reflects very badly on the Council.
9. The Council has pushed forward the plans with Santon for Lewes North Quay development despite Lewes Phoenix Rising (LPR) offering a more suitable development. LPR's investigation has highlighted an apparent lack of corroborated financial projection. This raises questions on whether the LDC/Santos project will be financially viable.
10. Land and property held by the Council is of course a matter of public interest. Such assets are publicly owned. The Council should recognise that public consultation and engagement is central to any decisions it makes. There has been a total lack of regard for this, causing no democracy, no transparency and no accountability.

We urge you to immediately place a motion on the agenda for the next district full council meeting on 9th December 2015, calling for an independent investigation into the management of the New Homes and other Projects, and ask that you respond as to your intentions regarding this request on or before 18th November 2015.

Should District Councillors chose to ignore, or fail to respond to this request, residents will have no option but to utilise public media, locally and nationally, to ensure that this request from residents for an investigation is acted upon for inclusion in the Full Council Agenda on 9th December 2015.

Yours sincerely

(Signed by Fiona House, Treasurer)

On behalf of the Executive, Independents for Seaford