

Lavant Annual council report 2023/24

Report author: Joseph Brookes-Harmer

District Councillor for Lavant, Funtington, West Stoke, East & West Ashling and Asdean

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Council elections took place in May 2023.

The result was:

Liberal Democrats 25

Conservatives 5

Local Alliance (Selsey) 4

Greens 2

*The Local Alliance and Greens sit as a "Group" and are therefore the official Opposition.

Joseph Brookes-Harmer

District Councillor for Lavant

Responsibilities / committees:

- **Planning committee**
- **Overview and scrutiny committee**
- **Economic development committee**

- **Budget task and finish group**

Outside bodies:

- **Goodwood aerodrome consultative committee**

The new Council met on May 17th 2024.

Clare Apel (Chichester West) was elected Chair.

Adrian Moss (Harbour Villages) was elected as Leader.

Midhurst Fire

- It's also hard to believe it's been just over a year since the major fire in Midhurst. As you know, the council has stepped in to offer significant support to the town with a package of over £300,000, as well as business support on the ground and marketing activities to encourage people back to the town. The funding has been used to provide grants to eligible businesses, pay for a new website to promote the town and to provide coaching from a retail specialist. The Town Team is also developing a new Midhurst Business Partnership.

Temporary accommodation

- One of the most pressing issues is increasing the amount of temporary accommodation. We must house people who are facing unintentional homelessness.
- Last year the council spent a significant amount of money on nightly paid accommodation, so we are delighted to have secured additional temporary accommodation. We can now place people in more suitable accommodation and reduce the Council's outlay on Temporary Accommodation at the same time.

Play Parks

- Parks and play areas are integral to people's quality of life.
- We have started a project to refurbish play parks on our own land including in Florence Park; Priory Park; Sherbourne Park; and Whyke Oval.

Boosting the local economy

- We've issued more than £220,000 to businesses and community groups from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This is from the £1.7 million that we were allocated in 2022.
- The funding has supported a variety of work - from small charities, to growing businesses and community organisations.

- We are also running a range of Markets and Events to encourage people to visit Chichester. Many of you I know attended the Laser show at the canal and others I have seen at the Farmers Market.

Supporting businesses and Regeneration Strategy

- We are providing enabling grants scheme for small and independent businesses; a shop front grant scheme for high street businesses; and an independent retailers grant scheme.
- We've developed the Invest Chichester project over the last three years, which works hard to attract businesses to the district or businesses looking to relocate in order to boost the local economy.
- We are also working on a Regeneration Strategy for the city, which will set the overall direction of travel; work in partnership to influence change and investment in the city; set out potential key areas, strategic land and physical assets; and provide a clear framework for decision making.

Food waste

- We are also starting to prepare for the introduction of a new food waste recycling service. This is a huge project that has to be delivered in 2026 and so we have lots to do between now and then. This includes purchasing new vehicles, recruiting new staff and rolling out the service.

Local Plan

- The local plan has now been submitted to the secretary of state. The inspectorate will scrutinise the plan and revert with any comments.
- The aim was to submit in summer 2023 but delayed due to issues with National Highways, wastewater and Natural England.

Climate Change and the Environment

- We are starting work on the new Environmental & Biodiversity Plan for the District
- Later this year, we will consult on our revised Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Cost of living

- A key priority for the council is helping local people with the cost-of-living crisis. I am delighted that we have been able to retain our services, including:
 - Supporting You
 - Council tax reduction schemes
 - Social Prescribing

Coastal projects

- We are also hoping to bring forward to major costal and harbour schemes
 - Selsey Flood defence
 - Chichester Harbour Adaption Plan
- We are currently bidding for money on these from the EA and other government grant schemes.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any help. My contact details can be found at the top or alternatively, on the Chichester district council's website.

Best wishes,

Joseph Brookes-Harmer