

REPORT FROM WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL
MAY 2025

1. At the Full Council meeting on 14 May, WDC adopted a new constitution. Councils are obliged by law to have a constitution which is up to date. WDC's constitution had been updated and amended over the years, with the result that it had become very long and unwieldy, and also contradictory in places. The new constitution is clearer and more user-friendly, and it is hoped that residents will find it more straightforward to consult and to find the information that they require.

Notable changes include adjustments to the way that planning committees are organised. WDC will no longer have a North and South planning committee, but will instead have a Majors and a Minors Committee. This reflects best practice, in that the Majors Committee will have councillors who have been trained to look at larger developments (10 or more residential units) and who have the expertise to consider strategic planning applications, such as those for solar farms or battery storage. The Minors Committee will deal with applications for less than 10 residential units and all other householder applications, including those involving heritage issues.

2. Ward budgets of £10,000 will be allocated to each councillor to fund projects and initiatives which directly benefit our wards. Councillor ward budgets have been successfully used by councils across the country to support grassroots projects that may otherwise lack financial backing because they do not fall within existing grants programmes. The scheme is expected to be up and running by July, so I should be grateful if Parish Councils and Parish Meetings could spread the word amongst their residents, and encourage community groups to contact me directly if they would like to apply for funding (cllr.alison.wilson@wealden.gov.uk).
3. Full Council also approved the creation of a new fund, the Community Led Infrastructure Fund (CLIF). This new capital fund will be backed by monies collected from developers through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and is intended to target small and medium scale projects based in communities across the district. WDC is currently delivering a range of grant funding programmes and is contacted regularly with funding enquiries which do not fit within the terms and conditions of specific government grant programmes which often have strict funding criteria. The CLIF will help to bridge this gap and to fund locally led projects which meet the needs of communities. Examples of such projects include adaptations to community buildings, energy efficient measures, access improvements to outdoor spaces and installing new facilities and equipment. The CLIF will have a fund of £2M, all areas of the district will be eligible to access the CLIF and the grants awarded will be between £5,000 and £200,000 (subject to a low match funding requirement of 20%). If Parish Councils and Parish Meetings are aware of community projects which might benefit from the CLIF, please do get in touch (email address as above). Once the CLIF scheme has been set up, applications for funding will be made directly to WDC.

Alison Wilson
21 May 2025