

## **COUNCILLORS' INTRODUCTION**

The Council has for many years sought to generate as much discussion as possible about the issues posed by the continuing need to manage future development and change within the District. We have consistently acted reasonably and responsibly in the interests of the residents of the District as a whole and have established the way forward over the next few years, despite the understandable concerns of those most directly affected.

We now need to take stock of the current position and to look even further ahead in the light of the Government's approval of the South East Plan covering the period from 2006 to 2026. During the preparation of this regional plan, we fought to restrict the amount of new development which is required to be accommodated within the District and the carefully structured arguments expressed have found some favour. Nevertheless, we still face a position where there will be considerable change and development beyond our current provisions and we need to equip ourselves with the right tools to meet the challenges we face. By planning strategically to 2026 and even looking beyond that time we will be able to continue to provide our communities with a degree of certainty for a comprehensively planned future and a high quality of life for future generations by ensuring that only the most appropriate and sustainable solutions are adopted.

There are many issues which require careful consideration in order to establish the long term way forward, although inevitably there will be a focus on the development pressures and new housing development in particular. We are clearly not starting with a blank sheet given our adopted Local Development Framework and now the South East Plan, but there are many important issues on which we can still make decisions locally and on which we want to hear your views. We need to meet the challenges of accommodating the new development positively, with the minimum damage to the environmental quality of the District and the maximum benefit to the wider community, including both those living and working in the District.

We remain committed to a thorough public debate on the issues and options available at this stage. This Consultation Document sets out the results of our initial assessment process and indicates possible options for discussion. It is stressed that we have analysed a range of options and drawn some preliminary conclusions in this Consultation Document for public consultation purposes only.

We look forward to receiving your views on the content of this Consultation Document.

Cllr Robert Nye  
Leader of the Council

Cllr David Jenkins  
Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning