

Councillor Lee Castle

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February has been another productive month, marked by significant council activity and a steady stream of casework across the ward.

This month included Full Council and the annual Budget Meeting. I'm pleased that we agreed a balanced budget that protects essential frontline services while continuing to invest in key priorities for our district. With councils across the country facing financial pressures, it remains vital that we manage resources responsibly while supporting residents and planning for the future.

The Local Plan has also reached an important milestone. This plan outlines where development is expected to take place and provides clearer guidance for residents and parish councils. It will be considered at a special Full Council meeting in March before entering the next consultation phase. Following that, a Planning Inspector will review the full plan and all supporting evidence, a lengthy process likely to continue well into 2027.

The decision on the Gladman appeal has now been issued. Unfortunately, the appeal has been allowed by the Planning Inspector. Although this decision was made nationally and not by the District Council, I know many residents in Littlebourne and across the wider district will be disappointed, especially after such a long process. While the outcome is not what many hoped for, I will continue to keep residents updated as the application progresses, with all reserved matters still to be determined.

Casework has remained steady throughout the month.

- In **Ickham**, I have followed up on faulty streetlights, overgrown trees impacting pavements, and planning-related questions.
- In **Bramling**, I have raised issues around missed bin collections and helped clarify collection days.
- In the **Grove** area, I have been responding to queries about planning proposals, footpaths, and signage.
- In **Littlebourne**, I am working with officers to push for footpath clearance and maintenance to keep routes safe and accessible.
- In **Wickhambreaux**, I have been engaged in conversations about road signage, speeding concerns, and local environmental matters.
- In **Stodmarsh**, I have continued supporting residents on planning and environmental issues to ensure concerns are properly addressed.

I'm also pleased that the traffic order introducing a new 20mph limit in **Adisham** has now been formally published—an important step toward improving road safety following long-standing community concerns. Similarly, in **Bekesbourne with Patrixbourne**, the consultation phase on the proposed 20mph limit is now underway.

Alongside these focuses, I have continued to deal with day-to-day enquiries relating to housing, planning, environmental matters, and general community support.

As we move into March, I will remain committed to working closely with residents on casework and attending council and parish meetings to ensure local voices are heard and represented.