

District Councillor Report to Glastonbury Town Council – November 2020

Cllr. Jon Cousins, Mendip District Councillor for Glastonbury St. John's Ward.
Member of Standards Committee and Audit Committee.

Mendip Green Party Councillors' Response to Government White Paper on Planning Reform:

The Green Group on Mendip District Council submitted a formal response to the Planning for the Future consultation on the White Paper proposals for reform of the planning system in England. Agreeing that the planning system is over-complex, out of date, and in need of reform; that it struggles to deliver the homes that many people need and that it fails to properly value the climate, biodiversity, our soils, and food production capacity. However, we suggest the under-resourced planning system is NOT the main reason why the UK has a shortage of good quality houses.

"By making the wrong assumptions about what is actually wrong with the system, by failing to look properly at the evidence and to understand the reasons for failed delivery of housing, this white paper resorts to ideological rhetoric, plays to the gallery and takes the wrong approach to sorting out the problems".

Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy:

On Monday 9th November, Mendip's Full Council meeting discussed and approved the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy.

For some reason, an image of a 'camel' did come into mind several times over the period this strategy has been in development. There is much lacking in this document if it is indeed a strategy to deal with an emergency... However, the debate did acknowledge the shortcomings, and full marks need to go to my fellow Mendip Councillor **Tom Ronan**, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Policy and Climate Change, who has fully been involved in the process.

During the meeting I queried the inclusion of Hinkley Point C as "*the largest low carbon energy project in the UK*", a description that seriously discounts all the stages of the nuclear power cycle at which greenhouse gases are emitted... Using this as an example, I suggested that for the strategy to be robust (and taken seriously), any suggested 'technological solution' must be "*life-cycle assessed*".

Who knew discounting carbon emissions might be an Achilles' heel in this context... ?

With something about a baby and some bathwater in mind, I voted in favour of Mendip adopting the strategy.

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/climate-emergency/somerset-climate-emergency-strategy-documents/>

Section 106 Monies and the Benedict Street tennis courts:

I am delighted to say that with the agreement of my fellow Mendip Councillors, the Town Clerk and I have signed a formal 'Funding Agreement' with Mendip to spend the 'at risk' S106 monies on renovating the derelict tennis courts off Benedict Street in accordance with the S106 Deed of Variation. Works have already begun!

I attended the following Mendip meetings:

Tuesday 20th October: Risk Training as a member of the Audit Committee.

Wednesday 28th October: Audit Committee.

Monday 2nd November: attended the Cabinet meeting as an observer.

Monday 9th November: Full Council