

## **Cllr Lindsay MacDougall - Mendip District Councillor report - Oct 2021**

This month I have attended Planning Board, a zoom meeting re. Somerset buses, Scrutiny, Full Council, and Cabinet.

The Somerset buses ('Bus Back Better') meeting was called to discuss the response of the community to the National Bus Strategy consultation; Somerset County Council is due to submit their proposed Improvement Plan to feed into this national strategy by 21st October. It was presented by Peter Travis of Frome and Villages Bus Users Group and Glen Burrows, co-chair of Somerset Bus Partnership (and Bridgwater Town Councillor). The results of the consultation revealed that Somerset is bottom of the league in the country for satisfaction at 27%; 74% said they want more evening and weekend services and 49% more early morning services. It was agreed that the principal points to feed back were: linking to trains; better information (eg. timetables at bus stops); and that bus stations should be reopened.

At Scrutiny there was a presentation from Planning; 1700 dwellings and 160 applications are affected by the phosphates issue and it could be 1 - 2 years for it to be resolved. The Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) has been approved with modifications by the inspectorate, and is now due to pass through Cabinet and on to approval at Full Council. A significant modification is the removal of Local Green Space allocation which is now to be addressed in Neighbourhood Plans. While the approval of the LPP2 is welcome, the LPP2 housing allocations have more limited application, since numbers have been superseded by the 40% uplift in housing numbers recently specified by national government.

At Full Council it was reported that Mendip District Council (MDC) has joined the UK100 group in order to lobby government to make the major changes needed to address the Climate Emergency. Achievements so far include a £50K Climate & Ecological Emergency Fund launched; multi-user paths scheme, including Strawberry Line; new windows installed at MDC offices; anti-idling signs installed around the district; pilot scheme to reduce waste in the hospitality industry; discussions starting soon re. renewable energy schemes; re. trees and insulation there is much work still to be done. It will require an investment of £5 billion to insulate the whole of the UK, and we need a national retrofit programme, including training of retrofitters. The new Climate Emergency & Resilience Officer, Jacob Hall, is to produce a report on how MDC campus emissions have been reduced as a result of actions taken.

At Cabinet it was reported that solar PV is to be installed at waste depots in Taunton and Evercreech. MDC is to loan Somerset Waste Partnership the funds required for this and also a trial of electric refuse collection vehicles. Under an agenda item re. landlord enforcement, it was reported that Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) were introduced by central government in April 2018, requiring rented properties with new or renewed tenancy contracts to have a minimum energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of E. However, these regulations are changing and landlords need to make plans to upgrade their property to an EPC rating of C or above by 2025. Currently rental properties with a rating of D or E can access a financial assistance grant.

Somerset Waste Partnership report that following delays to services due to Covid issues they promise that when **required to return for missed collections** – they are now able to commit to **returning within two working days**, including recycling. This is a change from the 'back on your next scheduled collection day for recycling' message and reflects improved performance. Residents are encouraged **to report any missed collections** after 7pm on due day each time using My Waste Services at [somersetwaste.gov.uk](https://somersetwaste.gov.uk).