

## Happy New Year

Covid continues to disrupt our lives with daily number of infections over 100,000 nationally and while there does not seem to be any let up. I hope that by the time this goes to print it will be on the decline. The current chat that 'everyone will get it at some point' might be true but this does not prevent us continuing being careful to help protect vulnerable friends and relatives and our hard-pressed health service.

### Next stage for Central Winchester Regeneration

Proposals to move forward with the long term plan for the Central Winchester Regeneration area were approved at a Winchester City Council Cabinet and are being tabled at Full Council on the 12th Jan. The documentation considered includes the outcome of the 'Outline Business Case' for the project that has reviewed the viability of the proposals for the site. It also included the proposed approach for securing a development partner to work with the council to deliver the proposals.

All the best for a safe and happy 2022!  
Councillor Vicki Weston (Ind.)

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## Food and Farming

With the cost of fuel and food increasing many will be looking for best deals in the supermarkets but will also be keen to support local farmers and food producers. Squeezed by rising production and delivery costs they are now looking to the future under new regulations that could have a profound effect on the countryside that we so cherish.

At the recent Country Land and Business Association conference the Environment Secretary [George Eustice](#) outlined opportunities to enhance profitable agricultural production and increase food security, alongside delivering on environmental priorities to tackle biodiversity loss and climate change, pointing out the importance of the food industry to the Government's levelling-up agenda.

The Environment Secretary also shared further details of the [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#) – the first of the new environmental land management schemes – which will be rolled out next year. Crucially, farmers will be free to choose the elements of the scheme that work for them. Farmers will receive payment for taking actions which generate environmental benefits, such as improving grasslands or soils.

With nearly 1,000 farmers signed up to the pilot, the new scheme will now be rolled out to farmers who farm more than 5 hectares of land and are eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme next year. This is an interesting debate on how livelihoods of many in our community could be impacted by the changes.

Will taking land out of food production help the Government's target on nature and climate? Should Government be looking at the planning system and preventing important smaller plots of land in the countryside with great biodiversity and importance to nature and protected species from being developed? Should the Government be strengthening enforcement powers for local authorities to help protect not just our very special part of the UK?

Food for thought, but once change has happened it can seldom be undone and biodiversity will have been lost. If you have views on these subjects, negative or positive, please get in touch with your local representatives, or your MP. We are here to help!

## Small Grants – Applications Open

*This scheme aims to make small grants easily available to local voluntary and community groups. Grants are quick and easy to apply for, and we will offer you advice whenever you need it. The grants of up to £500 are available for one-off pieces of expenditure if on projects, equipment and other items which will help your organisation to do more, to reach more people, to provide better services or to try something different. We are encouraging organisations to apply for Coronavirus (COVID-19) related activities which support our themes (dealing with peoples and communities needs and striving for positive change). Items of expenditure for example could be:*

- *Trailing a different way of working during these socially distanced times*
- *Buying different or updated technology*
- *Increasing or updating your resources*
- *Improving digital connectivity to enhance service user engagement*
- *Activities to increase your support to vulnerable individuals*
- *Creating a COVID safe environment in which to deliver your service*
- *Provision of equipment including Personal protective equipment (PPE)*

*Should your application be eligible and suitable for funding we would like you to attend a virtual panel meeting in order for us to have a brief discussion with regards to your application. You will be advised within seven days of your meeting if your organisation will receive the funding you requested. Small Grant Panel Meetings will be held on a 6 week rolling basis via MS Teams.*