

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018

## **County Hall passes Lib Dem motion to keep fracking decisions local**

### **Motion criticising plans to take decision-making away from local communities receives cross-party support at West Sussex County Council**

A Liberal Democrat motion opposing plans that would allow central government to override local objections to drilling for shale gas, has been passed by West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The motion, proposed by Kirsty Lord, Liberal Democrat County Councillor for Hassocks and Burgess Hill South, calls for decision-making on potential fracking to remain with local authorities like WSCC.

It comes in response to a consultation by central government looking at granting permission for ‘non-hydraulic shale gas exploration’ through ‘permitted development rights’. This mechanism would ordinarily be used by householders for small changes to their homes, and for permission for shale gas production to be decided by civil servants rather than local councillors. The potential changes to planning regulations would leave residents with much less of a say in applications to explore for oil and gas, and decision-making would be taken away from local authorities.

Cllr Lord’s motion was passed with strong cross-party support, with no councillors voting against it and only two abstentions.

Kirsty Lord said: “The overwhelming support for this motion sends a strong message to central government that decisions on drilling must not be taken away from local communities. The proposals from central government are a cynical attempt to override local objections to fossil fuel exploration in places like Balcombe and Broadford Bridge.

“Taking decision-making away from local councillors would make it much harder for residents to voice their concerns about proposed fracking and other types of drilling and to hold councillors to account for their decisions. Liberal Democrats have long championed local democracy and accountability. These proposals would severely undermine these principles on an issue where local opinion should be central to decision-making.

“I am delighted that my motion received such strong cross-party support. We are adding our voices to a growing chorus of local authorities and MPs across the country, telling central government to think again.”

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**ENDS**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

**Councillor Kirsty Lord, West Sussex County Councillor for Hassocks and Burgess Hill South:**  
Mobile – 07952 643623, Email – [kirsty\\_lord@btinternet.com](mailto:kirsty_lord@btinternet.com)

**NOTES TO EDITOR:**

1. The government consultations “Permitted development for shale gas exploration” and “Inclusion of shale gas production projects in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime” close on 25th October 2018.
2. The text of motion 7c that was passed by West Sussex County Council on 19th October 2018 can be found on page 7 at: <https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b5856/Item%207%20-%20Proposed%20amendments%20to%20motions%2019th-Oct-2018%2010.30%20County%20Council.pdf?T=9>.
3. Kirsty Lord has been the county councillor for Hassocks & Burgess Hill South since May 2017