NUSRAT GHANI MP
Member of Parliament for Sussex Weald

Madam Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons
Chairman of Ways and Means
House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Cllr James Partridge
Cllr Rachel Millward
Leader and Deputy Leader of Wealden District Council
Council Offices
Vicarage Lane
Hailsham
BN27 2AX

19 November 2025

Dear Cllr Rachel Millward and Cllr James Partridge,

Thank you for your prompt letter dated 14th November, which sadly failed to answer the basic questions we raised to help us and our constituents see what Wealden District Council has been doing to lead the legal challenge against the Home Office. Taking legal action was the clear statement of intent made by Cllr James Partridge with Cllr Rachel Millward at the public meeting hosted and chaired by Nusrat Ghani MP on Monday 10th November.

We had hoped that Wealden District Council leadership would be true to their word, but alas, not a single item of evidence has been shared to show any legal action has or will definitely take place. What's more your letter states:

"*As you know, we are seeking legal advice from two KCs – specialising in public administration and planning law - on potential challenges of the proposals, however we are sure that you will agree that this should be done for the right reasons with a prospect of success, not running to the court without grounds and wasting public money.*"

This is a joke, as it clearly reflects that your decision to take legal action will be political, as you are yet to be convinced that the right reasons exist.

A - We and your constituents are fed up with this gaslighting – are you or aren't you going to take legal action?

B - At the public meeting organised by Crowborough Town Mayor, Cllr James Partridge admitted that he couldn't explain nor understand your own KCs advice. This is beyond parody and we and our constituents have zero confidence that you have the skills, willingness or even interest in pursuing the Home Office on behalf of Wealden. Can you confirm that you have read and understood your KCs advice and will share that with key stakeholders – when and where will this happen?

We worked on our technical letter to you with guidance and shared legal experiences of other Councils fighting the Home Office, saving you time and helping you hone your case. It sets out multiple planning challenges you can use against the Home Office, opportunities that exist and have been deployed by other councils in similar situations. We have shared details of those councils with your officials and have helped secure a meeting with West Lindsey District Council, basically stepping in and doing the jobs you have been elected to do.

C - Have you even attended those meetings to improve your lack of knowledge?

Instead of dismissing our letter, you should be using it to strengthen your legal case and challenge the Home Office over its process and perceived legal powers. You can thank us later.

D - As for your 'wasting public money' point, you allocated £1.2m to Sussex Wildlife Trust, £450k to celebrate Winnie the Pooh and £450k per year for District Councillors to donate to local charities in line with your Council strategy. Can you confirm these are choices you have made on public money expenditure?

You make disingenuous statements that you want us to 'work together'. How do we work with you when you haven't done anything, won't meet in public, or share information.

We aren't going to join you in sitting on your collective hands, letting the clock run down.

We will work with you, when you actually evidence you will do all in your power to legally challenge the Home Office. A letter before action, for example.

Until then, we will continue to do what we can with our constituents and local stakeholders to gather as much information to challenge the Home Office and put pressure on you as the lead and planning authority to actually take legal action.

E - If you change your mind, do as our letter asks and set up a weekly/daily working group which meets in public and works towards challenging the Home Office, not working with them.

In your letter to us ref points 7 and 10 (below) are a fabrication and need to be formally corrected, unless you can share when and where you have held any public meetings where we and the public had the opportunity to question you, Crowborough Councillors and Officers.

Nusrat Ghani MP and the Crowborough Town Mayor (to question the Home Office) have held public meetings, and the council have held a scrutiny meeting (where the Liberal Democrat and Green Leadership were forced to address the issue). We trust you will correct the record and not spin misinformation.

7. "We do not have a planning application and so cannot consult with any group in that way. Notwithstanding this, outside the planning system we have held public meetings and sought to give all sectors of our community an opportunity to raise their concerns with the Home Office. In addition, as you know, the Council has a very strong track record of protecting the Forest in our decision making and this would be a key consideration, should a planning application be made to the Council."

10. "Not applicable at this stage as no such application has been received by the Council. Outside the planning system we have held public meetings and sought to give all sectors of our community an opportunity to raise their concerns with the Home Office."

You end with the following:
"*Moving forward, we are keen to prioritise working with our partners and engaging with our community, to ensure that the Home Office reconsider their plans, not exchanging long letters with you*."

This is just dither and delay. We urge you to just move in some direction, any direction and we will applaud you. To date you have held one meeting with stakeholders on Friday 7th November, where you excluded us MPs and local representatives, and we are informed by stakeholders present, that they are still awaiting for minutes from you. As if we have all the time in the world.

As for exchanging long letters, welcome to the real world of governing, accountability and transparency. Please respond to points A to E by Friday 21st November.

We look forward to an update on the all the outstanding points you failed to answer. You can always get the answers from the Home Office, and if they don't share them, use your legal powers to access the answers. We hope that helps improve your knowledge of the powers you have.

On behalf of Wealden and Crowborough we ask you to step up, get a grip of the situation and not waste any more time playing politics. Roll your sleeves up, and start working with the rest of us in legally challenging the Home Office.

Yours sincerely,

Nusrat Ghani MP - Sussex Weald
Mims Davies MP - East Grinstead and Uckfield
Dr Kieran Mullan MP - Bexhill and Battle

Copied to:
Crowborough Town Mayor Cllr Natalie Whittle
Cllr Ian Tysh
Cllr Alison Arthur
Cllr Jane Clark
Cllr Martyn Everitt
Cllr Andrew Wilson
Cllr Gareth Owen-Williams