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Happy Christmas and a very happy New Year to all residents

I do hope everyone has a peaceful and relaxing Christmas after the stresses and strains of this year. Lets hope that 2021 brings us better news and times than 2020. I wish all residents a very happy and healthy new year. As my old boss used to say, if you've got your health you are rich!

Christmas Recycling

What Christmas recycling can go in your green box?

- Plain wrapping paper and Christmas cards (Nothing with any glitter on it).
- Textiles in a plastic bag, to keep them dry. EDDC works with The Salvation Army which reuses the items - they need to be in a good enough condition that you would buy them from a charity shop for us to be able to reuse them.
- Batteries, placed in a small clear bag, and small electrical items that fit inside your green box with the lid on – like hairdryers or kettles.

What should be put in your black wheelie bins?

- Wrapping Paper or Christmas cards with glitter, foil or plastic – they will be used to generate electricity. Putting these out for recycling could contaminate a whole lorry load of paper or cardboard!
- Plastic film – Unfortunately EDDC are unable to recycle plastic film products such as film wrappers, plastic bags, crisp packets, cling film, polythene and pill casing.
- Polystyrene – There is always lots of polystyrene around at Christmas in packaging. Pop it in your black bin and help EDDC power more homes.

What about Christmas trees?

You can recycle your real Christmas tree in your [green waste bin](#) (no branches thicker than 100mm) or you can take them here:

- Axminster - West Street car park – Monday, January 4 - 12:30pm to 2.30pm.
- Broadclyst - Sports Pavilion car park – Tuesday, January 5 - 12:30pm to 2.30pm.

- Budleigh Salterton - Lime Kiln car park - Tuesday, January 5 - 8.30am to 11.30am.
- Cranbrook - The Cranberry Farm – Wednesday, January 6 - 8.30am to 11.30am.
- Exmouth - Imperial Road car park – Monday, January 4 - 8.30am to 2pm.
- Honiton - Lace Walk car park – Tuesday, January 5 - 8.30am to 11.30am.
- Ottery St Mary - Land of Canaan car park – Tuesday, Jan 5, 12.30pm to 2.30pm.
- Seaton - Jurassic car park – Monday, January 4, 8.30am to 11.30am.
- Sidmouth - Manor Road car park – Wednesday, January 6 - 8.30am to 12pm.

**Your trees will be composted and used as a natural fertiliser by local farms or in our parks.
Don't forget about the food:**

- All your food, cooked or uncooked, dog and cat food and tea bags and coffee grounds, can be placed in a single-use plastic bag (whether it is a bread bag, cereal box liner or carrier bag) and then put in your food caddy.

Extra recycling can still be collected if you fill up your recycling box or sack!

Recycling champions who fill up their recycling containers can put the extras in a box or bag next to your usual recycling containers. Please remember to separate extra materials as you do with your normal sack and box.

For more information on when your collections are over the holiday period visit EDDC's website at eastdevon.gov.uk or by downloading the app.

Don't forget you can now pick up a bargain at Devon recycling centres re-use shops which are now selling electrical goods, including vacuum cleaners, lamps and Flat screen TVs.

The goods are being sold within the re-sale shops at Pinbrook Recycling Centre in Exeter and Knowle Hill Recycling Centre in Exmouth, thanks to a scheme being run by SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd and Devon County Council.

Visit www.devonnewscentre.info/pick-up-a-bargain-five-recycling-centres-now-selling-electrical-goods for more information.

East Devon recycles more than most other districts in the UK, and that is down to residents' diligence, so thank you, and please continue recycling.

NB – EDDC informed councillors just this week that there may be a delay to recycling collections (we have already seen this in Lower Way, Harpford) due to the number of staff off work due to CV-19. I hope residents can be patient with the service at this time, frustrating though it is.

Government u-turn on House numbers

The Government algorithm proposed in their recent White Paper and consultation made absolutely no sense at all. There was a big outcry about the proposed numbers and changes not least from local councillors, residents, the Campaign to Protect Rural England and even Conservative MPs.

The government have now published their response to their consultation on changes to the standard method for calculating housing need that EDDC responded to earlier in the year. You will recall that the new methodology would have led to a housing need of 1614 homes per year. The

details of the response are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

The key headlines are that:

- The government is not going to proceed with the new methodology and will continue with the existing methodology other than in greater London and the other 19 most populated areas where a 35% increase over existing numbers will be applied.
- In the case of East Devon this means that our housing need under the standard method is 928 homes per year and will not now increase to 1614.

This is excellent news for the district and the countryside. The proposed numbers are quite high enough.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England said:

“You may have heard of their so-called ‘mutant algorithm’ that would have caused needless loss of our precious green spaces by unnecessarily ramping up housing targets in rural areas.

We’re happy to say that after some very effective campaigning **the government has now ditched this algorithm in favour of one that focuses more on building the homes we need in cities and on previously used land.**

Building more affordable homes on so-called ‘brownfield’ land, rather than our open countryside, is something we’ve been calling for.

Although this is a cause for celebration, the problems with the government’s damaging planning proposals run much deeper than the housing algorithm itself.

We need a complete reboot to put people and nature at the heart of a new planning system. We will keep campaigning to achieve this vision”.

Budget constraints for EDDC for the coming few years

At Full Council in December we received a report from the Finance Officer. Each year councils have to show they can produce a ‘balanced budget’ and project this forward into a medium and long term financial plan. Since 2010, funding from central government has reduced by 60p in the pound. At the moment it is difficult to predict what the government is going to do next in terms of funding but despite this a ‘balanced budget’ must be produced and approved at this time of year with a medium long term plan also predicted.

At the time of writing EDDC has 3 main forms of income, Business rates, the New Homes Bonus and income raised from its own fees and charges (car parking and Home Safeguard Alarm Services for example. Council house income has a separate budget of its own). The information released by the government on 23rd November confirmed that the new homes bonus will cease in 2022/23 thus reducing the council’s income by £1.5M. It was estimated that this year EDDC would earn £1.5M in business rates but mainly due to the expansion of major large businesses on the growth area in the outskirts of Exeter, EDDC exceeded this income and earned £2M which they are allowed to keep.

Although many small businesses have struggled and either have or will go to the wall, the bulk of business rates for EDDC comes from larger businesses rather than these small businesses. But the government has now decided they will rebase Business Rates and reduce EDDC's financial growth, so in one fell swoop the council will be £3M down for its 2022/2023 budget from the loss of the New Homes Bonus and Business Rates. EDDC have decided to put £2M into a reserve fund to help ease them over the present circumstances while we await to see what the government will announce next in terms of support for councils.

In the year 2021/22 the council needs to save an additional £694,000 to be able to show a balanced budget. At the same time EDDC are expected to increase their outlay for example to 'retro fit' council properties to bring them up to current eco-friendly standards, as you can imagine this is not cheap and I imagine it is often more complicated to retro-fit than to eco-fit from scratch. I wonder if I am the only sceptic at some level on retro fitting because as fast as one standard is set, another standard is brought in to supersede it. Examples of this would be the depth of loft insulation which changes frequently, the depth of double glazed and triple glazed windows. If we all followed these standards slavishly, I wonder if the 'eco' cost of manufacture and waste would not outweigh the benefits.

How can EDDC balance their budget in subsequent years:

- 1) Cut services – this is obviously not desirable.
- 2) Cut staff – again not ideal as the workload increases year on year, for example this year there has been a massive rise in Universal credit applications, schemes to support CV-19, planning applications continue and grow, the New Local Plan must be written, changing legislation around council housing provision and services.
- 3) Raise Car Parking Charges – It is helpful to look to what other councils are doing and see what impact that has or has had. In Dorset (Lyme Regis and Lyme Bay) the council agreed that they would raise car parking charges from early next year, the pay period will run from 8.00 am to 8.00 pm and they will increase the charge from £2.00 all day to £4.00 all day. EDDC owns and manages 57 public car parks. 45 of these are pay and display. From 1st November to 31 March the winter parking rate is £2.00 to be able to park all day to encourage local shoppers. Since 2010 the £1.00 per hour parking rate has been in place outside of that area.

Most car parks fall into the following categories

- a) Coastal long stay (maximum £6.00 for 24 hours)
- b) Inland long stay (maximum £3.00 for 24 hours)
- c) Short stay (maximum £3.00 for 4 hours)

A recent Car Parking TAFF recommended that:

- a) In prime location car parks the rate should rise from £1.00 per hour to £1.20 from April 2021.
- b) It also recommended that annual parking permits be increased to £120 per annum for a single town up to a maximum of £240.00 per year to cover all towns in East Devon AND to provide a 'monthly payment scheme' of £10.00 per month for those who would find it difficult to fund the £120.00 upfront.

The above decision will go to Full Council for a vote in January.

I think the vote on offer at Full Council will be:

- a) Support the increase
- b) Reject the increase
- c) Postpone the increase until 2022 amid concerns that this rise in charges will penalise business just as they are trying to build back up post covid-19. I am currently reserving judgement on this. I think the annual permit is good value, especially with the monthly payment scheme and particularly for workers who have to pay for parking for work. With regard to raising the charges from £1.00 per hour to £1.20 per hour, I wonder if raising a pint of beer, a coffee or a sandwich by 20p would deter buyers from buying them? I am just not sure at the moment which way I will vote on that for the reasons given above and below.

The suggested rise of 20p per hour in Category 1 car parks plus the rise in permits could boost the council's income by approximately £300,000 per year, unless it puts shoppers off coming to park there, in which case it is self-defeating.

At subsequent Car Parking TAFF meetings in January there will be discussion around whether free car parks will be offered to town and parish councils to run, so that they take on the cost for the benefit of their community. (It is alleged that the cost to EDDC for 'running' the Newton Poppleford free car park is £4,385.00 per annum including business rates which seems rather fanciful to me). The TAFF will also look at provision of parking for Camper vans, both for residents and for touring vans. I think EDDC are missing a trick by not making provision for these especially in the seaside towns. The TAFF will naturally look at the provision of electric charging points as a means of raising income we move towards the carbon neutral target.

- 4) EDDC could potentially earn another £50,000 by providing private customers with the Home Safeguard Service pendants.
- 5) There is the potential to save another £70,000 from Street Scene policies such as 'rewilding'. I know this receives mixed reviews. It is very important that road splays are kept clear and well managed for road safety reasons. However, 'rewilding' does support wildlife. Strimming and spraying are indiscriminate in their destruction. It would be good where possible if communities could help with maintaining their local areas to keep them looking tidy.

I hope this helps to explain some of the difficult financial decisions the council has to make.

Conduct of Councillors at EDDC Council Meetings - Scrutiny

The introduction of virtual meetings has meant more councillors than ever are 'attending' council meetings. On the one hand this is a very good thing. However, I finally reached breaking point at an evening Scrutiny meeting last week. Some councillors, comfortable viewing from their own homes, waste hours of time in meetings 'posturing' with long rambling speeches and convoluted questions that are completely inappropriate. Some shout out spurious interruptions like small children. Then, when they get peckish around their evening meal time, they either treat the rest of us to the sight of them scoffing their gammon and chips brought by their doting partners, or turn off their screens, thus maintaining a 'presence' without necessarily actively listening or participating. They then eventually leave the meeting once they are bored or are ready for bed, leaving the poor officers who are running the meetings and the live streaming, sitting in the isolated and lonely offices in Honiton late into the evenings and councillors on the particular committee who are voting on the matters of the day to carry on with meetings that can run on for 3 or 4 hours due to the timewasters.

Having reached the end of my tether with all this, I felt it needed saying how unprofessional and out of touch some councillors are with the time constraints of the real world and that they should be ashamed of themselves, not least for their lack of consideration to others. I expressed my views and made a recommendation that councillors attend training on asking appropriate and effective questions to keep a meeting moving forward at a decent pace. No virtual meetings should go on for longer than two hours as concentration is difficult to maintain. How these councillors ever expect the public to engage more with the councils work or watch meetings that can last for 4 hours is a mystery. To my surprise, one regular guilty party wrote an email to all other councillors apologising for his behaviour. Progress indeed! Of course this is also a matter of Chairing meetings effectively so timewasters get the message.

Four Elms Hill

Work is finally scheduled for Four elms Hill to be shut overnight from 11-23 January 2021 to reduce the speed limit from 60 mph to 40 mph and unbroken double white lines up the entire hill. Excess speed has been shown to be a contributing factor in 50% of collisions that take place on the hill. Hopefully drivers will show some responsibility and respect these new restrictions. This work is long awaited and there has been much reluctance and procrastination along the way on the part of some at Devon County Council but the pressure and persistence from the County, District and Parish Councillors looks to finally be having an effect.

Cranbrook

It is hard to believe that despite developing this town from scratch with the ethos that this should be a 'healthy town' with its own town centre, employment provision, easy public transport links and so on, it should still remain without the long promised town centre and amenities. The previous administrations policy was that the developers would pay for this through S106 provision and CIL payments, not to mention attracting private investment but that has proved to be a totally flawed theory (these are exactly the concerns some of us raised about GESP, much promised with nothing delivered). The new administration in place since May 2020 is now pushing to take this out of the hands of developers to ensure that proper provision is made. This is causing controversy in Cranbrook as some see it a backwards step given what the developers have and are continuing to promise. I can't quite understand that view given how long the delays have been so far and I am surprised that there is resistance to this new approach given the failure of the old one.

LED

EDDC is being asked to ensure the LED leisure facilities remain available for the health and well being of East Devon residents. LED is a charitable trust which lost around £1M in turnover for every month it had to close during lockdown and has had to draw on its reserves. The majority of the 600 staff were furloughed. It is estimated that the business boosts the local economy by around £5M every year through employment and work given to local suppliers. EDDC Cabinet agreed to pay LED an additional subsidy of £732,275 to cover its net losses until September 2020. Cabinet agreed to subsidise LED's further losses from October to March 2021 with a maximum payment of no more than £1339.00 in the current financial year. EDDC is also setting up an LED Monitoring Forum which will meet monthly to review LED's performance both operationally and financially. The government announced in October that it has set aside £100M to support leisure centres and the council and LED hope to make a joint bid for funding although this is unlikely to cover the full losses to date. The major costs for LED are things like running of swimming pools which are extremely costly and some

are more than overdue for a revamp. They also provide ‘passports to fitness’ in conjunction with GPS, public tennis courts and other community benefits that private gyms cannot offer.

Sidmouth and East Beach flood scheme (EDDC press release text)

Discussions by group on ‘splash barrier’

Significant steps to deliver a scheme to protect both the East Cliffs and Sidmouth from flooding and cliff erosion were discussed at a virtual meeting of the Sidmouth and East Beach Management Plan Steering Group held earlier this month (December).

East Devon’s Engineer Tom Buxton Smith provided the steering group with an update and progress of the proposed scheme. A project of this scale has to follow stringent tests and scrutiny by Environment Agency engineers and specialists before the funding can be guaranteed. This project review work is envisaged to be completed by March 2021.

Once the funding is guaranteed, the district council will appoint a Beach Management Plan (BMP) Project Manager to oversee the project, with a tender process for design consultants and contractors. The council would look to go through the planning process in late 2021/early 2022 for construction later in 2022.

A key element of the proposals is what is referred to as a ‘splash barrier’ on Sidmouth Esplanade. The group recognised that a plain concrete wall a metre high as a splash barrier would not be supported by the residents nor the consultees at the planning application stage and various solutions are under further investigation.

During the design stage, further work will be carried out to investigate the need for a splash wall, its height in relation to the location on the Esplanade and its distance from the existing sea wall.

Variations are being investigated to reduce the height of a splash barrier, for example:

- A “managed adaptive approach” where a wall foundations are built but only to a minimal height in the first instance with further additions added in future years when required
- A full height barrier built that is stone-clad and topped by a glass screen with flood barrier gates at intervals
- A rising barrier that will come up from a small wall, similar to the existing splash wall, which will be raised by water pressure
- A bench seat which turns into a splash barrier by lifting the bench top into the vertical position
- A top up panel barrier that can be placed on a new splash wall and similar in height to the existing wall

Aside from developing alternatives to a solid concrete splash defence, the engineers are investigating other cost effective and innovative options for maintaining a healthy design beach to leave Sidmouth better protected into the future.

Proposals by the Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce requiring the group to re-evaluate further offshore islands and other alternative solutions were discussed. However, it was agreed to proceed

with the current scheme so as not to delay any progress. At the same time the group agreed to continually evaluate any further affordable solutions and adjust the scheme at the final design stage as appropriate.

The group discussed the recently published coastal analysis study (CCMA) from the University of Plymouth about the future erosion rates along the coast between Sidmouth and Lyme Regis. The study, although useful for making future planning choices, ultimately has no effect on the BMP, as it does not unlock any further funding.

Currently, the Environment Agency do not recognise the tool to justify further funding which has been produced from the study and forecasts erosion rates in the future. A bespoke local study has previously been completed. The CCMA's publication does, however, focus minds to deliver the BMP scheme sooner rather than later.

At the steering group's previous meeting in October, it was agreed to review the project aims and objectives and its terms of reference.

Chair Cllr Geoff Jung, who is the district council's portfolio holder for coast, country and environment, suggested that a subgroup review both items, in the light of the new administration's 'open and transparent' policy for all meetings. This was considered appropriate.

The proposals from the subgroup were all agreed along with the changes to representatives who are invited to attend along with a recommendation to rename the group as an "advisory group." Subject to the adoption by the council, the future meetings will be open to the public.

The next virtual meeting of the Sidmouth and East Beach Management Plan Steering Group will be held in early February.

Harpford Village Hall Calendar Sales

The Committee are indebted to Nick Howe for the magnificent calendar he produced from his own photographs of wildlife taken during lockdown. Profits from the sale of the calendars produced a magnificent profit of £633.00. Many thanks indeed Nick.

Lake across the road in near the old Vicarage, Tipton St John.

This area of flooding has been reported to DCC around 14th December 2020. This is a recurring problem which DCC seemed to address by raising the height of the road. It did not address the enormous drop on each side for any motorist unfortunate enough to stray off the highway.

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