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# Big thanks!

Firstly thank you to those who voted for me in the May 2019 election, and to everyone who wrote messages of good luck and supported me by hosting boards, posting out leaflets, talking to me on the doorstep and manning the village hall on election day. Also thanks to Cllr Burhop of the parish council who sealed the ballot boxes for me on election night and attended the count at Exmouth on Friday. Apparently the count was running 3 hours behind by Friday afternoon, I think due to requests for recounts in earlier wards in the day; a number of long standing Councillors were not voted back in. The result was 710 votes for me and 114 votes for David Atkins. The turnout was 44.98% (I think the third highest percentage vote in the district, thank you again) and the number of ‘spoilt’ votes was 4. Things were even more disrupted on the Saturday when it turned out that Exmouth Town Hall had been booked for a wedding, so election counts had to be halted and the space cleared while the ceremony went ahead! It all then resumed after the wedding.

# New Parish Council

I have for the time being stepped down from the parish council to concentrate on EDDC matters but will continue to attend PC meetings and fully support their work. The last membership of the parish council worked very well but I would like to thank in particular Hazel Jeffrey for being such an amazing Chairman of the parish council for the last 4 years. Hazel worked tirelessly for hours behind the scenes, never shying away from difficult matters, nor picking and choosing what she did or didn’t do. She also had a very good focus on governance and ensured that the parish council complied with its legal requirements AND along with our ‘new clerk’ Paul Hayward, unravelled the mass of jumbled paperwork that had languished for years in the filing system of our former clerk. This ensured that in future the parish council will be aware of historic decisions that brought the parish council to where they are today in terms of land ownership, trusts, assets, and so on. Our Clerk Paul Hayward too spent many hours way over and above his contract in sorting out this paperwork and ensuring that our website is improved and up-to-date, that all documents are available electronically, accounts are in tiptop shape and in a format readable for councillors, residents and auditors.

I am sure the new parish council will continue this; there are a number of experienced parish councillors staying on which will be very helpful for new and possibly co-opted parish councillors. There are still vacancies if anyone is interested.

# Postal vote opening

I had attended postal vote opening the Monday prior to the election. Its an interesting procedure. Each postal vote is scanned to check if the signature on the postal vote letter matches the signature held on records at EDDC. Then the date of birth is checked against the date of birth on record. A surprising number of signatures don’t match (in some cases the names were completely different) or the date of birth is completely different to that held on file for that person, for example I saw cases where the date of birth clearly had the date that the person completed the form rather than their date of birth. The scanner picks this up and highlights the discrepancy in red. Then the nominated postal vote agent for that particular ward (I was observing a number of wards on behalf of EDA candidates) is called over whilst officers point out the discrepancy and it has to be agreed that the vote is ‘spoilt’ and cannot be counted.

# New EDDC council political party breakdown

The current make up of East Devon District councillors is:

20 – independent

11 - independent East Devon Alliance

19 – Conservative

8 – Liberal Democrats

2 – Green

So as things stand no single party has overall control – quite a turn up. For new and existing councillors there is now a 3 month period of ‘induction sessions’, and committee memberships have to be agreed. This will be quite different to previous years where the conservative party had overall control of all of these committees. There are many more councillors of working age now so quite how the daytime meetings will pan out remains to be seen. The first Full Council meeting is on Wednesday 22nd May 2019 when all positions on committees and lead roles will be agreed.

# New I-Pads

It had been decided by EDDC, although I am not quite sure how or when, that each new councillor must now use an EDDC I-pad complete with sturdy protective cover. EDDC emails can only be accessed via this I-pad, whereas previously we could have emails coming into our mobile phones. Also each councillor was given a slot to receive both the email and training on the device. This slot was apparently non-negotiable. My slot was Thursday 9th May at 2.30 pm, entirely incompatible with work commitments. Therefore I was unable to access my EDDC emails until Tuesday afternoon 14th May when I could get into Honiton, having negotiated a new training slot... Obviously a good number of emails had come in between 2nd May and 14th May so apologies to anyway who I appear to have ignored, it will take me a while to catch up. At the time of writing the I-pads do not have our historic emails available, which is very inconvenient. There are some benefits to the system but there have been a number of grumbles about this from various quarters. Personally I will not be taking an expensive I-Pad which weighs just over 1 Kg (2lb 4 oz) and roughly the dimensions of an A4 sheet of paper, though much thicker, out and about with me to work (so again there may be further delays to responding to emails as they will not be seen until the end of the working day. Rather than making our work more efficient, to date it has hampered productivity.

At the second Induction evening of 15th May the Chief Executive gave us an overview of planning issues in the area. However, an EDA councillor pointed out he had omitted to mention that it would be breaking news on 16th May that the government had approved a scheme by Exeter, Teignmouth and EDDC to build 20,000 more houses. The CE brushed over this and said he would be talking about this at other planning training in two weeks time. It would seem only reasonable to me to inform councillors of such a massive piece of breaking news such as this, but it seems that so far the attitude that councillors are best kept in the dark until the deal is done continues.

# European Elections

I received my European election voting card on 15th May with helpful instructions to say if I wished to register for a postal vote, the closing date was 8th May and if I wished to register for a proxy vote the closing date was 15th May at 5.00 pm. I got home around 5.15 pm so neither of those options was open to me.

Complaints about recycling and parking of commercial vehicles in residential roads

I have already received a number of complaints since the election from residents firstly about the way recycling receptacles are left and mess left on the road on refuse collection days and complaints about commercial vehicles parking in residential streets and making entering and exiting either side roads or private drives a problem.

# Consultation re Double Yellow Lines

A consultation is due at long last from DCC to put double yellow lines at the entrance to Millmoor Lane, Capper Close, Green Bank (entrance to the garages) and Otter Reach. The parish council supported these proposals but we also thought of a number of other roads that need this same treatment (Back Lane, extension of existing lines in Meadow Drive?). DCC tend to prefer to organise this sort of work in groups of roads rather than one by one (owing to the time it takes to get the entire process agreed which is painstakingly slow). If you can think of other areas that need parking managed please contact either me or the parish council so we can consider these and put a proposal forward to DCC. DCC Cllr Claire Wright has supported us with this.

# Sidford Industrial Estate

I have submitted my objection to the planning Inspectorate about the Sidford Industrial Estate (closing date 17th May 2019), not least on increase of traffic through Newton Poppleford and the affect of this on air quality.

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