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Registering with Devon Home Choice.

Further to a comment I made in the parish magazine about hoping that the new affordable housing in Newton Poppleford will actually go to local people, I have been contacted about with questions about exactly how to do that.

Rental

If you would like to register to rent an ‘affordable home’ in Newton Poppleford or indeed anywhere in Devon you can use this link to read about Devon Homes Choice. The Devon Homes Choice register actually covers the whole of Devon, not just Newton Poppleford specifically.

https://www.devonhomechoice.com/sites/default/files/DHC/dhc_user_guide_sept_18_web_and_email_version.pdf

Here is the link if you wish to register: <https://www.devonhomechoice.com/>

You will be categorised into a band for housing need:

The five priority bands are:

Band A – Emergency Housing Need Your application will only be placed in this band if your need for housing is assessed as so exceptional that you must take priority over all other applicants. For example:

- *you have an urgent health or wellbeing need*
- *your home is in a state of emergency disrepair*
- *you need to move to escape violence or the threat of violence, harassment or a traumatic event Substantial evidence must exist to award this priority.*

(NB it is highly unlikely you will be in this category – VR)

Band B – High Housing Need Your application will be placed in this band if:

- *a Devon council has accepted that you are statutorily homeless and it is not considered possible and appropriate for you to find private rented accommodation*
- *a Devon council assesses that it will not be possible and appropriate for you to find private rented accommodation, you are subject to the Prevention or Relief duty of the Homelessness Reduction Act, and you are taking the actions set out in your Personalised Plan*
- *you are severely overcrowded*
- *you are a tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner landlord and want to move to a smaller home*
- *you have a high health or wellbeing need*
- *your home is in a state of high disrepair*
- *you are ready to move on from supported housing*

Band C – Medium Housing Need Your application will be placed in this band if:

- *you are overcrowded and lack 1 bedroom*
- *you have been assessed as having a medium health or wellbeing need*
- *you live on, or above the 4th floor with children under 8*
- *you have served in the armed forces and are assessed to be in urgent housing need*
- *you need to need to move for work, where you would otherwise have to travel more than 30 miles (each way) from home to work*

Band D – Low Housing Need Your application will be placed in this band if:

- *a Devon council has accepted that you are statutorily homeless but it is considered possible and appropriate for you to find private rented accommodation*
- *you have no permanent home. For example you have been assessed as non priority or intentionally homeless by a Devon local authority, or are ‘sofa surfing’*
- *you have been assessed as having a low health or wellbeing need*
- *you share facilities, such as a toilet, bath, shower or kitchen (for example you are living with your parents)*
 - *you meet a local priority agreed by the local authority managing your application*
 - *you have a housing need but have no local connection to Devon*
 - *you have been assessed as having deliberately worsened your circumstances*

Band E – No Housing Need

From your application it has been assessed that you are adequately housed.

Once you register you will receive a letter telling you what category you come into and you can then ‘bid’ for properties via Devon Homes Choice.

Shared ownership purchases to buy or buy in partnership

- 1) You MUST register with Help to Buy South West

<https://www.helptobuysw.org.uk/>

Live West Homes are the housing association who will be working on the housing allocation (formerly Devon and Cornwall Housing and then formerly Liberty).

- 2) **Call Live West and speak to Sarah 01752 856037** to register that you are particularly interested in the **Newton Poppleford** development. They will send out details, information and an application form in advance of the homes being officially released.

You will need to be getting your supporting evidence in place such as:

- Credit report
 - Mortgage in principle agreement etc
- 3) Once the houses are released for sale (about 4 months before they are ready) Live West will contact you and tell you to apply officially for a home.
 - 4) You then send in your application together with your supporting evidence and houses will be allocated on a 'first come first served basis'

So it is really important to have all your paperwork ready to go with this process.

But don't be put off!! If you would like to be considered for an affordable home either to rent or buy then please do register!

Accidents in Newton Poppleford

Residents contacted me in response to my comments last month about road traffic accidents in the village. It was suggested that a further VAS sign is needed at the western end of the village as there have been so many accidents near the bridge and because the bus stops are placed in such hazardous places. With regard to accidents at the Halfway Inn our District Councillor Claire Wright asked DCC if there were plans to further improve this junction. Their response was that the junction is safe and they will not support any further improvements there. Police are only required to report serious personal injury requiring hospital treatment and anything less is of no interest to DCC (and we have the exact same issue on Four Elms Hill). The parish council were not happy with this response and have written to other parish councils in the area to gauge their view on the Halfway Inn junction.

Four Elms Hill

The Highways and Traffic Orders Committee are scheduled to meet at the Knowle Council Offices on Friday 7th December 2018 at 10.30. If anyone wishes to speak at that meeting they must register four days in advance of the meeting, and can only speak on matters that are on the agenda. The Agenda will be published on Thursday 29th November 2018. You can register by calling 01392 382299.

Section 106 money owed to parish councils.

In July 2017 our then 'new' parish council clerk and I started to chase EDDC for information and clarity on what the parish was owed in terms of S106 funds. The parish council had already consulted with Newton Poppleford School children about what play equipment they would like to see in Newton Poppleford and were finalising details of the design etc. The Local Government Association defines S106:

Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), commonly known as s106 agreements, are a mechanism which make a development proposal acceptable in planning terms, that would not otherwise be acceptable. They are focused on site specific mitigation of the impact of development. S106 agreements are often referred to as 'developer contributions' along with highway contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy. <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/pas-topics/infrastructure/s106-obligations-overview>

We pushed for a meeting at the end of 2017 to no avail, we tried to meet with the S106 officer in January 2018 and were told Feb/March would be a better time. We chased again at the end of Feb 2018 and were told they were very busy and needed more time. We scheduled a meeting for April 2018. We had a useful meeting about the background and general issues around S106. We expected things to move forward at a better pace. In August 2018 Ed Freeman, Service Lead on Planning, sent an email to all parish councils to say that they were overhauling the S106 system so there would be delays in information coming forward, that we needed to be patient but the system would be much better in the end. We were told the S106 officer would not be available to answer queries for about 8 weeks.

I understand that a number of you have been querying the apparent lack of support with Section 106 issues at the moment and that this is causing some frustration among town and parish council's. I can only apologise for the current level of service but I can assure you that it is for a very good reason....

The benefits of this new system are numerous and will mean that we have much of the information requested by yourselves, town and parish councils and through FOI requests available at the press of a button and as a result will save a lot of time that can then be spent on better working with community groups on spending the S106 monies and delivering infrastructure such as play and sports areas in the district.

I hope you can appreciate that this is a short term pain for long term gain and would appreciate your help in communicating this to any of your town and parish councils who are frustrated by this situation. Apologies for not communicating this message sooner.

We chased again for information in November 2018 and were told that the S106 officer was very busy and had other priorities. I raised the issue at EDDC Scrutiny last Thursday. It seems that other parishes share our frustration.

All Newton Poppleford Parish Council want is the paperwork and authorisation to buy a piece of play equipment and put up some safety fencing; it is a shocking indictment that EDDC are not releasing funds owed to parishes. In my last email dated 23rd November the officer apologised for the delay in supplying information and said we should hear something 'in the next few weeks'. It has already been over a year that we are chasing information.

In some cases S106 funds owed is many thousands of pounds. The excuse given: the officer too busy, very sorry. It is clear the department is seriously under resourced. The Scrutiny Committee agreed unanimously this matter should be reviewed but that will not undo delays thus far. I received an update this morning to say that by spring 2019 all parish councils will have the information they need instantly and that will be great news indeed.

Examples such as the above makes the next story even more unpalatable.

EDDC Non-Disclosure Agreements and Settlement Agreements

The Exmouth Journal published the following story on 19th November 2018

Figures obtained using a Freedom of Information request show that East Devon District Council has spent more than £200,000 on gagging orders over the past four years. A total of £205,074 has been spent by East Devon District Council on gagging orders for former members of staff since 2014, according to figures obtained by the Journal. The information, obtained through a Freedom of Information request, reveals 10 settlement agreements, or gagging orders, were agreed by EDDC between 2014 and October 31, 2018.

Gagging orders are often referred to as confidentiality clauses and are usually agreed when an employee leaves an employer due to redundancy, a work place problem or a disagreement.

A number of opposition councillors have said they are shocked by the amount of money spent on gagging orders.

Independent group leader at EDDC, Ben Ingham, said: "When any one of us is thinking about how we can afford to pay our latest council tax bill, I do not believe we expect one penny to be spent on gagging orders.

"If we did, non payment may become a real expectancy. As Leader of EDDC Opposition, I can tell you at no time has the current leadership contacted me to discuss this issue at all. "This is not acceptable, but to me not surprising. Merely another piece of evidence against an exhausted regime."

A spokeswoman for EDDC said: "Settlement agreements are legally binding contracts that waive an individual's rights to make a claim covered by the agreement to an employment tribunal or court.

"The agreement must be in writing. They usually include some form of payment to the employee and may often include a reference. They are voluntary and have therefore been entered into on that basis by the individuals.

"Part of the agreement is that they must seek independent advice from an employment lawyer."

Exmouth district councillor Megan Armstrong said: "I am extremely concerned at the huge amount of taxpayers' money, which should have been used to provide services for the people of East Devon, which has been spent on gagging orders.

"The council has a duty to be open and transparent; yet over £200,000 - a vast sum - has been spent on suppressing information. Exactly what is the Conservative administration trying to hide?"

It is well known that this has been going on for years but the ruling party seem happy to accept the status quo.

In past Scrutiny meetings I have queried before the high percentage of staff who leave EDDC each year (10% per year ie approximately 50 staff). The HR manager said it is because local authorities cannot compete with private sector pay. Actually EDDC pays very well. Administrators and junior officer rates compare very well with salaries available elsewhere even in the private sector.

Senior Officers rates are published here: <http://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/2532091/senior-salaries-1-april-2018.pdf>

It seems they pay even better if you leave. EDDC produced the following press release in response to this:

Statement concerning East Devon District Council settlement agreements

Following an article published by an East Devon media outlet this week about settlement agreements between the district council and its employees, the Council wants to bring a greater degree of clarity to the headline-grabbing story.

The article ignores the actual reasons why the Council has used settlement agreements from time to time and that these are common practice in both the public and private sector where employers wish to bring employment to an end.

The Council has used settlement agreements to terminate the contracts of 10 individuals since 2014 for a mixture of contractual, performance and sickness issues.

The reason that any employer enters into these agreements is particularly in circumstances where it wishes to bring employment to an end quickly and pragmatically to avoid unnecessary costs and to protect itself from tribunal costs. The figures quoted include statutory and contractual payments such as holiday and notice periods.

Such agreements are commonly used throughout the UK and the primary reason is that the individual is required to agree not to take their employer to court. The agreements also contain a confidentiality clause.

To validly settle statutory employment claims, a settlement agreement must satisfy several conditions that must be met including that the individual must have received legal advice from a relevant independent adviser on the terms and effect of the proposed agreement; and its effect on their ability to pursue any rights before an employment tribunal. Only certain statutory claims can be settled by a settlement agreement such as unfair dismissal or discrimination.

Landscapes Review - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks 2018 – Call for Evidence

This is a really important government review.

What it's about

It is nearly 70 years since a bold decision was taken by Parliament to preserve some of England's finest landscapes and help people visit and enjoy them.

England is home to 10 National Parks and 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Their rugged mountains, unspoilt coastlines, farmed landscapes and vast moorlands attract more than 260 million visitors a year and are home to over 2.3 million people.

Now, 7 decades after a visionary report led by Sir Arthur Hobhouse led to their creation, it's time to renew the mission. As part of the [25 Year Environment Plan](#), the government has asked Julian Glover to lead an expert panel looking at how these protections can be renewed.

The review's purpose is to ask what might be done better, what changes could assist these areas, and whether definitions and systems - which in many cases date back to their original creation - are still sufficient. Weakening or undermining existing protections or geographic scope are not considered.

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/landscapes-review-call-for-evidence/>

PLEASE RESPOND TO THIS SURVEY. The introductory notes explain that you don't need to answer all the questions, just the ones that you feel strongly about or apply to you.

The closing date is 18 December 2018

In the October parish magazine report I wrote that our local AONB partnership were enthusiastic about some of the East Devon area being included in a National Park alongside Dorset who are moving forward on this idea. It seems this has caused some concern at EDDC. I raised a written question about East Devon's view on our area becoming a National Park along with Dorset at Full Council on 24th October 2018 as I felt that EDDC were being evasive about answering my previous questions on this. Cllr Paul Divianni stated that I should 'verify my facts in future'. He is recorded as saying:

DCC are not taking any action...

If you push for a National Park over and above the AONB, the AONBs will fight this tooth and nail because they think that the quality that happens in the AONB is higher than in the National Parks.

The full recording is here and my question is around minute 50.

<http://eastdevon.gov.uk/recordings/council/241018councilrecording.mp3>

Recycling service

If you are having any continued problems with the recycling collection please email me and send photos and I will send them onto John Golding at EDDC who is determined to improve this service with our contractors. Main issues continue to be rubbish left strewn over the road, broken glass and bins not being put back from where they were collected. PLEASE don't think that its not worth complaining, I am happy to receive complaints every week until the problems are resolved.

Parking in Otter Reach.

I addressed last year the issue of camper vans being parked all along here and you may remember the police said all vehicles



were taxed and insured and Trading Standards said there was no illegal trading happening on the roadside. The camper vans seemed to disappear in the summer all at the same time and none seem to have returned permanently. There has been however an A frame trailer parked on the road for months with no licence plate on it and it has not moved. I contacted EDDC Streetscene for advice and they referred me to DCC and the police for their advice. I understand that the trailer has now gone but please contact me if you have any further concerns.



Events in Newton Poppleford

The bonfire and Fireworks display

The parish council excelled itself this year with the biggest firework display yet and a fabulous bonfire. It was lovely to see so many families and friends enjoying themselves on our playing fields, the music gave a great atmosphere, the weather was perfect and the PTA (barbecue) , Harpford Hall (Mulled wine) and Cannon Pub (open bar) all benefitted from their supporting roles. Thanks to Cllr Chris Burhop for driving this event, ably supported by his team of Cllrs Downen, Lipczynski, Dalton, Tillotson, Kemp and Zirker and special thanks to all the marshalls and background helpers not named here.

World War I Commemoration evening

This very moving evening on Saturday 10th November was held in the new school hall. There was poetry read by Poems read by Cllr Hazel Jeffrey, Headmaster Stuart Vaughan and Brian Small, music by 'A bit of Rough', Daniele Coombe lead the singing of WWI songs, a potted history of events was given by Newton Poppleford History Group, (we particularly enjoyed Malcom Burge's piece about innovations and inventions developed during the war such as aircraft development, army tanks and medical techniques). The evening was rounded off by a hilarious yet poignant performance of Black Adder by the Jenni Cardwell Players. Thanks again to Cllr Chris Burhop and his team for organising this event with the NP history group. The event was sponsored by the Parish Council and all proceeds will go to the British Legion.

Annual Laying of Wreaths – Remembrance Sunday – WWI 100 year Commemoration

These events took place at Newton Poppleford and Harpford at their respective war memorials. There was a good turnout of residents to pay their respects to those who gave so much in past wars. It is always such a moving event and it was an honour to lay a wreath in Harpford on behalf of the parish council and many thanks to Brian Woodley for supplying the wreaths via the British Legion as he has done for so many years.

Val Ranger

Ward Cllr

Newton Poppleford and Harpford. 26th November 2018