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# 

# Draft Local Plan 2021

Readers might remember that central government has dictated that 18000 homes need to be built in East Devon over the period of the new local plan (up until 2040), that’s 918 houses per year. I touched on the matter of how the council was consulting over ‘Settlements’ in last month’s magazine.

EDDC has now published in a more clear format the potential sites put forward by developers in the last call for sites (HELAA Jan – Mar 2021). A quick search for ‘EDDC Draft Local Plan 2021’ will take you to that page if you are online.

If you want to find the site by site assessment for Newton Poppleford search for ‘Strategic Planning Committee meeting 14th December 2021’ and go through the Agenda where under item 8 – additional supporting documents you can find the site by site officer assessment for sites put forward. It is numbered item 1d Settlements in Tier 3 and 4. Page 47 is where Newton Popppleford sites start. The link is here:

[1d Site Assessment Tier 3 and 4 settlements.pdf (eastdevon.gov.uk)](https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/documents/s14508/1d%20Site%20Assessment%20Tier%203%20and%204%20settlements.pdf)

This time around there is supposed to be far more emphasise at the planning stage on ‘Feasibility’ and rightly so. If you look at the work Officers have put in on the site by site analysis you will see far more emphasis this time on issues such as topography of sites and flood risk which is something I am very keen to see. Emphasis must also be placed on the climate emergency agenda too to make sure there are safe walking and cycling routes. This would include pavements for example and good road crossings. Historically, in the King Alfred Way development, it was put forward originally as a ‘flat site’. It’s not flat and required considerable amounts of retaining walls. When it came to flood protection for properties lower down the developer was permitted to use an attenuation tank not of a standard adoptable by South West Water. Furthermore, claims were made that because a doctor’s surgery was being provided, less affordable homes should be built and they got away with this again, providing only 35% of housing association homes instead of 50 %. Despite residents asking for the surgery to be built first as a planning condition before any houses were built, that didn’t happen either. It is absolutely essential this time around that infrastructure is in place before housing and infrastructure includes flood prevention and adequate sewage works, medical facilities and schools with adequate spaces, safe roads and pavements and so on.

At the Strategic Planning Committee meeting Ed Freeman Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development assured councillors that feasibility would be discussed at the planning application stage. He also said that only ‘new’ problems that had arisen since development started would be considered in any late calls for not meeting planning conditions on the grounds of feasibility. I had some questions:

1. What planning application stage are we talking? Outline or Reserved Matters - because in my opinion once outline planning is given, the deal is sealed for the developer. Feasibility at outline is critical.
2. What if the developer just runs out of money – I can think of an existing example in Tipton St John (which has to be one of the ugliest sites I have ever seen permitted in what was a beautiful field). The original developer went broke as I understand it and the next developer wanted conditions amended to a cheaper solution to managing the topography of the land and simple landscaping. Ed Freeman seemed to think the same conditions would apply in such cases but that remains to be seen. The people who suffer are those in long standing existing properties below the site, although some new houses on the site itself have issues.
3. What sanctions are there for developers who go back on promises? We heard at Scrutiny not so long ago that Planning Enforcement is under pressure so what hope is there when developers wriggle out of commitments. Ed Freeman said the legal route was a last resort and that the council would seek to negotiate with developers first before entering into costly legal battles. I think developers count on that and whilst I appreciate the council has to be mindful of costs, I think there’s definitely a place for a test case.

There are suggestions of a new town, but it is important that we learn the lessons of Cranbrook; you cannot build a town and expect the infrastructure of appear by magic, which is exactly what the last administrations did. Cranbrook was a so called ‘Healthy Town’ planned from scratch by the long standing Tory administration. Those former councilors now heckle the current administration who have been in office for two years for failing to provide a town centre for Cranbrook, which I find a bit rich; the current administration are working hard with local councillors in Cranbrook to bring plans for a decent town centre to fruition, years after the town was established.

This is what the EDDC website states about the draft local plan:

***A draft new Local Plan reveals potential locations for where new homes could be built, including an option for a new town, as well as East Devon’s ambitious plans to become carbon neutral by 2040.***

*This is the first time in the council’s history that it has revealed a*[*‘work in progress’ draft for a Local Plan*](https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1671&Ver=4)*, normally waiting until work is further progressed before showing it to the public.*

*In the spirit of being open and transparent the draft document, which may change as a result of further consideration and public consultation, was debated for the first time in public on Tuesday, 14 December by*[*EDDC’s Strategic Planning Committee*](https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1671)*.*

*The document, which will help shape East Devon until 2040, builds on the authority’s recently adopted Council Plan and looks at how the district can protect the environment, build employment space and ensure only high quality developments are built.*

*EDDC’s bold plans to be the ‘leading light in addressing climate change and environmental issues through planning’ have also been revealed, with a number of highly ambitious measures to tackle the climate change emergency.*

*It is appreciated some of the proposals are controversial and will cause concern to communities but the proposals may well change following further work and input from councillors. Residents have been asked not to submit comments at this stage and to wait until the final draft plan has been published. A public consultation, including workshops, will then be held next summer based on current timescales.*

***Housing numbers***

*The Government says EDDC must deliver 918 homes a year. This means the new Local Plan needs to identify land for more than 6,900 additional homes. This is in addition to those already planned for, like at Cranbrook and developments expected to come forward by 2040. Most of the large scale housing sites will also be expected to provide a range of employments spaces and community facilities and create sustainable communities where walking and cycling are the norm. The plan showcases EDDC’s aspirations for all new homes to be zero carbon with measures such as better insulation, triple glazing, solar panels and special pumps that extract heat from the air to warm people’s homes as well as district heating systems like the one at Cranbrook, which can be run on renewable energy.*

*Policies that minimise the carbon footprint while building developments have also been proposed along with measures that ensure more is put back to create natural habitats, affected by developments, than is taken away.*

***Growth Strategy***

*In brief the current preferred strategy could deliver:*

*A concentration of new development on the western side of East Devon to include an additional new town (a further new town in addition to Cranbrook) to provide around 2,500 homes by 2040 but ultimately to grow to around 8,000 homes;*

*Major strategic developments close to the city of Exeter including new developments off Clyst Road, North of Topsham and expansions to Exeter Science Park and further employment spaces north of Sowton Village and near the airport;*

*Moderate levels of development at the principal and main centres of East Devon including:*

*Axminster – approx. 335 homes in a series of small scale urban extensions providing a mix of housing and employment sites.*

*Exmouth – approx. 455 homes within a number of sites focused on the north east of the town with some smaller scale allocations to the south and east.*

*Honiton – approx. 228 homes with a large allocation to the eastern edge of the town and a series of smaller applications to the other edges of the town.*

*Ottery St Mary – approx. 250 homes to the western side of the town including an area of employment land.*

*Seaton – approx. 264 homes largely focused on 4 sites to the north of the town including a large allocation between Harepath Road and Colyford Road comprising a mix of housing and employment.*

*Sidmouth – approx. 196 homes comprising a large allocation west of Woolbrook Road and a series of smaller scale allocations to the north and west of the town.*

*Around 400 homes could be built in total across a number of ‘local centres’ including Broadclyst, Budleigh Salterton, Colyton, Lympstone and Woodbury. With a further 500 homes split between the ‘service villages’ including Clyst St Mary, Feniton and Whimple among others.*

***Economic Strategy***

*Alongside the new homes the working draft plan looks at where employment space can be put to deliver new jobs alongside the homes to create a “…resilient, inclusive, green economy, delivering growth and prosperity for the benefit of everybody in the district”.*

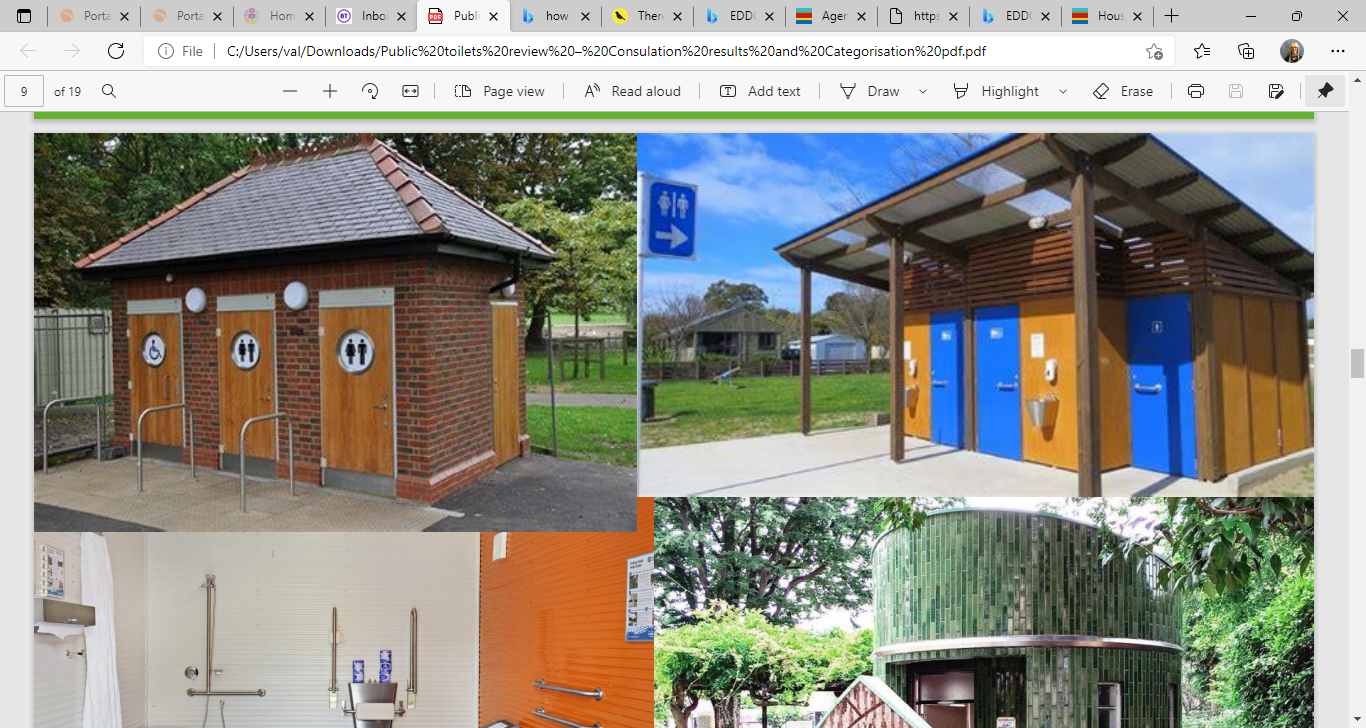
***Moving Forwards***

*The working draft of the plan will be considered by councillors and amended and modified as work progresses over the coming months.*

# Local Government Association Motion on planning

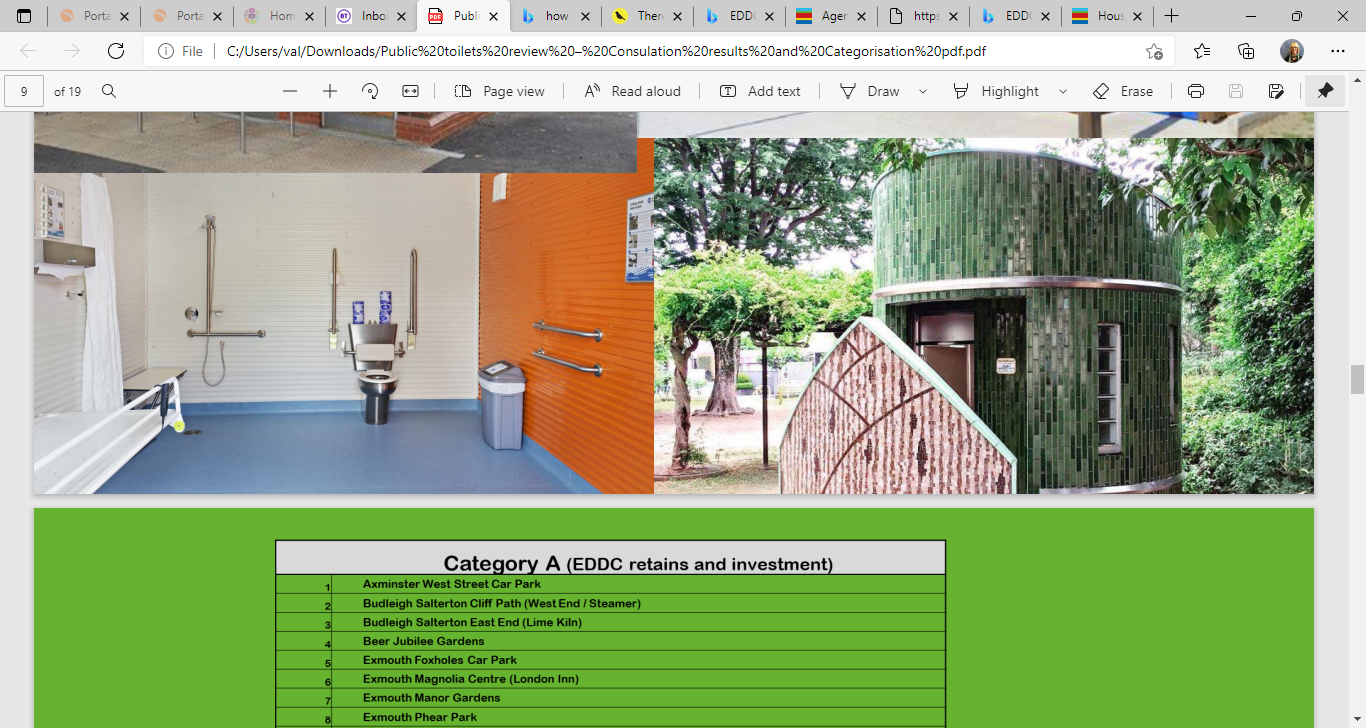
On a different tack the Local Government Association (LGA) is calling on the government to scrap the so called ‘5 year land supply’ rule. Councils currently must show evidence that there is enough scope to deliver the number of houses the government dictates an area needs over the next 5 years. The current rule does nothing to ensure that these houses come to fruition so private developers can sit on land and not actually develop it. Furthermore, if a council is unable to show a 5 year land supply, then its open house for developers, with a presumption in favour of development for any sites put forward. This is what the LGA say and which I believe matches the aspirations of the current administration:

**Planning motion**

1. *Our Independent Group Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport (EEHT) think tank has been in hot discussion about planning. Since we have a new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove, MP), and delayed planning legislation, we now have a chance to impact a change. You may want to write to the Secretary of State using*[*this example letter*](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTEyMTAuNTAwOTkyODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2NvbnRlbnQuZ292ZGVsaXZlcnkuY29tL2F0dGFjaG1lbnRzL1VLTEdBLzIwMjEvMTIvMTAvZmlsZV9hdHRhY2htZW50cy8yMDE4ODQwL0xldHRlci10by1Nci1Hb3ZlLmRvY3gifQ.EaA1iig0u1tnl4_FDkV1tS_VK6K2BPK4bbNNsjL34Jo/s/598223206/br/122791010053-l)*, or put a motion to your council as follows:*
2. *“This Council calls on Michael Gove MP to scrap the five-year land supply requirement. It effectively punishes councils for private firms not building, something over which they have no control. 90 per cent of applications are passed and more than 1.1 million homes with permission are waiting to be built. The housing requirements need to be more clearly focused on the local need for housing, including affordable housing and the availability of matching infrastructure.”*

# Public Toilet Review

This matter went to the Overview Committee for its recommendations in November and to Cabinet on 1st December 2021. Here is what the website says about the financial commitment of running public toilets which are not a council statutory responsibility, but are a much needed and valued service:

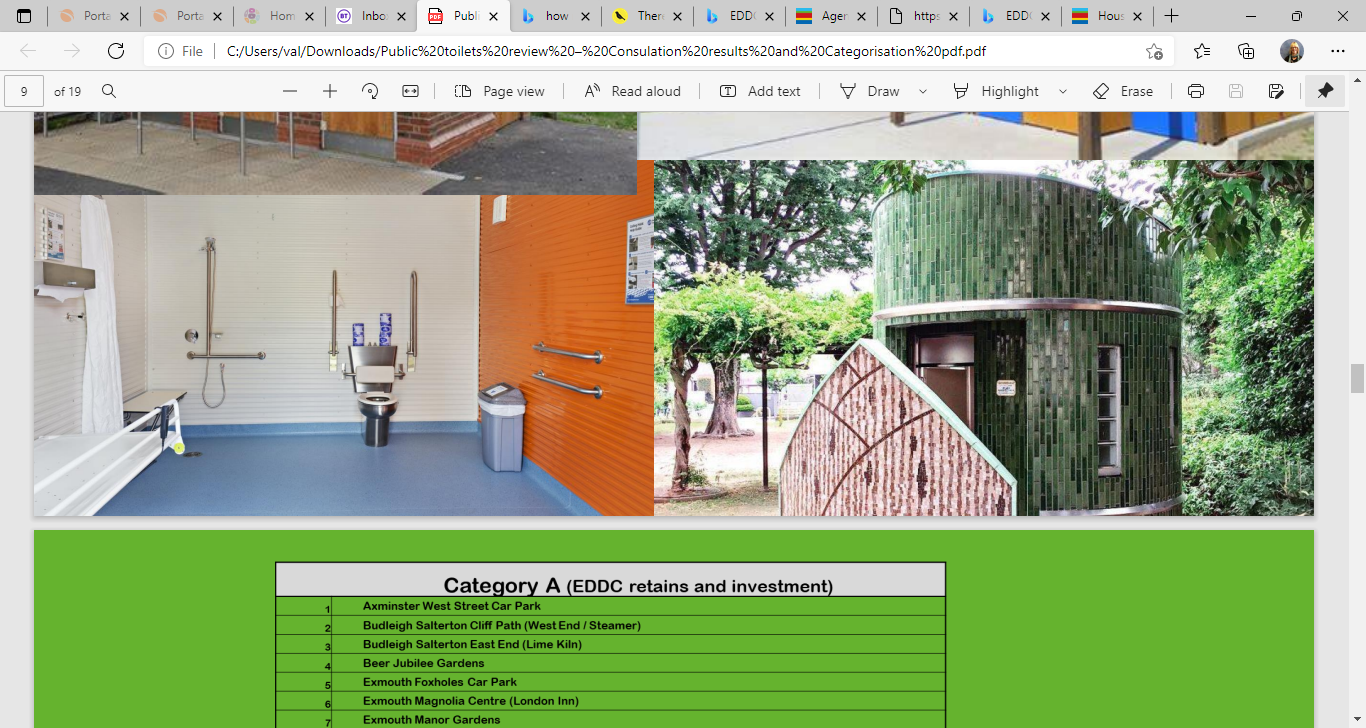
***Financial challenge***

Doors open to front to reduce vandalism

*This funding gap will impact on the services we offer. In 2019, £473,000 was spent on directly running the public convenience service. This provided 30 public toilet sites, 26 owned and operated by the council and 4 maintained for others. It amounts to an average of £15,766 a year to look after each toilet block, this includes the maintenance of the toilets and providing water, toilet rolls, cleaning them twice a day and management costs.*

Easy clean with Shower facility built in. (Not all toilets will have this ).

*We know that our residents expect high quality clean public toilets, and these have an important role to play in our visitor economy. However, we cannot afford to keep providing them as we currently do, unless significant savings are made. We also need to think about making the best financial use of our sites so we can continue to provide good quality public toilets into the future. An example of this would be the repurposing of the current location for alternative use such as a cafe with a public toilet being provided as part of this.*

Officers behind the scenes have worked so hard to help councillors find solutions and a way forward. Many councils have simply closed public toilets as they are not a statutory service and some have been charging for them for some years. What is clear is that our current toilets have lacked upgrading for many years and as a result are also far more expensive to run than they should be. They also don’t take into account modern requirements to provide better services for those with hidden disabilities and the disabled and their carers. In a number of cases it will be more cost effective to replace toilets with a modern version. (For example when the parish council looked at a major upgrade of the Newton Poppleford toilets, the cost came out at around £40,000). EDDC will be offering some toilets to local town and parish councils, some to those with an innovative idea on how to use the premises for a dual purpose and regretfully will have to close some. I don’t like this but the money to upgrade toilets and the option to continue offering a free service is simply not there. The council have reluctantly agreed they are going to have to charge for the new upgraded toilets they are going to continue to run (but not until they are upgraded) and the fee is expected to be in the region of 40p. Discussions are ongoing about whether this will be cash or card payments, whether there will be discounts for residents with certain medical conditions that require them to use a toilet frequently and so on.

Possible innovative design

# Retro fitting of Council Properties

Another drain on EDDC finances that the council is charged with and that residents may not be aware of is the retrofitting of all council properties to bring them up to category C in terms of energy efficiency. This is certainly something the council are keen to do, but the question remains how can it be funded? This additional financial burden is something the LGA are lobbying the government about:

The LGA also submitted a Motion on retrofitting:

**Retrofitting**

1. *Retrofitting with insulation and efficient heating is the number one job to save energy and the planet. We’re interested if anyone has done costings on retrofitting that they can share? One of our councils found the total cost to be £37 million for 3,100 homes, while another found the average price of retrofitting was between £34,000 and £37,000 per house. My council has calculated the total cost of getting our district to net zero to be £1.45 billion. For councils with housing, retrofitting up to the required energy efficiency level of 'C' is a significant concern. The Government has proposed that all rental properties will need an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of ‘C’ or above by 2025. Similar to the previous changes, the new regulations will be introduced for new tenancies first, followed by all tenancies from 2028.*

EDDC has to find the money to do this retrofitting.

# How much of your council tax goes to EDDC?

EDDC receives £7.00 for every £100 of council tax you pay. Central government has reduced the amount it gives to local councils by over 60% since 2010. Hence we find ourselves having to raise car parking charges in future and in future charge for public toilets in desperate need of updating.

# Winter parking charges 2021/22

Just a reminder the £2.00 to park all day charge over the winter period remains in place this year to encourage residents to shop locally. (I love the new refill shops in Sidmouth and Ottery St Mary and the fact there is less plastic cluttering up the recycling sack).

A reminder that residents can buy a £10 per month rolling parking permit online to cover their local town car park. This equates to around 30p per day.

# Full Council Wednesday 8th December 2021

This meeting opened with a very moving victim support statement read by Councillor Eileen Wragg on behalf of one of the many victims of convicted paedophile, former Exmouth councillor John Humphries who was recently jailed for 21 years. What this young man suffered from the age of 14 was shocking. Its hard to believe the no one knew John Humphries was being investigated by the police over these allegations from 2017 and yet it was still proposed that he should become an Alderman in 2019. The Leader of the Council Cllr Paul Arnott has written to Shaun Sawyer, Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police suggesting the force refers itself to the Independent Office for Police Conduct for an investigation inter alia the alleged harassment and misconduct of the victim by the police themselves. He copied in Conservative Councillor Andrew Moulding (former EDDC Conservative Leader), Conservative Councillor Colin Brown (current Conservative group Leader), Neil Parish MP, Simon Jupp MP, Oliver Dowden CBE MP, Chairman of the Conservative Party, The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP and Sir Hugo Swire.

Naturally this raised again calls from the Conservative party that if all EDDC councillors had EDDC checks this could not have happened. This is such a nonsense. The victim first complained to the police in 2004, he was dismissed. He tried to have the case re-opened in 2012 and it wasn’t until 2015 that a female officer went to him and said another person had come forward about his abuse and the case would be re-opened. So John Humphries would have had a clear DBS check for over 15 years during the time he was abusing children. The suggestion by the Conservative group on Twitter also is that anyone who thinks DBS checks are not a necessity for District Councillors have something to hide! A clear DBS is a snapshot in time, it would need to be an enhanced DBS and are generally considered valid for 3 months.

What would be more appropriate for all EDDC cllrs is Safeguarding training with an emphasis on whistleblowing and an appropriate safeguarding officer role on the council. I see no reason at all why a district councillor should find themselves alone with a child under the age of 18 nor a vulnerable adult. It is different for County Councillors who have a different remit such as care.

# Remote meetings

A decision was made in an extraordinary meeting in July 2021 that EDDC should continue to meet remotely until January 2021. So at the December Full Council the question of whether this should continue after January 2022 in view of the latest Covid figures and winter viruses, was again raised.

Once again, the Conservative Group were insisting that face to face meetings should start again despite a number of their own group currently being sick with Covid, and one signed off sick with long covid. The Leader of the Conservative group even suggested that all additional responsibility payments for example to the EDDC Leader and Cabinet members should cease, implying that because meetings were being held remotely, no work was being done. This was a totally outrageous suggestion and more a reflection on himself I feel than anyone else. He made claims about how many parish council meetings he had attended in person and that he had covered 200 miles in his car attending them, nothing to be proud of in my view. A quick look at the records of the parish council meetings seemed at odds with this claim which needs further investigation. Another opposition member suggested our residents were being short changed and receiving poor value for money because councillors were not driving in and out of Honition to Blackdown House for meetings but tuning in from wherever we were at the time be that the workplace, home or even on leave.

As my Wifi was playing up on the evening of the meeting the Chair Cllr Ian Thomas kindly read out this statement on my behalf:

*I would like to highlight to colleagues some of the benefits we have secured during the use of virtual meetings.*

*Between 2017 and 2020, we members made £90,000 of travel claims, and average of £22,000 per year. This has reduced to just £1,077 in 2021 when we moved to remote meetings.*

1. *Not needing to travel to meetings has reduced our personal Carbon Footprint. This is a key priority for the council in our drive toward Carbon neutrality.*
2. *To hire Westpoint for our recent Full Council meeting cost £1,530 – rather a lot for a meeting which lasted only 45 minutes or thereabouts – but of course preferable to any becoming ill as a result!*
3. *This did not include the extra hassle or workload on our officers who had to set Westpoint up.*

*I believe calls for a return to face-to-face meetings are a scandalous waste of public funds at a time of financial pressure. They are also short sighted with regard to the welfare of colleagues both members and officers, and frankly selfish in the additional risk to our vulnerable colleagues and their families.*

*As well as protecting our colleagues, we should be pushing the government for an update to the ridiculously outdated Local Government Act of 1972.*

For the record I have never made a travel claim as I consider it part of my role. The Chair gave an excellent summing up and the vote to continue to run meetings remotely until May 2022 was recommended by the majority. Most of those opposition members who objected to remote meetings and dragged the meeting out for far longer than it should have run with their comments, abstained in the vote. How pointless.

**The LGA support for remote meetings**

*The LGA has again written on your behalf to Government ministers calling for councils in England to be able to meet and vote remotely – particularly given yesterday’s working from home announcement. We continue to make the economic, environmental and democratic case for the rules to change, and we have been using your evidence to make a very compelling case. I directly asked the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, previously and followed up directly with the Minister yesterday. We have cross-party agreement and LGA staff have been working with ministerial staff to back us up, seeking the required emergency legislation. We have also asked our vice presidents to ask a Parliamentary Question to this effect, and you may like to raise it with your local MPs, some of which are senior ministers. We also raised the following six concerns about councils' on-going battle with COVID-19:*

1. *supporting residents in care homes, pressures on ambulances and A and E, encouraging vaccine take-up*
2. *economic impact of further lockdown without new grants and economic uncertainty during the coming months*
3. *increased demand on services at the same time as lower income and tax collections rates, new role in encouraging compliance with the new rules in plan B, focusing on keeping premises compliant*
4. *keeping schools open and focusing on student health*
5. *impact on council budgets.*

# Local Christmas Tree recycling and cardboard recycling

**Tuesday, 4 January - Ottery St Mary:** Land of Canaan car park – 12.30pm to 2.30pm

**Wednesday, 5 January** - **Sidmouth:** Manor Road car park – 8.30am to 12pm

Your trees will be composted and used as a natural fertiliser by local farms or in our parks.

**Cardboard galore - help our crews:**

We are expecting lots of internet shopping as we all prepare for Christmas. This produces a huge amount of cardboard packaging which we want to recover and recycle, however, if you have large quantities of cardboard, it will help our crews if you can spread the load by putting it out for collection over a number of weeks. There are times when we may have to leave behind some cardboard for another collection if our vehicles are filling quickly. If you do have large quantities of material which you would rather not keep until the next collection, then there will be the option for you to visit your local recycling centre. Also, please remember to take out any polystyrene, bubble wrap or polythene bags from your cardboard packaging before putting it out for collection.

# Crew Behaviour Training for new Suez recycling crews

This will be music to the ears of many! Minute 20 of the Waste and Recycling Review board states that crews should:

* Never litter
* Always return bins neatly – I’d be interested to get feedback on this from residents.
* Always behave responsibly
* Drive with care
* Use social media responsibly

There is also a training video on this.

# Planning Matters

Straightgate quarry planning permission – a letter of objection was sent to DCC by the EDDC Planning Committee.

Sidford Industrial Estate reserved matters came before planning on Wednesday 15th December 2021.

Fences that front onto the public highway – residents are reminded that whilst fences up to 2m high don’t generally need planning permission around your property, where a property fronts the public highway the limit is 1 metre. Fences that front onto the public highway that are higher than one metre require a planning application.

Consideration is also given in any planning matter to the effect of a planning application on the setting of a listed building or buildings of a historic or local nature that enhance the local area. Even where those buildings are not listed but they are lovely historic buildings, consideration will be given as to whether the proposed new development or planning application will adversely affect the setting.

# Community Speed Watch and road safety in the village

Gill Cameron-Webb is our local CSW co-coordinator. I have recently completed the online training for this along with a small group of other interested residents. It was very interesting and the online training did not take too long, maybe a couple of hours maximum. Next comes the roadside and equipment training to complete the necessary steps to be able to set up the independent community speed watch sessions. If anyone else is interested in joining in with this, do contact Gill Cameron-Webb or contact me and I can pass your details on.

You will read elsewhere in the magazine about the very fruitful meeting organised by DCC Cllr Jess Bailey, along with parish council Chairman Chris Burhop, some residents and DCC Highways Officer Tom Vaughn on how to improve road safety in the village. My thanks go to them.

With grateful thanks as always to residents for helping to raise local issues so they can be addressed.

Wishing all residents a very happy and healthy New Year 2022.

Val Ranger , Ward Councillor, Newton Poppleford and Harpford

Tel 07475 201 340 or email [vranger@btinternet.com](mailto:vranger@btinternet.com).