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# EDDC Cabinet meeting 10th July 2019

The agenda item “Climate Change Emergency – Our Response” was debated. Devon County Council have a net zero carbon date set for 2050. A number of other district councils have debated the matter and set a closer date of 2030 and it was clear that both residents and some councillors were keen that a more challenging date was set. Cabinet decided that setting an arbitrary date was not realistic. They agreed to declare a Climate Emergency locally and try for 2025 for significantly reducing carbon emissions, however they were reluctant to state a specific date until they had fully reviewed their starting position, where they could make a difference, where they could make savings. Naturally the issue of travelling to work arose and the discussion continued about the cost of local public transport; this led to the suggestion we need more jobs close to where people live. This is a great theory but in practice does not work. For example, just because there is an industrial estate up the road, does that mean that young people will aspire to work there and will walk there rather than drive? Probably not. Many people could work remotely from home if their home broadband was better. The construction industry is being used to prop up the local economy but the cost is the loss of our agricultural land, trees are being destroyed. In many cases so called ‘green options’ have a carbon cost in the manufacturing or disposal at the end of their life. Cllrs were keen to see young people involved in the process. Another role of EDDC is to lobby the government and local MP’s. It is a massive subject to reduce to a paragraph here but it was clear that there is a will at EDDC to take the matter seriously, review what can be done locally and to take appropriate action.

# Review of the Council's governance arrangements

Since the Local Government Act 2000, there have been a range of options for how a local council executive leadership can be constituted:

**Source:** TASC (Think tank for action on social change)

* **‘Strong Leader’ and Cabinet Model**: Under this model, the Leader of the Council is appointed by the full council in one of its first acts post an election. Then, the Leader appoints a Cabinet of between two and ten Councillors . The Cabinet will make just about all the major financial decisions apart from the council’s budget, and Councillor’s allowances. To keep the executive ‘in-check’ a series of Scrutiny Committees is set up with various powers of call-in. The main job of the Scrutiny Committee is to scrutinise the Cabinet’s policies.
* **Committee system:** in a committee system, all major decisions are made by councillors responsible for a certain topic, such as health or young people, coming together to consider the issues in hand. Many councils were run in this way until the committee system was abolished under the Blair Government. However, since 2012 several councils are reverting to this system due to such a small proportion of councillors having direct involvement in decision making under the other models.
* The final system is **a hybrid**: in theory, you could cherry pick all the best (or worst) bits of the Cabinet and Committee systems and make a new type of administration. For example, Cambridge Council operates a hybrid scrutiny model where decisions are proposed by scrutiny committees then formally appointed by the cabinet member or leader.

Historically EDDC was run on the ‘committee’ system, whereby all members could have their say on the items which came before them. However, the labour party introduced the Cabinet system under which all councils had to be run. During the last EDDC administration when the Tory party had overall control, only members of the Tory party (with one exception) were in the Cabinet and there was the sense that they held all the power. It certainly felt like a small number of people had total control of the council and to make matter worse the Scrutiny Committee whose role is to scrutinise Cabinet’s decision making process were frequently restricted on what it could review by the Chief Executive who would come up with various reasons why one subject or another could not be scrutinised.

# Four Elms Hill

This matter comes before the Highways and Traffic Orders Committee on 18th July. A survey was carried out by the firm Jacobs. DCC Officers are recommending that:

1. Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) be advertised for an extension to the 40 mph speed limit on the A3052 from the Bowd to the existing 30 mph limit in Newton Poppleford
2. Subject to the results of the proposed amendment to the speed limit and consultation with Devon and Cornwall Constabulary regarding the White Line System that the revised road markings are implemented
3. That the TRO and amendments to the road markings be funded through the on-street Parking account at an estimated cost of £10,000.

I welcome all of the above though no mention is made of making good road markings that have currently faded almost completely such as the red warning markings at the base of the hill so I will be asking for that prior to the meeting. I will also be asking for the expected timeframe for this work. No mention is made of the irregular edgings on the west bound carriageway particularly, the filthy road edge markers that cannot be seen and the terrible state of the drains.

If you look at the edges of the road on Goosemoor Hill, there is a white line down the outside camber indicating the road edge, but Four Elms Hill, the scene of many more accidents than Goosemoor does not have anything to indicate the edge of the road. It is also under a canopy of trees making visibility difficult and has the additional hazard of random kerbs and uneven drains. I think lines to show the road edges as Goosemoor has might also help to reduce the number of cars which turn over on the hill.

Once the 40 mph speed limit at the top of the hill comes into force (assuming it does), that will be the time for the parish council to consider citing an additional VAS camera at the top of the hill travelling west to reduce speeds at that top turn.

# King Alfred Way

CDE continue to refuse to discuss the matter of the doctors’ surgery with the parish council and have gone to appeal with the Planning Inspectorate. The Development Management Committee asked CDE to go back to the table and talk to local people before they would give support the most recent planning application. CDE continue to state that they have communicated over the years with the parish council about the surgery but the fact is they have ignored all requests to meet and talk. They seem to believe that if you say something often enough, that makes it true. CDE threaten that the appeal will delay building and that therefore when they do finally get permission to build 2 luxury houses it will be more expensive for them to do so. I don’t think that local residents will be remotely concerned about that.
There does not seem to be a business case for the approach they are taking and one has to draw the conclusion that CDE wish to demonstrate that they are powerful landowners who can do as they wish with little care for anyone who gets in their way. Furthermore, winning a legal case (and not least winning a planning appeal) does not necessarily mean that justice has been done.

# DCC launch “My Tree, my responsibility”

Devon County Council have launched a “My tree, my responsibility” campaign to encourage landowners to inspect their Ash trees for Ash dieback especially where they lie close to roads and rights of way. In Devon alone there are around 448,000 Ash trees within falling distance of a highway that are owned by third parties or on unregistered land. The advice is that trees should be inspected by a professional tree surgeon whilst still in leaf to determine how urgently they need attention. DCC continue that they want communities and land owners to replace ash trees with new plantings. The Devon Ash Dieback Forum was established in 2016 to address the risks of the disease. They advise that three saplings are planted for each mature tree felled due to Ash Dieback, two saplings should replace a semi-mature tree and one sapling for each ash sapling lost. It is estimated that more than 90% of Devon’s native ash trees are expected to be lost to Dieback within the next 5-15 years. I understand that an Ash tree on Four Elms Hill has been marked for felling.

# Local Authorities charging for household waste

It was in the news on 17th July that Ministers are now going to launch a review into fees charged on householders for dumping waste at council tips as there are concerns that fly-tipping could be on the increase.  This is something we looked at on the Scrutiny Committee a few years ago. We questioned why local authorities were charging for this waste when it could encourage fly-tipping from those who weren’t prepared to pay.

The Campaign group Keep Britain Tidy, want to see the Government use some of the £1billion of landfill tax to subsidise recycling infrastructure. They believe this would ensure local authorities don't have to close or restrict the use of household waste recycling centres which, in turn, will avoid future fly-tipping costs.

# Lifeguards on Sidmouth Beach

You may have read that the hold up to Sidmouth having life-guards on the beach for the duration of the summer holiday is that EDDC want reassurances from Sidmouth Lifeboat that they can fund the project for 10 years. It is hard to believe that this is an area where a local authority (who own the beach) can say that it is acceptable not to put in safety measures in place as it is too expensive.

# Ottery Animal Rescue Centre (ARC) turning away 100 dogs a week

I read this shocking news in the Sidmouth Herald this week. Is it time to re-introduce some sort of meaningful dog licensing?

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