

Ward Councillors Report – March 2018

Four Elms Hill

The chaos continues both from weather and from driver error on a weekly basis. Meanwhile it is noticeable how many other roads and villages in East Devon have warning signs on entry to the village, lets hope common sense prevails after their report to HATOC in July. Meanwhile there is still no official mechanism for reporting every incident on the hill to DCC. How many more injuries or deaths will it take? Our County Councillor Claire Wright is continuing to work on this on our behalf.

Meanwhile – thank you to the magnificent efforts of local farmers Richard and Mark Smedley and Trevor Vincent from Four Elms Fruit Farm, Higher Way, Harpford who worked tirelessly during the recent snow to help Harpford residents and spent days helping drivers who had got stuck on Four Elms Hill. This is a regular task for this team whether it is snowing or not. They are an amazing team and much of their efforts go unrecognised so I would like to publicly thank them here. I know there were also others out in their tractors whose full names I don't know, and also 4 wheel drivers out offering to help stranded drivers who were stuck in Newton Poppleford. Thank you on behalf of everyone you helped, we are so lucky to have such great community spirit in our parish.

Transfer of WC to the PC

The Parish Council have been in discussion with EDDC for a number years over how and when this transfer could happen. The Parish Council put in an official request in November 2017 but due to a lack of staff at EDDC this could not be progressed. It finally looks like a meeting on this might take place this month. In the meantime the petty vandalism continues, at a cost to each and every household in the parish by the mindless few intent on being as antisocial. The Parish Council wish to reconfigure the premises and install appropriate CCTV to ensure this facility remains open to the public and in a fit state for users.

Parking in Otter Reach

The issue of nuisance parking in Otter Reach continues. Drivers are continuing to park right up to the junction of the A3052 which means that drivers turning into Otter Reach often come face to face with drivers trying to exit it. Therefore the drivers entering Otter Reach often have to reverse back out onto the A3052, which in itself is dangerous. The police have advised that ideally double yellow lines should be put at the entrance to prevent this. Residents have also complained about camper vans and commercial vehicles being parked along this stretch but it seems that they are lawfully parked there and therefore no action can be taken. Some common sense and common courtesy would be helpful.

Equine use of land and stables

A number of residents have queried planning policy around the construction of stables on fields. EDDC planning officers said this when I made an enquiry:

...the construction of stables, field shelters and the like that are clearly buildings almost always does require a grant of planning permission. By definition, a building will be of a size and have a degree of permanence and physical attachment to the land that marks it out as such. The complication arises where the structure is of a modest size, is not necessarily

attached to the land and is capable of being moved around; in these circumstances it may not amount to a building, rather more a structure/chattel that may, depending upon how it is being used, be ancillary to the use of the land on which it is stationed.

Even then, this can be complicated further by the extent to which it actually is, during the course of its everyday use, actually moved from place to place.

It is therefore a matter of 'fact and degree' whether a particular building or structure/chattel itself requires planning permission. This will depend upon: a) whether it is a 'building' as opposed to a use of land, and b) whether it is being used for agricultural or equestrian purposes.

...it can be a fine distinction as to whether a material change in the use of land and/or buildings has occurred in any given case.

Permitted Development and outbuildings

There have also been questions about this from residents and also discussion at the Parish Council. I attach the link to 'Mini' guides published by EDDC on their website.

https://www.planningportal.co.uk/homepage/29/mini_guides

Scrutiny Committee Meeting – March 2018

Broadband Update

Phil Roberts from CDS was back to give an update on progress. CDS are still two years behind schedule to extend 'Phase 2' Superfast broadband (>24Mbps) to 95% of Devon and Somerset, the only counties in England which still falls behind the 95% of 'premises' who are able to access Superfast Broadband. CDS will not achieve that figure until 2020. However, the government announced in January that "because the UK has now reached the 95% superfast coverage target" (true for all counties except Devon and Somerset) they will stop publishing broadband roll out performance data by county.

There have been some improvements to access to Broadband in the area due to pressure from local action groups working with Gigaclear – see story here about the success in Uppottery.

<https://www.gigaclear.com/full-fibre-brings-fast-and-reliable-broadband-to-devon/>

and the success of the Broadband Action Group in Talaton working with Venous. A Talaton group representative attended in person to explain how they have used the voucher scheme to buy in their service with Venous and were very happy with the results. The cost to individuals was the cost of the monthly rental as the voucher system had paid for installation.

But many small businesses are still hugely disadvantaged by the lack of progress in this area and gaps in provision. Lack of access to decent BB speeds has a significant cost to the local economy.

Car Parking

The issue of charging in the Pavilion car park in Exmouth was discussed. The Exmouth Cllrs were not happy with the way that charges had been introduced without any notification to either Ward cllrs or the town council. EDDC Solicitor Giles said that the decision to introduce charges to this car park was made 8 years ago, that the car park was in urgent need of resurfacing, and that it made sense to install the ticket machines at the same time. The forthcoming consultation will only be to determine

what charges should be made and if any concessions should be given, not the principal of charging. Concern was raised that the charges would impact on local business use for the sake of the £25,000 income that it would raise.

Election May 2017

Last month I reported that Scrutiny have also been asking for a report from Chief Executive Mark Williams on the running of the election in May 2015 and election expenses. So far this information has not been provided despite being asked for on a regular basis - nearly three years after the event. The CE has been due to report back to Scrutiny on this many times over the past three years. The CE was due to report to Scrutiny last November, this was delayed until the February meeting, this was delayed due to a forthcoming by-election and he will supposedly attend the April meeting to present a report and answer questions. It also turns out the report is on the 2017 election so questions about the 2015 election have successfully been brushed under the carpet.

EDDC Full Council – 28 February 2018

Two Notices of Motion for this meeting:

Motion – Reducing the use of single-use plastics by 2020

"That this Council resolves to lead by example to reduce the use of single-use plastic with a goal of zero single-use plastics by 2020. Washable options will be favoured and any unavoidable disposable goods purchased henceforth will be of the compostable variety. In addition Members commit to making alternative choices to reduce their own use of disposable plastic items and packaging."

Proposed by Councillor Cathy Gardner, Seconded by Councillor Eleanor Rylance

Supported by Councillor Val Ranger, Councillor Peter Faithfull, Councillor Eileen Wragg, Councillor Marianne Rixson, Councillor Geoff Jung, Councillor Susie Bond, Councillor Dawn, Manley, Councillor Peter Burrows, Councillor John Dyson, Councillor David Barratt, Councillor Matthew Booth, Councillor Megan Armstrong.

Motion – Queen's Drive Regeneration Project

'Mindful of the Council's decision to progress the Visioning Exercise for Queen's Drive, and with a view to securing greater community support for the results of the Exercise, the Council confirms that a detailed and fully costed Business Plan for the full Exmouth Regeneration project be prepared following the conclusion of the Exercise, but prior to any decisions on what action the Council proposes to take in response to the Exercise, and that this Business Plan be the subject of independent and publicly available audit'.

Proposed by Councillor Megan Armstrong, Seconded by Councillor Geoffrey Jung

Supported by Councillor Marianne Rixson, Councillor Peter Faithfull, Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Councillor Matthew Booth, Councillor Dawn Manley, Councillor Ben Ingham, Councillor Cathy Gardner.

I reported last month that despite these motions being put forward principally by Independent Cllrs, Tory cllrs would most likely put forward amendments that would then be voted through. True to form, this happened. Amendments were suggested by Tory Cllrs and subsequently supported.

Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP)

On 19th January 2018 organised a public open meeting to discuss the GESP touching on issues such as housing density, better use of brownfield sites, transparency in the decisions made to date etc. The article was entitled 'Real Consultation or An Expensive And Time Wasting Ritual?' Regretfully work commitments meant I was unable to attend but they have published a summary in their latest newsletter.

They also warn that Neighbourhood Plans are being ignored, something I have seen at EDDC Development Committee Meetings. The wording of these is really critical to ensure they carry sufficient weight in planning decisions.

Here is the link to their website should you wish to read more:

<http://www.cpredevon.org.uk/>

Commuting in and around Exeter

As a daily commuter into Exeter and as one who has done this for the past 24 years, I can comment on the utter misery now of that commute. I take the train from Digby and Sowton – what was once a pleasant 8 minute journey into the city centre is now a daily grind of insufficient carriages, ticket machines that regularly don't work, threats that those travelling without a ticket will be fined (fix the ticket machines), should you be unfortunate enough not to be able to buy a ticket, when you arrive at Exeter Central there will be 3 members of staff standing around and one person selling tickets to a queue of people that stretches the length of the concourse. There is often a policeman looking on. Last Friday evening it was clear that the number of people on the station platform waiting to catch the train from Digby and Sowton bound for Exmouth far exceeded the capacity of the two carriage train that was expected and sure enough, many commuters could not get onto the train, despite the number of people crushed inside, and they were left on the platform to wait another half hour for the next train. Meanwhile the roads in the city centre are often at gridlock at rush hour. The bus option is expensive and inconvenient to those who work across town from the bus station. As increased development is increasingly bringing in people from outside of the country, I imagine to escape the rat race, I think they may be in for a nasty shock. Do the planners, making decisions in their offices, have any idea of what commuting is like in Exeter today and how woefully inadequate the infrastructure is? This will only get worse over the coming years as the population in this area grows.

Val Ranger, Ward Cllr Newton Poppleford and Harpford, March 2018