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Support during lockdown

I hope everyone is staying safe and well during the current situation. If you have concerns about your own situation or any friends or neighbours who are not accessing the help they need, please contact me so I can help or refer them on to someone who can. Tel 07475 201 340.

A number of people have contacted me to offer their support and would be happy to help if asked. The help might be shopping, medicines and prescriptions, advice on accessing financial support, (perhaps for people who have never had to claim or rely on benefits before, lack of IT skills where applications must be made online), loneliness, low mood, domestic abuse. Practical help with dog walking has also been offered.

Our thanks go to all those essential workers in the NHS, shops and health services, EDDC council officers and employees, who are continuing to work, often from home

and in different ways learning to use newer technologies. I am finding 'remote' teaching useful, interesting and challenging in equal measure.

The turnout for the Thursday night 'thank essential workers' clapping and cheering can be heard in Harpford from Newton Poppleford. The turnout in Harpford is also excellent.

Newton Poppleford and Harpford Neighbourhood Plan Consultation extended

Due to CV-19, it is considered that the statutory bodies we have to consult with may be short staffed and therefore the time for consultation has been extended to Friday 29th May. We are still hopeful it will go to the planning Inspectorate in June.

Help for local growers and small farmers

I have today written to East Devon MP Simon Jupp about the gap in support for small rural farms and growers. EDDC have confirmed there is no help available for certain of these small businesses and partnerships. I await Mr Jupp's response.

Red Bridge - Harpford

The number of people enjoying walks in the local area has really increased. Regular walkers will know how vulnerable the red bridge is now, with the river bank on the north side eroding under the end support and threatening the safety and longevity of this path remaining open. Residents will be aware of my efforts over the years to keep this footpath open and the lack of interest on the part of DCC to do so. This may be the time to start rallying support for keeping the crossing safe and open in its current location and securing its future. DCC do not believe how well used and valued this footpath and river crossing is and have shown complete complacency over the years. Perhaps an online petition is the way forward given the social distancing issues and that paper and pen signatures may not be appropriate at the current time.

Wales and West Utilities vehicles sited at Homefield Farm, Venn Ottery Road

Chris Drake of Homefield Farm contacted me today to let me know that the multitude of vehicles newly occupying some of his land belong to West and West who were given permission to keep them there while they are 'sleeving' the gas pipes running through the area. He has been told they could be in situ for up to 5 months and he was concerned to point this out to concerned residents who may think he has multiplied his vehicle fleet (He hasn't) and that they will be there permanently (they won't). His site was identified as the best place to keep the vehicles temporarily whilst working in Newton Poppleford but keeping away from residential areas.

East Devon Parks are now open

The government has said that public parks must remain open. Just a few are still to remain shut such as Blackmore Gardens and Connaught Gardens where social distancing at entrances is more difficult.

Reporting potholes

I wrote about this in April's Parish Magazine but am repeating it here. Remarkably reported potholes are being filled if residents report them and it is easy to see why this is a good time for that given the fewer vehicles on the road.

Reporting a problem to Devon County Council

I am always happy to report these issues to Devon County Council but it always helps if there is more than one person complaining about these things and you also get follow up emails so you know how the council plans to deal with the issue. To find the site you can simply search for Devon County Council Report a problem

You will be asked for a location and you have to click on a map to show where the problem is. I always use the postcode EX10 0DW which brings you to the Cannon Pub on the High Street and that usually puts you in the vicinity of the problem you wish to report.

You are also asked if you would like to upload a photo and this is always very helpful in my opinion.

It is quite an easy site to use. However, if you don't have the IT skills to be able to do this, I will always do it on your behalf.

The debacle of the erratic and intermittent painting of double yellow lines continues...

Here is the link to the website

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

This is what you will see when you log onto Report a Problem:

Report a problem



Track an existing problem



Pothole

Large 40mm vertical-edge hole that is also greater than 300mm wide



Flooding and blocked drains

Standing water, blocked drain, flooded property, impassable road



Street lights, lit signs, lit bollards

Faulty street light, zebra crossing, bollard, lit sign



Overgrown vegetation

Pedestrians forced into road, cars over central line, reduced visibility



Hazardous or fallen trees

Trees that have fallen into the road or are leaning, unstable, diseased or dying.



Trip hazard

Hole or significant difference in level on pavement or cycleway



Broken manhole cover

Broken, missing or rocking manhole cover



Parking

Request enforcement in residents' parking and on-street parking zones



Public rights of way

For example blocked access or broken stiles



Debris or obstruction

Thick mud, soil, stones, embankment slips, large branches, fallen trees



Ice

Ice or snow on road



Defective road markings or signs

White and yellow, stop or give way lines or warning signs

Four Elms Hill

The date for work on this is now showing as 15-19th June 2020, put back from April owing to CV-19. I am sure this date may change again depending on the situation.

Scams

Please do be aware of the many scams that are on the rise which can take the form of bogus charities, testing kits and cures, donation scams claiming to be raising money to fight the virus, refund emails claiming to be offering refunds for holidays which may have had to be cancelled, financial offers which may appeal to those struggling financially. They can come via phone, email and the post so do be aware and talk about these with family and friends.

Lord Clinton's representative - offer of support

I was contacted by the above offering help from Lord Clinton during CV-19. I asked what was being offered, I was unclear about the specifics of the response so I said I would give it some thought.

I spoke to a few residents who pointed out that re-instating the Doctor's surgery would be a start though I didn't hold out much hope. I emailed that suggestion to the representative. This went down like a lead balloon who said she was surprised at my response during CV-19 and that most other people she had spoken to were extremely grateful to Lord Clinton for his very generous offer and that she was not going to bother to contact me in future. I thought about the withdrawal of the medical centre, and the retraction of the offer by CDE's builder Cavanna Homes to provide something for the village by way of compensation for the disruption caused by the construction of the 40 new houses and struggled to find evidence of his generosity here in Newton Poppleford to date. Other residents have asked by CDE does not open the railway line from Otter Reach so that people could walk safely between the villages during CV-19. I will pass on the message but don't hold your breath. If you want any other suggestions passed to Lord Clinton do contact me.

Here are the latest CV-19 links from EDDC:

Residents' weekly Coronavirus update:

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/latest-updates/east-devon-residents-coronavirus-update-24-april-2020/>

Business weekly Coronavirus update:

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/latest-updates/east-devon-business-coronavirus-update-24-april-2020/>

DV Toolkit resources

Dave Whelan - Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety Coordinator, sent this:

Nine really useful DV Toolkit resources for all different circumstances that individuals may find themselves in. They are a really good source of advice and contact material.

Domestic abuse recourses from Splitz can be accessed at the following link

<https://www.splitz.org/resources/talk-toolkits.html>

Government changes rules for council meetings

The Government have made the Regulations to permit virtual / remote meetings:

They apply to any meetings to be held up to 7th May 2021. They apply to Cabinet meetings and all formal committees and sub-committees of the Council.

The requirement to give notice and the publication of papers for meetings can be done virtually through the Council's website. Once notice has been given, EDDC can alter the frequency, move or cancel such meetings, without requirement for further notice - a meeting can be cancelled, even if the agenda has been published.

There is no requirement for any physical presence, the whole meeting can be carried out with everyone being in 'remote attendance'. While there is a clear preference for people being seen, the regulations do acknowledge that hearing each other alone is acceptable. However, requirements over being quorate remain. A member is deemed to be 'attending remotely' (and therefore counts to the meeting being quorate) as long as certain conditions are satisfied. These include that (i) the member is able to hear and be heard by the other members in attendance, and (ii) they are able to be heard and hear any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting.

Parish Council meetings to be held 'virtually' using Zoom

The first meeting held in this way is on Monday 27th April 2020. Residents can join the meeting and ask questions in the public speaking session but will be muted after that. The clerk is also going to try to live stream this via Facebook.

EDDC Remote Council Meetings

Concern has been expressed by some councillors that EDDC seem in no hurry to reinstate council meetings even using remote means. This means that decision making is left to officers and a few members of Cabinet which is not a democratic way to run the council. In the meantime, other councils - such as Exeter City Council and councils in surrounding counties - are running meetings.

Planning Applications

Officers at EDDC are working remotely in all departments. Concern has been raised by residents and some councillors about planning applications and DMC meetings. There are some cases where a site inspection cannot be carried out at the present time or where a committee decision is needed and has been delayed. This leads to a risk of appeals against non-determination, so EDDC are trying to agree extensions of time with applicants wherever possible. The government considered making a change to the time allowed to determine planning decisions but then decided against this. The Planning Inspectorate are experiencing delays at the present time and so if applicants do go to appeal, appeals decisions too are likely to be delayed.

Applications where a fully informed decision can still be made by EDDC under delegated powers are still being progressed and so it is important that Ward Members continue to comment on applications within the consultation period so that the views of their communities can be given due consideration.

According to the Chairman of DMC, planning applications are continuing to be processed as normal although there has been a delay to DMC meetings due to issues with how to conduct remote meetings that one the one hand allow the public to attend and yet can be controlled and not sabotaged by outsiders following a rather unfortunate incident with Somerset District Council.

Devon County Council appeal to return community equipment no longer needed

Devon County Council is urgently appealing for members of the public to return community equipment they no longer need, including commodes, walking frames, shower stools, and raised toilet seats, as increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic for these items has meant stocks are in danger of becoming short in supply.

Equipment like this is often given to people when they leave hospital, or after a period of illness, to help them stay safe and regain their independence. However, the outbreak of the virus has meant that NHS and social care teams have needed to quickly support a much higher volume of patients with items of equipment, placing an increased demand on the local equipment service. Some items, such as commodes, are in especially high demand. Manufacturers, supply and distribution chains are unable to cope with demand

The Council is asking that anyone who has items of equipment they are no longer using to contact Millbrook Care on [0330 124 4491](tel:03301244491) so that a collection can be arranged, free of charge. Once a collection is arranged, people will be asked to leave the item outside or in a safe place for collection by Millbrook.

Items that can be re-used will be fully tested, refurbished if required, and thoroughly cleaned before being reused.

Wouldn't it be great if this system could be continued. When we looked at recycling at Scrutiny a number of years ago, I remember someone quoting that in another area their hospital was saving £300,000 per year by sterilising and re-using returned equipment.

Democratic Alliance Questions to Cabinet 22nd April 2020 and Chief Executive's response. (Questions in black, response in red).

1. We are aware that in the last week there has been a greater number of food parcels delivered directly to those in the most vulnerable category. It took a month for this to be more widely actioned. Please can you confirm the district's role in this now, if any? **The national scheme for those who are in the shielded cohort is led locally by DCC. An example of our role was given in yesterday's update. We are anticipating that the role of our local community hub will progressively increase for the wider vulnerable sector who don't fall within the shielded cohort criteria.**
2. We are pleased to see EDDC acting as a hub across many issues. Please can you confirm what issues have been raised or help asked for by those making contact using available data if possible? **We receive approximately 50 calls a day. The vast majority of calls are for assistance with food and prescriptions. We also receive more general calls from residents seeking information about the crisis. In all, the Council is receiving approximately 500 calls a day.**
3. What is the current status of play and recreation spaces owned by EDDC? **A press release was issued about this yesterday and circulated to all members. The Portfolio holder will provide a further update separately regarding recreation and open spaces.**
4. What is the policy towards tenants of EDDC land or property who are now non-operational? **We are considering requests on a case by case basis so that we can assess the most appropriate response to suit the particular tenant. Income to the Council from our tenanted property remains an important consideration and many businesses have benefitted from the various Govt. schemes.**
5. Please would you update us on the help that has been offered to the homeless at this time? Also, the Government directive was to home all homeless people within a week. Has that been achieved? How many people are known to have become homeless since the Covid 19 crisis started? **This has been previously covered but I can confirm that all rough sleepers were offered accommodation over three weeks ago. Two took up the offer and one refused. We have seen an increase in homelessness approaches and we are accommodating an additional 22 people in temporary accommodation (last week's figure). We have sourced additional temporary accommodation should we need it and have prepared for an increase in referrals as a possible result of increased domestic violence and/or the release of prisoners.**

6. Please would you update us on the effects of the crisis on our council tenants and what action EDDC has been able to take to alleviate any difficulties? **In the main our service to tenants continues as before although visits for repairs and gas servicing are being done on a health & safety basis. We have adapted our service to assist particular requirements. We have been making welfare calls to all Home Safeguard customers and older/vulnerable people in general needs housing. Our Mobile Support Officers have been calling clients more frequently and arranging activities for older people where they are self-isolating. We have ensured that essential and emergency repairs are undertaken as well as gas servicing/safety checks performed with all the necessary precautions where due. We have seconded our Community Development team to the Community Support Hub. Our Housing Matters newsletter has been prepared as a Covid-19 update edition which will provide information to all tenants.**
7. Please could you advise the percentage of of the total number of known businesses in the district who have applied for financial assistance? **We can only answer for those schemes that we are administering and details were provided earlier this week. We do not have access to figures for those schemes that the Govt. is administering.**
8. We understand that Planning applications are being processed as normal. Can you confirm that this is the case but that action on any Strategic Planning matters are suspended until its committee can meet? **As previously updated, planning applications are being processed. Other matters await the ability to hold meetings of the SPC.**
9. Please will you confirm if any commercial purchases have been made in the last three months? Please will you confirm that negotiations for any more purchase are suspended? **We have previously confirmed matters in respect of the Ocean in Exmouth. No other negotiations are currently being considered.**
10. Please will you provide a summary by Simon Davey of the effect of the crisis on the council's finances? What is the amount in our reserves as of today's date? **The Portfolio Holder is proposing to run a session with his member policy team next week regarding this matter and we will provide further information to all Cllrs as soon as possible. We are still awaiting details from MHCLG of the proposed allocation of the recently announced £1.6bn. This may have an impact on reserve levels so it is important we await this information.**
11. As we understand that Cabinets across the region - and even small councils - have already been meeting online please will you confirm the date on which the May Cabinet meeting is to be held? Also, will it be live streamed? **- At the present time we cannot hold legally compliant meetings. Cabinet will not therefore be meeting on the programmed date in May. The delivery of Zoom was chosen by all 3 councils as the member's preferred platform due to a better live streaming functionality and this is currently being worked on by Strata. When we have a more definitive date for when Zoom will be available to facilitate the holding of virtual meetings we will of course notify all members. When formal meetings commence then yes they will be live streamed.**

Former Deputy Chief Executive uses delegated powers to buy Ocean, Exmouth

The last administration gave delegated powers to the former Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) to buy commercial property up to the value of £20M as an investment and a way for the council to increase their income given government cuts to councils. I was particularly against this given the volatility of the commercial property market and voted against it. The matter was raised again in this administration asking to reverse this decision but once again The Independent group defended the policy. The DCE used these powers this year to buy 'Ocean' in Exmouth, time will tell how that pans out as an investment. The DCE no longer works for EDDC.

Extract from EDDC Chief Executive update 23 April 2020

Government begins large-scale virus infection and antibody test study: I thought this link would be particularly interesting as it is potentially linked to an exit strategy for the current crisis - https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-begins-large-scale-virus-infection-and-antibody-test-study?utm_source=78f3a4b7-5fee-4e2d-a4b5-0b79104e0ad3&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

Business closures: There has been an update on the official Government guidance on business and venue closures. This follows the extension of social distancing measures until at least 7 May. A small number of [minor amendments to the regulations](#) were made yesterday, for clarity and to ease the operation of the regulations. The regulations also clarify the following:

- The measures require a reasonable excuse to leave and remain outside of the house.*
- Burial grounds may remain open, and grounds surrounding a crematorium may also remain open, including gardens of remembrance. It is also a reasonable excuse for people to leave their home to visit such a site, in order to pay respects to a loved one. (more on this below)*
- Livestock markets and auctions may operate.*
- Clarity that outdoor swimming pools (in addition to indoor) should be closed.*
- All money service businesses may remain open. Withdrawing or depositing money is also listed as a reasonable excuse to be out of the house.*
- Clarification that prosecutions for breaches of the measures while they are in place will be brought or continued following lifting of the measures.*
- Clarity that those aged 18 and over can be issued with fixed penalty notices.*
- Clarity on the way regulations and enforcement apply to children and their responsible adults (that is, the ability to instruct the responsible adult to escort the child home if the child breaches the regulations.)*

At the time of writing, an update is awaited on the official [government guidance on business and venue closures](#) to reflect these latest changes.

Data on COVID-19: the LGA Inform reports on COVID-19 hospital cases are now available again. These are updated daily, after Public Health England publish the information on their website. The new data in the reports shows the number of positive tests there have been on each date – but it means there is a lag. In effect, the five latest days have low numbers simply because not all the tests on that day have had the results reported yet. We have modified LG Inform to make this ‘provisional’ data (which is likely to change) clearer for you, by shading it in grey.

- [Local authority report](#) (which now shows a map of English authorities over time)
- [England overview report](#) (which contains the top ten councils)

Volunteer responders: Of the 750,000 people who registered with the NHS Volunteer Responders (NHSVR) scheme, 607,000 of them have been accepted and are now ready for service. At any one time as many as 350,000 NHSVRs are ‘on duty’ to take referrals for support from the NHS, councils, adult social care providers, and more recently other organisations such as charities, the police and fire services. The NHS and the Royal Voluntary Service have been able to adapt the scheme to ensure that local partners are able to share high level data on the number of volunteers available in an area. From the end of this week, the number of NHSVRs will be available on a clinical commissioning group (CCG) and local authority level. In Devon, the data will be available at district level and aggregated at county level. This will assist councils and their partners in the voluntary and community sector to gain a more comprehensive picture of voluntary capacity to provide support to vulnerable people in the community. Referrers to NHSVR support are now also able to [make ‘bulk’ referrals using the GoodSam app](#). This means that someone from a council, adult social care provider, pharmacy or GP surgery can refer several requests for support at the same time, rather than having to enter them all individually.

Loneliness: Even before this period of social distancing, loneliness was one of the nation’s biggest public health challenges with far reaching implications for individuals, communities and local services. In October last year the LGA launched their [‘Reaching Out’ guide for commissioners](#), service providers and councils to help tackle loneliness and support those affected by it. This was produced jointly with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). With supporting the emotional wellbeing of those at risk of feeling cut off even more important now, the [Government has launched a major effort to tackle loneliness](#). This package of measures includes a new [#LetsTalkLoneliness public campaign](#), funding for the charity sector, guidance on supporting yourself and others, and Age UK working with NHS Volunteer Responders in communities