

Yarty Ward – District Councillor’s Parish Council Report;

Cllr. Paul Hayward

December 2019

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Next meeting of East Devon District Council:

Council is due to meet again on 26th February in Honiton. As always, all members of the public are welcome to attend and ask questions / make representations as they wish. Details of the agenda and previous minutes are available (including audio recordings for those suffering from insomnia) via the website link below.

There will be motions to be debated and a series of written questions to Leader of the Council (which can then be followed up with additional verbal supplementary questions). This will be the first meeting of Full Council in 2020. Thereafter 22nd April, and then Annual Meeting on 13th May 2020.

Recent meetings of EDDC:

All minutes / decisions / audio recordings available online at:

www.eastdevon.gov.uk

Full Council	18 th December 2019
Cabinet	27 th November 2019 (and next 8 th Jan.)
Scrutiny	21 st November 2019
Strategic Planning	9 th December 2019 (see below)
Development Management (DMC)	3 rd December 2019 & 7 th January 2020
Overview	14 th November 2019

General Election result 2019:

The residents of Tiverton and Honiton constituency went to the polls on 12th December and the result, announced 13th December, was as follows:

Neil Parish (CON)	35,893
Liz Pole (LAB)	11,654
John Timperley (LIB)	8,807
Colin Reed (GRN)	2,291
Margaret Dennis (UKIP)	968

Congratulations to Neil on his re-election and I hope that he strives to support every resident in his patch and work with all Councillors – of all parties – to make our part of East Devon an even better place to live, work and play.

Neil can be reached via phone on 020 7219 7172 or via email at:

neil.parish.mp@parliament.uk

Car Parking:

As reported recently, Council has established a TAFF (Task and Finish Forum) to review parking charges and amenities across the district in light of the recent decision NOT to impose an arbitrary increase and change parking policy after a huge level of opposition from elected members. The TAFF is meeting currently and residents of Yarty ward are encouraged to have your say on parking charges and provision in Axminster (and other towns) so that your voice can be heard. Details on the EDDC website, or feel free to contact me via email or phone to let me know your thoughts, concerns and views on this matter.

Recent EDDC Press Releases:

Sidmouth Beach Management Plan update

Action on Homelessness in the district

Woodland Partnerships

Recycling and Waste Service updates

East Devon Homes Ltd – clarification of progress / achievement

S.106 sports spending highlights 2019

Membury Neighbourhood Plan report.

Axminster Masterplan

Delay to sale of Knowle (financial implications to Council)

Exmouth Tidal Defence scheme

Details of all of these initiatives and news stories can be found online via the website and social media feeds.

Knowle Sale delays as reported in local press:

For those with an interest in such matters, the sale of the Knowle building in Sidmouth has been delayed after the proposed purchaser (Pegasus Life) failed to complete by the agreed date of December 18th. They have since issued a press statement saying that they will complete by January 14th by way of an extension to the agreed deadline. EDDC has cited breach of contract and has now begun legal action against them to secure the £9m outstanding and any associated legal costs (and damages and interest). A 5% deposit was secured at the outset and it is hoped that things will sort themselves out without the need for expensive legal action especially as the construction of the new HQ in Honiton was funded by a loan, on the basis of this money being received. Any failure to complete would leave a large hole in the Council's accounts.

Axminster Masterplan (Strategic Planning Committee decision):

On the 9th December, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) met to consider the way forward with regards to the Masterplan and the associated large scale development of 850 extra homes, together with amenity and service provision, green space and the long-awaited relief road. It was accepted that the Homes England funding was unlikely to be forthcoming (having been downgraded from a grant originally into a repayable loan) and the development consortium claiming that they could not afford to deliver both a road AND affordable dwellings, and other infrastructure improvements to mitigate against the impact of these new houses (which would add considerably to Axminster's already straining transport system). Officers recommended that the scheme be permitted to continue but with no forward delivery of the road – something that Town and District Councillors have argued against – and it was ultimately agreed to return to the consultants to seek new solutions as to how the road might be paid for. Councillors accepted that central government funding was unlikely but, in light of the GE result on 13/12, there might be some movement at Westminster after all... watch this space!

Councillors understand that we have one opportunity to get this right. I made representations that the residents of Yarty ward expected me to be involved at the highest level (as Axminster is their primary town) and that decisions by unelected officers to exclude me from debates and discussions were unacceptable and undemocratic. The issue of Weycroft Bridge can not be kicked into the long grass as any solution that ignores this pinch-point is not a solution at all.

Redundant Post at EDDC:

We were informed in early December by the Chief Executive that the post of Deputy Chief Executive at EDDC was to be made redundant '*to help to balance the budget*'. This raised some interesting questions. As we understood it, the post holder in question was specifically brought in to oversee the relocation of EDDC offices from the Knowle to Honiton (see above). You will recall the promise was that this would be '*cost neutral*' and that particular objective has not been without criticism and questions over value. More worryingly, the post holder just last year was given '*delegated responsibility*' to spend up to £20million to invest in commercial property (in £5M chunks) on behalf of the council, a decision that does not sit easily with members who saw this kind of spending as fraught with risks in a market that Council has no experience in. Many Councillors have concerns over the timing of this recent news especially in light of the Knowle delays above and we are seeking assurances that the departure of the Deputy CEO will not come with a huge redundancy pay-off coupled with a non-disclosure agreement, something which causes consternation to the public and Councillors alike. Once the 14th January has passed, and the money from Pegasus Life is in our bank account, then perhaps the finer details can be reviewed and agreements reached.

And, finally; Happy New Year!!

I hope that all residents, Councillors and officers had a very pleasant Christmas and I wish you all a very happy, healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year. The year ahead looks to be extremely busy and full of surprises and I look forward to serving you all as Ward member in 2020 and beyond. Please do get in touch if I can be of any assistance. My details are on the relevant parish council websites and noticeboards, and available of course via EDDC HQ / website.

My best wishes to you all as always.

Paul