

County Councillor's Report 16th July – Coffinswell

A reminder that the Covid-19 Hardship Fund is still available for those who are struggling financially to cover basic costs. As we come out of lockdown it may be that more people need financial support. Please highlight the fund to Parishioners and share this reminder with your networks. The funding is available for those who need financial help as a result of the pandemic to cover for example utility or essential mobile phone bills, transport costs, purchase of white goods or other essential items. To qualify, applicants need to be:

- Resident in Teignbridge for three months prior to the application
- Financially impacted by the COVID19 pandemic
- Unable to receive funding from other sources
- Without savings or without £500 disposable income

Payments will normally be up to £200 other than in exceptional circumstances and will be paid directly to creditors. Full details and application process is on the TDC website. Those without internet should call us on 01626 215 512.

Devon is in a good position to start welcoming back visitors from 4th July due to our low level of infections and success during lockdown in keeping a low trend in Covid-19 cases. All the evidence from Public Health experts shows that because the County was able to get an early grip on the virus Devon continues to have one of the lowest rates of Covid-19 cases in the country.

Thanks to a brilliant Devon effort by our front-line health and care workers, council staff, police and military Devon is in a good position to start welcoming back visitors in July providing the low trend in cases continues locally and nationally.

It would be a huge boost to our £2 billion tourism economy, the biggest in the South West, and all the tens of thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on it. We know the people of Britain need a break and we need them back for the economy of this county. The County Council's Public Health team along with Public Health England, the NHS and District Council Environmental Health experts will continue to monitor the situation in Devon very carefully and we will not hesitate to take early action if there is any sign that the virus is making a comeback.

Highway developments. The Jetty Marsh link road between Whitehill Cross and West Golds Way (Newton Abbot Hospital) is a longstanding priority and will extend the A382 Phase 1 improvements into town. It will provide an alternative to the narrow Exeter Road stretch towards Newton Abbot's colleges and ensure that safe and convenient walking and cycling facilities are available for residents. The scheme featured in an urgent response to the Government's call for 'shovel ready' infrastructure projects in late June 2020 with a request for £5.8 million grant funding. Coordinating the Heart of the South West's submission, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) ranked the project second on a list of around 100 schemes across Devon and Somerset. If the bid is successful, the project will need to be delivered by spring 2022. However, the land needed for this corridor must be secured beforehand.

The first phase of works between Forches Cross and Whitehill Cross is currently underway. This £13 million scheme is being managed by Devon County Council and the scheme is due for completion by the start of 2021.

The remaining A382 improvements are the subject of a Major Road Network £43.5 million funding bid to the Department for Transport. Timescales for determining the bid are uncertain but it is hoped that there will be more news this autumn. If successful, works would be completed in phases, finishing by around 2025. Where additional land is required; the County Council have been working with landowners to reach the necessary agreements.

Devon County Council are due to invite tenders for construction of the £7.4 million first phase of the new link road during autumn 2020. This Section will run from Forches Cross to Howton Road. Bloor and Redrow Homes have submitted a new planning application for the remainder of the route through to the A383 Ashburton Road and will be responsible for delivery there.

The County Council has reopened its Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) for essential use. The government has defined 'essential use' as waste that *'cannot be stored without causing a risk of injury, health or*

harm to the resident or other members of their household.' Residents are urged to follow government guidance and only travel to recycling centres if the waste presents a hazard and *'cannot be legally and responsibly disposed of in other ways.'*

Van based cars with seats in the back and trailers are now allowed into the HWRC. The site has been reconfigured to allow a further six offloading spaces which equates to an additional 300 vehicles a day. We now have a booking system to allow vans and commercial vehicles onto the site. You can book a van here <https://www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/recycling-centres/site-user-restrictions/>

Devon Libraries will start to reopen from Monday 6th July, starting with the larger libraries. They will be starting with a contactless 'Choose & Collect' service which will be available at most of our libraries and we also anticipate four pilot libraries opening initially with limited public access to the building and bookable sessions on public computers.

For safety reasons libraries will initially be offering a more limited selection of stock for people to choose from. All books and items returned to the library will undergo 72 hours' quarantine before they are discharged from customer accounts and returned to the library shelves. They will be asking all customers to place returned items into a box at the library to keep them separate from books that are ready to be loaned.

The reservation service will not be operating initially, instead the free of charge 'Choose and Collect' service will be available where customers can select books or request a selection of books, via email or telephone from their local library, ready for collection from the library entrance at a pre-arranged time. The full reservation system will be reintroduced after all libraries reopen.

At CIRS Scrutiny two weeks ago we received a briefing from the Chief Executive on the current position in Devon regarding the pandemic. He reported that:

- the relatively low number of positive cases and deaths in Devon (1100 and 125 respectively, to date), although the actual number of positive cases was likely to be significantly higher;
- Devon had one of the lowest number of cases and deaths nationally, 146th of 150 upper tier local authorities;
- with the recent relaxation of lock down rules and increased number of visitors, to date there had been no increased rate of positive cases;
- the incidents of cases in care home settings was the lowest nationally
- the number of excess deaths in Devon was in the lowest category nationally
- work was continuing to support care home settings, taking pressure off the NHS;

The annual report of our Council's Treasury management team was next on the agenda. The level of long term debt remained for the tenth year at £507.85 million, we approved the Outturn Position and congratulated the team on an income of £.496 million against a Budget of £1.6 million. Sadly, it would be difficult to repeat this success in future years whilst Base Rates remain at 0.1%.

We heard the annual Report of our Flood Risk Management team – 500 consultations on sustainable drainage schemes; just under 100 Land Drainage Consent applications; three formal notices to landowners requesting that they clear blockages from watercourses and one Flood Investigation Report arising from a storm were dealt with in the year. The team also managed £1.5 million of flood improvements (this would have been much higher if the pandemic had not shut everything down early).

The Committee agreed to reply to the Under Secretary of State for Sport, Tourism and Heritage who had written to the Committee regarding our concerns on problem gambling in the UK and Devon in particular – the committee felt that the USOS's response was weak and Members considered that gambling should be considered in the same like as alcoholism and mental health. We also agree to write to Cabinet urging them to write to Secretary of State to permanently change the law to enable virtual meetings to be a fixture of the effective running of local decision making for Local Authorities as this will support the most effective local decision making and action and further support green initiatives and carbon reduction.

Finally, I want to say thank you again to all the amazing NHS workers, the Social Care staff, the Council bin men & sweepers, those behind the scenes keeping everything going, the teachers, the shop workers, the delivery drivers and those providing vital services - thank for all you have done!

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