

District Councillor Report – January 2024

Joint Planning and Policy Committee- we now have a 5-year Housing and Land Supply again. Both councils have given the go ahead to do a New joint local plan and will start visioning before the formal process starts. The last meeting highlighted the need for more traveller sites which has always been a struggle.

Full Council-

-Barbara Shaw Chief Exec of Westward Housing presented to Full Council in December with their highlights. There were 826 home improvements, 5731 repairs, with £16m invested in repairs and maintenance. Also 54 new homes for rent and shared partnership in Torridge and they received a customer satisfaction award last year. We are aware though of course there are also complaints and they will be called in for scrutiny later in the year for us to address different issues

-Torridge District Strategic Plan - Plan Consultation is now completed and plan now adopted and will be integrated into the council's business plans. There were a few additions made as a result of the consultation and the plan was adjusted accordingly, including to investigate the appetite for and feasibility of a rail link connecting Bideford and Barnstaple- it should be noted that the vast majority of that line would be within North Devon District, not Torridge!

-There was also unanimous support from district councillors for the mental health link centres that DCC are proposing to close down.

Old Torrington Creamery/Old Milk Factory/Dairy- The demolition of the old Torrington Creamery commenced in November and is expected to last for 8 to 10 months. The project is being carried out by the joint administrators of Waterside Construction Southwest Ltd and Valley Estates Southwest Ltd (in administration) that own the site, with support of Farm Finance Ltd, TDC assistance, Devon and Cornwall Police and the Fire and Rescue Service. This move has been welcomed by Torridge District Council.

Community Safety Partnership with North Devon Council- there was emphasis on the importance of street marshalls. In North Devon this has been funded through the Safer Streets Fund but wasn't available to Torridge. The police have said they will not fund it, and so the question is where funding will come from if we want it to continue or see more of it. There has also been success regarding a night bus between Barnstaple and Bideford and the councils are requesting they extend the routes to Torrington and Ilfracombe. It helps keep people safe by reducing drink driving, unlicensed taxis, people trying to walk home under the influence of alcohol.

First Meeting was held recently of the North Devon Culture Board - to deliver North Devon culture strategy for wellbeing, talent development, cultural hubs in market towns, youth and training skills. This also includes heritage and museums. There was initial discussion around a cultural directory, mapping, events and youth workshops. The board is looking for more members with specific skills in the cultural sector, including young people.

We're also hoping to grant some councillor grant money to Tea and tots for toys and crafts. We recently granted money to Shebbear Primary for tablets for one of the classes.

Berry Cross has been a bit of an ice rink recently, I've contacted our county councillor about it and suggested a grit bin there, but obviously the best solution would be to stop the water flowing across the road.