

Devon County Council: key issues

COVID concerns and advice remain a key priority at DCC and Public Health Devon. Walk-in vaccination centres for both COVID vaccinations and boosters and regular flu jabs are now opening up for those eligible. This is the link for advice and updates on services: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/>

20mph applications: The outcome of the 20mph areas selected further to the call for applications in March has been confirmed. There are none in this division.

Appendix 1 to CET/22/23 - 20 mph Assessment System

Name of Community / Location*	Pass / Fail	
Community Support (via local Elected Member and Local Town/Parish Council)	Pass / Fail	
POLICY COMPLIANCE	Score	Sub Total
Traffic Speed (85thtile)		
Below 24 mph	4	
25-30 mph	2	
Above 31 mph	0	
Speed Related Injury Collision (3 year record)		
Each Slight	1	
Each Serious	2	
Each Fatal	3	
Vulnerable Road Users / Environment		
School/Playground	1	
Health/Social Care Facility	1	
Community Facility	1	
Footway both sides	-1	
Footway one side	0	
No Footway	1	
Pedestrian crossing	-1	
OTHER FACTORS		
Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)	2	
Community Speed Watch Scheme	2	
Road Character		
A road	0	
B road	1	
C class road	2	
Unclassified road	0	
Index of Multiple Deprivation		
Decile 1 and 2	5	
Decile 3 and 4	3	
Decile 5 and 6	0	
Decile 7 and 8	-3	
Decile 9 and 10	-5	
Total Score		

*Where multiple sections of highway are proposed for 20SPL, assessment will be made on representative length(s).

The scores for the applications made for this division are as follows:

List no.	Location	Score
8	Totnes	12
12	Dartington 1	11
20	Dartington 2	11

Communities scoring 10 and under in alphabetical order:

- o Harberton
- o Harbertonford (westward extension of 20mph)
- o Harbertonford (A381 from filling station to Chapel Lane)
- o Harbertonford (along Old Road adjacent to the Primary School)
- o Staverton (Landscape/Woolston Green, include Landscape Primary School)
- o Staverton (Memory Cross)
- o Staverton (St Christophers School)

After the successful applications were announced, and having read the criteria that had been applied to score the applications, I submitted a motion to Full Council on 21.07.22 seeking modifications to the criteria for assessment and additional funding for the other schemes that had been put forward to be funded in the 2023/24 financial year. It was watered down, but the final version of my motion that was amended by Cabinet and then agreed at Council was as follows:

Councillor Hart **MOVED** and Councillor McInnes **SECONDED** that the Cabinet's advice be accepted and that Council ask the Cabinet to provide an appropriate level of funding for the continuation of the roll out of 20mph speed limits, when considering all the proposals for the 2023/24 Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Block expenditure in the autumn.

Implementation of Parking Restrictions approved for this financial year: DCC Highways Neighbourhood Team has confirmed the roll-out of this year's programme as follows:

"The requests for this year are at the stage of having the final technical drawings drafted ready for submission to the contractors.

As we undertake the works geographically to achieve the best value for money, we need to co-ordinate all the lining and the signing works for an area. The fabrication of the signage has the longest lead-in time and this will determine how quickly the works are completed.

We are aiming to have the technical drawings with the contractors by the end of September and the works should be undertaken through the months of October, November and December. However, at every opportunity we will endeavour to start the works as soon as possible."

2022/23 HATOC Local Waiting Restriction Programme List: The **closing date** for requests for next year's programme of parking restrictions proposals is **Friday 23 September**. Please ensure you have sent all your requests/proposals **to me** by Tuesday 20th September at the latest, to ensure I can notify the local Neighbourhood Highways Team before this date

Bus services and reductions by Stagecoach in Higher Westonfields, Bridgetown

Stagecoach have recently advised that they are going to cease operating the Gold service round Higher Westonfields from 4 September 2022. This will be part replaced by service 88 which normally runs between Newton Abbot and Totnes and is being extended as a town service to serve this area. As a result, it will only be operating anti-clockwise (southbound) round the area – apart from the afternoon journey from South Devon College which will come in the other direction. The buses used will be smaller buses.

Concerns have been raised by Bridgetown Alive and some residents regarding these revisions to the routes, I have written to both DCC Highways officers and Stagecoach reps seeking clarification and raised some issues:

- It has been difficult to find hard information (i.e. timetables) to substantiate the statement put out by Stagecoach that the 88 bus will provide services in these parts of Bridgetown.
- Do they imagine that Bob the Community Bus will pick up the slack?

The key problems that need to be taken into account are:

- It is quite a walk to Bridgetown Hill from large areas of Bridgetown down to access buses in Totnes (Seven Stars) or to cut through to Bridgetown Hill.
- A lot of those pedestrian journeys are on steep roads – difficult for older people and those with young children &/or heavy shopping
- The cost of taxis has gone up, and their use simply causes more traffic
- The Cost of Living Crisis could force people who cannot realistically walk to access bus services, and can't afford alternative transport may have to lose their job.
- It is widely accepted that being unable to get out and about easily means people can feel trapped in their homes and in turn experience mental health issues.
- If people are forced to access the buses from stops on Bridgetown Hill, then a new zebra crossing should be installed to make them safe
- In short rather than assist people to use public transport services and get more people out of their cars, the opposite will happen.
- Are bus companies making such changes that will affect a large number of residents, in particular elderly residents, families with young children, and areas with a steep topography and a higher than average proportion of below average income, not obliged to carry out a public consultation to assess public views and the likely impacts of these changes to local people?

I was also concerned that this was possibly an extreme response to a considered discussion at a site meeting with DCC officers and Stagecoach representatives earlier this year in Higher Westonfields, which had investigated complaints about buses meeting at the narrow junction and bend by the triangle, such that the busses were needing to mount the

pavement. The response at the time from Stagecoach was that they might be able to modify the timetable a little and that DCC could remove a parking space to make more room.

I understand from a resident who had contacted Anthony Mangnall on this matter, that Stagecoach are stating the near misses of their busses on Higher Westonfields (as mentioned in my text above) as a reason for the changes to the services. I have followed up this with a request for clarification to Stagecoach and a further request to reconsider and reinstate these important services in Totnes.

The reply from the DCC officer (who also provided a copy of the new timetable - attached separately) as follows:
“ I can confirm that Stagecoach will still be serving Westonfields and Higher Westonfields through their service 88”.
“This will normally operate round the route southbound only, returning into town via the A385. The exception is that afternoon journey from South Devon College which will be coming into town via Westonfields and Higher Westonfields so will continue to operate northbound. I attach the timetable they will be running.

“ As you will see from the timetable, this is a reduction in timetable both in frequency and the loss of the service evenings and Sundays, which one of the residents has contacted us about, and has also been in touch with Councillor Andrea Davis. However, our view at Devon County Council is that the daytime service on Mondays to Saturdays is still reasonable and will cater for the vast majority of passengers due to fewer travelling evenings and Sundays. Service 88, like the Gold, is commercially operated by Stagecoach and at present, we do not have any authority to force them to continue the current timetable. Stagecoach also do not have any obligation to consult on such plans. Whilst we do have a budget to support bus services, this is under pressure due to the rising cost of fuel and driver wage increases. We are therefore having to make difficult decisions over where we can replace withdrawals to Stagecoach services as this example is far from unique due to a combination of less people travelling and the need to adjust services to help solve their driver shortage problem which is still affecting reliability of services. We are generally prioritising those where the service is being completely withdrawn from areas to ensure passengers are not cut off.”

Local residents attended Totnes TC meeting on September 5th requesting support for the reinstatement of these services and informing the TC that they had gathered a number of signatures on a petition to Stagecoach. (I will be supporting the residents in bringing this petition to DCC and Stagecoach).

DCC hosting a Public consultation on Stagecoach services further to issues regarding the reliability of services in some areas. DCCLr Andrea Davies (Cabinet Member for Highways), has issued the following request for submissions: “Most of you will be aware of the ongoing issues with the reliability of Stagecoach local bus services which has been raised at the Exeter Highways and Transport Orders Committee, Cabinet and Full Council. Partly as a result of my two letters to him, Stagecoach Devon has been called by the Traffic Commissioner to a Public Inquiry on 27th October 2022. As part of this process, Devon County Council have received a directive to provide evidence to the Traffic Commissioner.

Therefore, please could I ask you to send any emails, letters, social media conversations etc you have received from your constituents relating to service reliability and failures, including your replies. We are going to include correspondence relating to ALL of services operating in our Council area regarding Stagecoach services, not just the Exeter area.

As the Inquiry relates to the period since the Commissioner’s last inspection of services in October 2021, please only include correspondence from **1st October 2021, up to and including the 6th October 2022 by when we have to submit evidence.** The transport team will ensure all personal information is redacted prior to being sent to the Traffic Commissioner. We look forward to hearing from you to help us build a substantial portfolio of evidence, and thank you for your assistance.”

Please could you send them to: devonbus@devon.gov.uk – **and cc me: jacqi.hodgson@devon.gov.uk

KEVICCS – sale of sites. As the Secretary of State (previously James Cleverly MP) has a decisive role in the sale of the individual sites that KEVICCS has invited bids for, I wrote a comprehensive letter bringing together all the elements regarding the community support for the TC bid, the survey information, the multitude of public benefits etc of keeping the two Elmhirst sites on Lower Field in public ownership and the importance and community benefits of keeping them as green open space sites. I made him aware of the public concerns regarding the recent changes to the articles of

association by Dart Valley Learning Trust and the implications regarding the monies from sales as KEVICCS becomes part of Education South West, a multi-academy Trust, which may not permit ring-fencing of those monies for KEVICCS use only. I copied that letter to Baroness Barran MP (Minister for Schools) and Anthony Mangnall MP (who I have had a several conversations and correspondence exchanges with on this matter. I also copied in The Dept of Education who replied thanking me for this information which they said they welcomed and would be taken into consideration on this decision. Now that the Secretary of State for Education has been replaced as a result of the new Prime Minister Liz Truss switching the cabinet around again, I have resent the correspondence to newly appointed Kit Malthouse MP.

I also wrote in the last two weeks to Devon County Council regarding the concerns that have been raised and received regarding some key concerns regarding decisions and changes being enacted by Dart Valley Learning Trust who took over management of the KEVICCS estate in 2013. These are my questions that received the following replies from DCC

KEVICCS does not appear to have carried out a proper public consultation, which given the enormity of impact on the town from its proposals, is this permissible for a school?

Unfortunately, I am advised this is not something that DCC can advise on. The requirement to consult is set out in the legislation and it will be for the Secretary of State to determine whether or not KEVICCS has met its obligations in this regard.

Have DCC officers or Cabinet Members been in communication with KEVICCS regarding these sales, please could I have copies of any such correspondence to enable me to understand the position of DCC and represent this division's interests as best I can?

DCC Officers have been discussing proposals for KEVICCS to move to a single site now for many years albeit proposals to develop the site were only formally adopted through the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan Policy TTV20 - Land at KEVICC. In respect of the consultation on current proposals, DCC has responded to these to ensure it can meet its statutory responsibilities in respect of the supply of sufficient pupil places. I attach the formal representations but understand you were copied in at the time.

Please could someone at DCC confirm whether or not these changes to this important document, carried out in this manner are legal, if not what is the status of that document and who are companies / Foundation schools accountable to?

I am informed that DCC is not able to advise on the changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Association. If the community and the Town Council requires advice on the nature of these changes it should seek independent legal advice. In terms of who the Foundation is accountable to, the Trust is a Charitable Company which is exempt from registration with the Charities Commission. The reason for the exemption is because the principle regulator for Foundation Schools is the Department for Education.

Can Devon County Council step in at all in this matter to ensure that the legal requirement for this local capital investment to remain local? Will this change from a Foundation school to become part of an academy affect the recent correspondence I received from Neil Pateman, regarding the nomination for the school rebuilding programme?

We have discussed this with the Multi Academy Trust who have reconfirmed that all proceeds from the sale will be reinvested into KEVICCS, we understand this commitment has already been made to the Town Council. The conversion will take place as planned on 1 September. Neil Pateman has already responded regarding the Schools Rebuilding Programme, you will be aware the nomination only relates to four temporary buildings, not the whole school site.

Has DCC corresponded with the Minister for Schools and the Secretary of State for Education to indicate its approval of the sales of these sites and that within those sales, the Town Council's bid that would retain the sites E and F1 in public ownership is the preferred option of DCC?

DCC has not corresponded with Ministers/SOS on this matter, as per responses to previous Cabinet Questions and the recent petition, DCC will not intervene in these matters but hopes the Town Council and Trust can find a mutually beneficial position.

A couple of other enquiries to DCC Education team officers I have made regarding KEVICCS are:

King Edward VI Community College (KEVICC) will shortly be visited by a surveying organisation appointed by the DfE as part of the **School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) prioritisation exercise**. DCC has worked jointly with the school to nominate KEVICC for consideration in the SRP and whilst this visit is not a guarantee of inclusion in the programme it is a

positive step that our nomination has merited further investigation by the DfE. The college are aware of this development and the DfE appointed surveyors will be in touch shortly to arrange date and time of visit. It has been confirmed to me, that this nomination will not be affected by the transfer to Education South West, Multi-school academy.

School Numbers. Last October, DCC notified KEVICCs that they could “ not support a permanent decrease of capacity to a PAN 180 / 1102 net capacity as this would create a significant shortfall of places for children within the school catchment area and represent a decrease of capacity of over 400 places. Such a decision would inevitably lead to the need to review catchment areas and create a need for capital investment elsewhere, funding the Local Authority does not have. Devon Council Council’s position on this matter is consistent with conversations with other schools which do not have the benefit of securing significant capital receipts. A capacity of 1,340, would support a PAN 210, which is still under the total cohort who could seek a place at you school. “ As such the school’s capacity remains the same.

KEVICCS Road Bridge: The works to remove the bridge were successful with the road being closed for short periods than originally expected. The crossing works very well and from my observations had very little impact on the traffic. The bridge is currently being shot blasted with the repairs then commencing next week. The latest program is for the bridge to be reinstalled the week commencing the 19th of September. This is slightly later than planned due to unforeseen layers on the bridge’s paint system that required additional shot blasting. We have asked the contractor to make every effort to bring this date forward

AIR QUALITY at A385 and SHDC AQMAP (Air Quality Management Action Plan). **Inclusive Totnes** has issued an extremely useful document regarding the likely impacts of additional new building developments along the A385 and the requirements of our local authorities (DCC and SHDC) to consider this regarding any new developments at KEVICCS and in particular, how important the open green space at the Lower KEVICCs site is to current and future air quality. Inclusive Totnes sent this a a wide range of interested parties and stakeholders including officers and Councillors at DCC.

Further to receiving this I have forwarded the report with a request for investigation to the Public Health Officers at DCC seeking an update on how they are implementing their AQMAP to not only reduce the current traffic pollution problems, but also what action is being taken to address the problems of the additional developments permitted under the Joint Local Plan in Dartington and the new developments coming forward in Torbay that will all adversely affect this arterial route. I have requested that a member of DCC public health team attends a Parish council meeting in Dartington to respond to some concerns and questions raised by residents there.

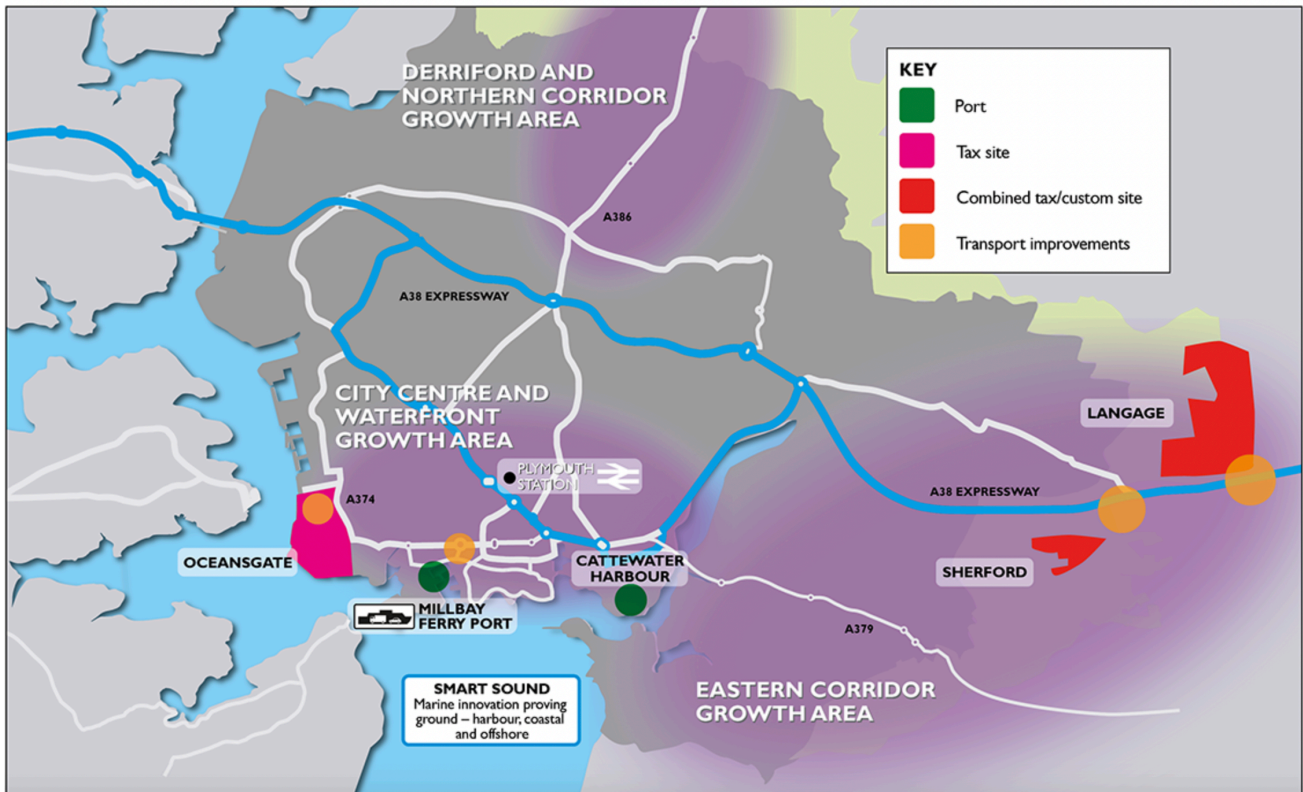
Last May, I made enquiries to SHDC under Freedom of Access to Environmental Information requesting Air Quality monitoring along the A385. I have yet to receive that information which (in my view) needs to be considered before any further developments that will directly impact on the A385 AQMA are brought forward for planning permission.

Plymouth and South Devon Freeport: background & timeline

- At the end of 2020 [Plymouth City Council joined Devon County Council and South Hams District Council](#) in a bid to unlock £35 million pounds of funding for the area by putting in a Freeport bid.
- In March 2021 the Chancellor announced at Budget that Plymouth and South Devon had been [successful in bidding for Freeport status](#).
- Initial funding was awarded to Plymouth and South Devon Freeport to develop the Outline Business Case with partners between March and November 2021.
- In June and December 2021 two stakeholder events were held in collaboration with the Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce.
- Plymouth City Council, in partnership with South Hams District Council and Devon County Council, has submitted a proposal to HM Government in April following months of close working between public and private sectors to develop a business case that supports local, national, and international businesses to leverage the benefits of being part of the region’s only Freeport.

- More information & updates posting are at this website <https://new.plymouth.gov.uk/freeport-updates>

PLYMOUTH AND SOUTH DEVON FREEZONE



I have been asked many questions about the Devon Freeport project. Formal proposals have come before full council and committees that I sit on at both DCC and SHDC.

At DCC Cabinet at its meeting of 13th April 2022, the following decision was taken “approves that the Council borrows up to £15 million of capital investment to leverage the government’s seed capital funding of £9.6 million to deliver transport schemes, to support the development of the Freeport sites in Devon. This borrowing will be repaid from retained business rates in future years.”

The Freeport investment subsequently came up at **DCC Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services (CIRS) Committee in July’22** which I sit on and surprisingly the officer fielding questions denied that this investment included monies to be spent on upgrading the nuclear deterrent at Devonport or the luxury super yachts facility in Plymouth. <https://new.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouth-and-south-devon-freeport>

The proposal approved at DCC Cabinet meeting in April is attached as a separate document. This sets out the same provisions for the project as those issued in the agenda to SHDC (below).

At SHDC Full Council meeting (31.03.22) SHDC Councillors approved the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport proposals for SHDC to participate in this partnership scheme. This included borrowing up to £5M from the Public Works Loan board to match the Government Freeport seed funding, the investments from both DCC and Plymouth City Councils as ‘founding partners’ and a total of £63,000 from SHDC Business Rates earmarked reserves to provide upfront funding to the project.

I voted against these proposals at SHDC (I don’t have a vote at DCC cabinet). My concerns:

- SHDC should be investing in housing to meet local needs which is recognised as a housing crisis.
- SHDC should be investing in local renewable energy projects to help develop a resilient and affordable energy supply.
- Why should the public in the south hams (and the rest of Devon) be paying for investment without being asked? This is undemocratic.

- SHDC's continued failure to manage the recycling and waste collection services should have been sorted out as a priority and hardly bodes well for more complex and expensive partnerships such as this.
- SHDC Has already wasted £500,000 on a failed bid to install an Aldi in Ivybridge this spring.
- Why has no formal public consultation to approve the borrowing of £15 M (DCC) and £5M (SHDC) in the public's name been carried out?
- I am also deeply unhappy about the objectives of this proposal which includes the following listings provided in the agenda for the March FC meeting at SHDC

"Devon's freeport is one of eight across the country announced by the chancellor in the 2021 budget. The project is expected to create more than 3,500 direct jobs with an average wage of at least £13.92 per hour, five new businesses every year and £4 million a year in private investment in research and development."

- "The Freeport will supercharge the local and regional economy by building on our unique national capabilities in Marine, Defence and Space to form globally impactful superclusters and a UK Innovation Superpower."
- "As a Southwest Powerhouse, the full potential of the region will be realised by concentrating around the largest UK Naval port and Europe's only horizontal launch spaceport, high value primes and their rich supply chains."
- "A combined footprint of around 130 Hectares (Ha) for development"
- A 10MW green hydrogen plant low to support carbon transport for shipping and HGVs.
- "A huge investment worth over £62m designed to meet the supply the needs of the Royal Navy and capable of providing significant additional customs capacity."
- "Facilities at Devonport to include the UK's sole licensed site for the refitting and refuel/defuel of nuclear-powered submarines, as well as docks to maintain, refit and modernise surface warships."
- "Invest £22m to deliver a new factory to build the next generation of super yachts, supported with £0.9m of public investment and Babcock will invest £6.5m in new and upgraded infrastructure.

At the following SHDC Full Council meeting in April'22, I tabled a question to Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader at SHDC. 'South Hams District Council has not declared an economic crisis, but has declared a housing crisis, so why are we borrowing £9M to support Aldi and £5M to support economic development in Devonport rather than investing in social housing in South Hams that our residents need?

The reply from Cllr Pearce denied that SHDC was investing in Devonport, but just renewable energy at Language and a cycle route at Sherford. I cannot see how this reply can be true when the Freeport is all one zone, being managed by a single group made up of the 3 Councils, the money is being pooled and the list above sets out the purposes approved both at SHDC and DCC.

Amongst the concerns that have been raised with me around Freeports is that they benefit private investors rather than public bodies and these private companies have the benefit of tax breaks and little or no business rates, ease of planning restrictions when other local aspiring and established enterprises do not have these advantages at the public expense. (<https://www.traverssmith.com/knowledge/knowledge-container/freeports-and-planning-benefits-and-challenges/>). The public purse has been invested against without public consultation, in my view this is not fair or democratic.

SHDC – Key Issues:

Information for Households experiencing hardship A new flier has been produced to assist Parish Councils, Councillors and others needing to find out about financial advice and supports being offered at SHDC. **There is also an on-line link:** <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/Benefits>

Other organisations that can also help are Citizens Advice South Hams: <https://southhamscab.org.uk> plus (advised by Martin Lewis): Turn2us: <https://www.turn2us.org.uk> Money Buddies; <https://moneybuddies.org.uk>

Waste services updates. The key message is that SHDC will be taking back services in-house from October 3rd '22. It is expected that there will be some slight 'wobbles' for the first couple of weeks as there will be round reviews to help improve the practicalities of the basic services, but as many of the staff currently working for FCC will move to SHDC with the services, it is anticipated that the services will improve dramatically from then on.

For months now I have been receiving daily updates on services that have been stood down on those days and from time to time these have amounted to more than 1,000 customers on a single day being missed and not being returned to until the next due collection. It may well be that SHDC will experience some of the same issues such as recruitment of staff as the services switch over, but it is hoped that many of the problems will now be able to be directly addressed and SHDC customers can expect a good service and improved recycling rates asap. I will update in my next report when these changes should have taken place. In the meantime I apologise to everyone who has experienced poor waste and recycling collection services for over two years and to assure you that I am still pressing for some community consultation as we go forward to address some of the issues around the various bins etc that have also caused problems for some residents. Thank you for the understanding and patience of parish councils and many residents despite pretty awful experiences for some.

Planning at Dartington: Further to the two highly contentious development sites at Dartington, Broom Park and Sawmills Field that were approved for planning in April, the community supported a resident applying for a Judicial Review of the planning decision for Broom Park. The key reasons cited for the complaint were the lack of heritage assessment of the proposals and impacts on the heritage assets adjacent to the site. A legal advisor was engaged. Unfortunately the Judge refused the application. However it has emerged that the defence statement prepared by SHDC, and to which the resident had responded in his submission to the Court, along with a formal response to Baker Estates who had also made a submission, this SHDC submission had not been received by the Court and therefore the statement for the defence was not considered by the Judge. In the SHDC statement it was realised by the residents that SHDC had made a huge error in their submission, stating that there was no lighting strategy as this is a dark skies development. It seems this has been a very negligent response from SHDC who are also allowing all the £5,000 claimable costs to be claimed by Baker Estates rather than applying for 50%. So that £2,500 of potential public funds will go to Baker Estates.

Moor Road, Staverton. Unfortunately I have nothing new to report on the urgently needed resurfacing on this road. This is apparently the only publicly used road that SHDC owns and before it can ask DCC Highways to adopt it, they need to bring it up to good highway's standards. Strangely it seems that the property owners in the street will be required to contribute towards the costs of repairs and improvement. I fail to see the problem or the reason for the two-year wait since the improvements were initially requested, but I presume sorting out the costings is part of this. I do make regular requests to the relevant officers for updates and the works to be carried out.

FUNDING

DCC Locality Funds: A moratorium on all grants from this year's Councillor's budgets was placed by Cllr John Hart as Leader in July. Along with other Councillors, I made a complaint about this when it was announced. This has now been reviewed and this week the budgets remain as they were, and grant applications can continue to be made.

New funding available to support innovative projects that benefit local communities from DCC: We're making a new pot of funding available to support local projects across Devon that align with key priorities in our four year strategic plan. Specifically, we want to support projects that directly benefit local communities, helping to tackle hardship, such as food and fuel inequality; improve people's mental health and wellbeing; address loneliness and isolation; and that respond to the climate emergency. DCC are calling it the '**Growing Communities Fund**'. There is information on the website about the type of projects they are looking for. 'We know that people across Devon are feeling the effect of the current cost of living crisis, and we want the Growing Communities Fund to provide vital support to local communities that will make a genuine difference'. Information at this link:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/communities/growing-communities-fund>