

West Devon Borough Council matters relating to Tavistock. Report to Tavistock Town Council, 5 September 2020

Prepared by Councillor Steve Hipsey, Tavistock (North) ward

1. Major reform of the planning system.

A briefing is to be given to WDBC members on Tuesday 8 September summarising the key themes contained within a paper that is described by Central Government as proposing '*reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.*' These proposals will inevitably change the entire complexion of planning at WDBC and its relationship with the DM&L committee at TTC.

A major public consultation is currently underway. Further details can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

Those with an interest and knowledge of planning and the impact of the proposed changes are strongly encouraged to engage with the consultation.

2. TTV 17 Development in the vicinity of SX 48143 72706 Brook Lane/Plymouth Road.

Debate surrounding this proposed development and some procedural details relating to the recent history of the application process continues unabated. The subject has been the subject of much discussion between members and officers at WDBC. It is currently proposed that a report being prepared by officers in consultation with Tavistock members of WDBC and certain interested members of the public will be presented for discussion at a future DM&L committee. There is however, some divergence of opinion as to whether this is the most appropriate forum. The report will seek to address some procedural aspects of the application, some broad details of the development itself within the land allocated by the Joint Local Plan and the provision and allocation of the associated Section 106 funds. The latter subject is considered to be of prime importance by the Independent group of Tavistock councillors who will seek to maximise benefits to the town.

3. Meadowlands Leisure Centre

The council, particularly the independent group of members representing Tavistock wards, is very concerned about the continued closure of the Meadowlands facility. Consultations with the operators Fusion, continue in an attempt to rectify this. Meanwhile, a substantial grant has been made to Fusion and the situation is being monitored closely.

Members of the Independent group attended the recent demonstration in support of Tavistock Swimming Club's call for Meadowlands to be reopened as soon as possible. They will continue to support this cause vigorously. WDBC has contacted Mr Cox to call for Government funding to provide help operators reopen their community pools wherever possible. This has been backed up by several individual members. It is hoped that members of TTC and other concerned residents will do likewise.

4. Public Toilets

The Bus Station, Guildhall and Bedford Car Park toilets are now all operational to some extent. At the moment only the disabled and family room toilet are open at the Bedford Car Park site. This however, is being reviewed in the hope that additional facilities can be provided there. All the toilets are being cleaned and serviced twice per day by FCC in line with the COVID-19 risk assessments. They are also being monitored regularly by WDBC locality officers.

5. COVID-19 Discretionary Grant scheme

Processing for the Discretionary Grant scheme is nearing completion. A cautious approach has been taken due to the unknown number of businesses that could have applied. Due to the applications received, WDBC has been able to offer increased grants to some applicants. So far £635,500 has been paid to 160 businesses. The processing in some applications has been complex and will require further checking with respect to their validity. It is expected that grants can be increased for around 95 businesses, to be paid in the week commencing 14 September. The total budget is £870,500.

Notice was received in August that Town and Parish Councils could apply to the Discretionary Scheme. Applications have been received from Tavistock and Okehampton Town Councils. It is hoped that these payments can be made at the end of September.

6. Three weekly residual rubbish collection trial

The recent COVID-19 lock-down period presented unique conditions resulting in significantly increased residual rubbish collected at the kerb side across the Borough. This has skewed the results of the trial to the extent that they are not considered to be statistically useful. Not surprisingly, given the overall situation, very few comments have been received from the residents involved in the trial. That being the case, officers are recommending that the trial period be extended until next March. It is hoped that more meaningful results will be forthcoming if and when things return to near normal.

7. Planning Enforcement Cases

There are currently 37 Planning enforcement cases extant in Tavistock (N) ward, 9 in Tavistock (SE) and 12 in Tavistock (SW)

8. Travellers and Gypsies

Issues relating to unauthorised travellers encampments have been raised at the regular meeting of Devon Leaders and Chief Executives which included the significant financial challenges a number of town councils are experiencing. It was agreed that items would be included in future meetings to explore potential opportunities to establish permanent transit sites for gypsies and travellers at suitable locations across the county. The possibility of a loan support scheme for town councils that get into severe financial difficulties due these difficulties is being explored.

9. FCC Environment statement on animal cruelty (summarised)

WDBC and FCC Environment were made aware on 11th August 2020 of footage in circulation on social media showing four members of its West Devon collection crew perpetrating an act of animal cruelty at one of its depots.

Once aware of the footage, and in cooperation with officers at WDBC, FCC Environment took swift and decisive action to instigate a full investigation. The identity of the individuals perpetrating and filming the act ceased to be FCC employees as soon as the investigation was completed the next day.

FCC Environment has taken action to remind all employees that the business has a zero-tolerance approach to animal cruelty and that this sort of behaviour is completely unacceptable. Working practises and procedures have been reviewed with a view to preventing any recurrence of this sort of incident. The company is now proactively assisting the RSPCA with a further investigation potentially leading to the prosecution of those involved.