

County Councillor update April 2022

Highways:

There have been several issues relating to wear & tear, notably the paintwork on roads fading. I have asked when repainting will be done, I also want to know if the Community Payback initiative can be re-started, now the Covid 19 restrictions are easing.

I will be going on an inspection of the Tavistock & Gulworthy Parishes with the new local highway officer next week. Joining us for some of the tour will be officers of the Greenland's residents association and LiveWest. The association is great at getting the residents' issues heard and hopefully resolved. If there are areas where councillors think creating a residents association, would be useful perhaps this might be something we could work on together.

Some residents have been concerned about commuters parking in residential areas & I have noticed that car parking in the Abbey Rise car parks looks less since the car park changed from Long Stay to Short Stay. We need to get the statistics from WDBC car parking usage. We realise the pandemic will likely have bearing on the usage, though walking my patch, I have noticed more cars parked on street.

Rail & Bus and footpaths:

DCC officers and Network rail will be attending a meeting at the Bedford Hotel on Wednesday. Locals are keen to see the re-establishment of the rail link from Okehampton to Plymouth. We know that the Tavistock to Plymouth route is DCC's priority for that area £50K has been directed from central government to support a business case. I have been asked to support initiatives supporting buses and links to local Devon Rail routes. Not much to report yet but watch this space!

I am grateful to Kit Harbottle & others, who actively engage in the Bus Back Better Scheme and looking into mapping all the little, short cuts and footpaths around our town. This is to encourage residents to walk more & reduce our reliance on motor vehicles.

Health & Wellbeing:

The Tavistock Health and Wellbeing Alliance grows from strength to strength. Thanks to our local CVS, (whose CEO is Karen Nolan) and the team, Tavistock is well placed to share information. Little did we know when we were establishing the Alliance, that all our teamwork would be called to help support a pandemic and now a war. **Ukrainian** guests who will soon be arriving in our area and staying with sponsors. I include an update from DCC officers

The Council, alongside Team Devon colleagues and partners, have made considerable progress this last week contacting several hundred potential sponsors to conduct and complete required DBS checks.

In addition, working with councils across Devon, we have developed and implemented a property and people appraisal process. District councils have started to check a range of sponsor properties using this, and this will accelerate the work this week.

There has been considerable national commentary regarding the delays in people able to arrive in the UK, including their visa application status. decisions regarding visas and travel

are not connected to the local work DCC is undertaking and people will travel to the UK when granted permission by the UK government. DBS and housing safety checks can be completed post-arrival and are not part of the visa application process.

DCC is working with partners to ensure we can make early payments to sponsors and guests and alongside this, we are developing clear processes regarding school admissions, health registration and access to Universal Credit and other benefit entitlements.

DCC has a shared microsite <https://www.devon.gov.uk/supporting-ukraine/> which is evolving rapidly as we get clarity on the latest guidance and information for guests and sponsors.

Last week DCC documented the process and information for sponsors, this week the priority is information for guests, in the form of an online 'welcome pack'. You should consider this site the definitive source of key information relating to the scheme in Devon. We are considering launching a joint, Team Devon, single telephone number for enquires with organisations from the voluntary and community sector. Further, we are currently in negotiations with several organisations to provide a consistent and comprehensive offer of wrap-around support, across each locality in Devon. I will update you on both aspects of this later this week. In the meantime, if you have key questions that you or constituents would like an answer to, we have a dedicated e-mail address health.ukraineresettlement-mailbox@devon.gov.uk.

We will be building on and further developing ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) provision in Devon for this community and how best we can link key organisations providing support to local speakers for translation, alongside large providers of telephone and internet-based translation options.

The immediate support to people fleeing conflict will continue to be a complex and significant challenge for councils, statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector colleagues in the weeks ahead. I am pleased to say that Devon has already developed a considered and agile response, which will however need to continue to evolve and adapt.

Life in general:

As the Vice Chairman of Devon County Council, I was pleased to attend a Choral Evensong at Exeter Cathedral and a ceremony Tree planning for the Queen's Green Canopy, marking her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Wonderful singing from visiting Choir of Jesus College Cambridge and Exeter Choir.

I attended Celebration Civic dinners hosted by the Mayor of Okehampton, the Mayor of West Devon Borough Council and the Mayor of Torbay.

Case work continues to be high. I close now ready to attend the Gulworthy Parish Council Annual meeting.

As ever if you need to contact me my details are debo.sellis@devon.gov.uk 07765103316