

Councillor Andy Coulson (Tavistock North Ward) Initial Report to Tavistock Town Council.

First of all – introductions! Please call me Andy when you see me. I live in the North Ward on Trelawny Road and can often be seen tramping around the town centre with my black & white dog most evenings so please come and say hello. I hope you'll find this opening report of some use, despite the fact that since being elected very little has happened within WDBC. As I am sure you'll appreciate the time since the election has largely been spent conducting mandatory training sessions (which have been comprehensive and well run) and getting to know my fellow councillors and officers. At this stage I am very much getting my feet under the table and learning who are the key stakeholders I'll need to be engaging with over the coming months. To that end please see below a brief summary of how I will be going forward in this first year.

1. Committees that I will be on and represent.

I will sit on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (O&S) and as representative to Tamar AONB. Although this may not seem significant I'd rather do a smaller amount well at this stage whilst I still find my feet. Next year I may take more on.

O&S: Many prospective voters asked me about my involvement in the hotel episode and the perception was that I would 'get amongst' the decision making process of WDBC if voted in. This was largely my motivation for standing in the first place and something I fully intend to do. O&S will allow me to do this; both pressure testing the Hub decisions as well as assessing performance of previous initiatives to ensure value for the taxpayer and sufficient local democratic participation by the community. I feel strongly that politics in general at the moment is viewed as foreign, malign and an external force; I'd like to increase the ability of voters to have their voice heard in how their communities are run.

Tamar AONB: I am passionate about protecting and enhancing the natural and historic landscape in the region and improving accessibility for the population. Tamar AONB is coming to the end of its 5 year management plan and will therefore currently be engaged in writing their next one. I look forward to representing WDBC as a stakeholder and engaging on subjects as diverse as planning, renewable energy, local sustainable economic growth and sustainable tourism to ensure that the AONB continues to be more than just an exercise in 'keeping landscapes pretty' but also a vehicle to ensure thriving communities, economy and environment.

2. Priorities for Tavistock North. Specific issues that I intend to follow and engage with:

New estate. (Embden Grange). Of particular interest in the election was this development and its effects. Although one of the smaller estates this development slipped through the net prior to the JLP being finished (to my understanding) and local residents are concerned about its effects on traffic volume, local services/health care and town centre parking. I am not yet fully appraised of all of the issues surrounding this (although, living off of Drake Road I am personally familiar with some). I will begin fact-finding shortly so that I can then search for answers or solutions in an informed manner. I welcome any support from, or collaboration with TTC Councillors.

Transport and economy. Related to the above point and more generally development in general. These two areas are something that DCC, WDBC and TTC must absolutely get right for both new residents and current. Employment opportunities in new developments are generally an afterthought or non-existent. If Tavistock is to remain a viable community and economy then our

new neighbours need places to work and means to get there. Without a viable jobs market there is a danger of economic isolation or of people being chained to the daily commute, which is bad for them, the neighbours and the environment. Although I will not be a portfolio holder in this area I will seek to use the O&S Committee to chase answers to the issues of jobs and transport that accompany the new developments.

Services. Once again – related to the scale of development. Elements of our local services are already operating beyond capacity (NHS Dentists for example). I believe the O&S committee should be used as a vehicle to push external stakeholders for an answer.

Environmental concerns. I firmly believe that Climate Change and Biodiversity loss at scale are very real and present concerns about which as a society we are well behind the power curve when it comes to responding. As someone who is institutionally conditioned to look at issues through the lens of security I see this as a genuine threat to society. I will push for and support any decision by WDBC to declare a 'Climate and Biodiversity Emergency' as other more progressive councils already have. However – it is of critical importance that this isn't simply a fashionable reaction to public sentiment accompanied by a few empty platitudes; within 18 months I want to see concrete and deliverable local solutions from WDBC tabled and implemented. I also think it is really important to push this as something that can be really positive for the local economy and community. If WDBC, with Tavistock as its economic heart can lead in this area we could generate a local 'green economy' which could bring significant ancillary benefits for jobs and tourism.

Health and Wellbeing. I see this area as something that can be addressed through community groups and physical activity opportunities. Tavistock is notable for the sheer number of community groups for a relatively small town. These thriving groups bring with them so much associated health and mental wellbeing benefit. However, I'd still like to see more and greater involvement from those who most need it. Most groups (not all) are largely comprised of people with time, economic means and social confidence. I'd like to see more people who are not in this position engaged and involved and although I don't have all of the answers I'd be really keen to discuss and support ideas from the community to create more opportunity.