

## Council news round-up March/April 2010



This news round-up is being sent to all town and parish councils. You may wish to include these highlighted topics in your parish magazines. For more detailed information, you can go straight to the Council web site for agendas, reports and minutes by following this link – [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/index/your\\_council/committee\\_minutes\\_and\\_agendas.htm](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/index/your_council/committee_minutes_and_agendas.htm)

### **Partnership working with South Somerset**

As reported in the last news round-up, East Devon and South Somerset District Councils have agreed to share a chief executive to help achieve savings through shared working. Similar arrangements are working successfully throughout England. Sharing a chief executive, management team, joint procurement and shared specialist positions at both authorities should achieve efficiencies. The aim is to help save council taxpayers' money, preserve services for residents and to respond to expected cuts in Government funding over the coming years.

Mark Williams, Chief Executive at EDDC took up his new role of joint Chief Executive of East Devon District Council and South Somerset District Council on 22 March 2010. The process of exploring joint working and sharing overheads has now started. However, both councils will remain separate authorities and will retain their own councillors and service their existing populations.

To find out more about the arrangements and why EDDC chose South Somerset as its partner and the similarities between the two authorities, please go to the Council's website or follow this link.

[http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/shared\\_services](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/shared_services)

Both Councils have now appointed Councillors to a Joint Integration Committee which will meet at regular intervals to assess what is possible in terms of shared services and how to progress this. The first meeting of the Committee has already been held. The agenda and minutes of these meetings will be published on our web site and can be accessed by following this link:

[http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/index/your\\_council/councillors\\_and\\_meetings/committee\\_minutes\\_and\\_agendas/joint\\_integration\\_committee\\_agendas\\_and\\_mins.htm](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/index/your_council/councillors_and_meetings/committee_minutes_and_agendas/joint_integration_committee_agendas_and_mins.htm)

At the same time an internal efficiency review of East Devon's current service structure is taking place through a Rationalisation Panel.

Recommendations from both the Joint Integration Committee and Rationalisation Panel will be considered by the Executive Board this autumn.

### **Complaint about a councillor?**

Please follow the link below if you need to make a complaint against a parish, town or district councillor who you believe has breached the Code of Conduct. Would parish and town clerks please put this information on your next council agenda for information and as a way of raising awareness and promoting openness and high standards in local public life.

[http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/index/your\\_council/councillors\\_and\\_meetings/councillors/code\\_of\\_conduct\\_and\\_monitoring\\_officer/councillor\\_complaint.htm](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/index/your_council/councillors_and_meetings/councillors/code_of_conduct_and_monitoring_officer/councillor_complaint.htm)

### **The Standards Committee minutes**

were received at the meeting of the Council on 14 April: [Agenda Papers](#) [Minutes](#)

## **Town and Parish Standard**

The **Town and Parish Standard** is a newsletter for parish and town councillors, containing news, features and guidance on the Code of Conduct and the work of Standards for England. It is designed to support members of town and parish councils in performing their duties under the Code of Conduct and keep them informed of ethical issues in the local government sector:

<http://www.standardsforengland.gov.uk/News/Newsletters/TownandParishStandard/>

## **Governance Toolkit for Parish and Town Councils**

The Governance Toolkit is primarily intended for use as an easy reference guide for:

- ❑ town/parish clerks and councillors
- ❑ those interested in becoming a parish councillor
- ❑ principal councils wanting to establish parish councils in their areas
- ❑ monitoring officers

At its heart, the Governance Toolkit intends to contain the things a parish clerk really needs to know and do. It is as much a signpost document to other material as a comprehensive source of reference in its own right. Find the latest version here:

[http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/parish\\_toolkit\\_april\\_2009.pdf](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/parish_toolkit_april_2009.pdf)

## **Wheelie bins must be closed to protect SITA staff**

EDDC's waste collection contractors have been advised to change their policy on collecting wheeled bins that are so full that the lid will not close. This is to protect staff from injury.

Such bins will no longer be collected. SITA's staff will attach a label to any overflowing bins that states: "Bin lid open, making it unsafe to empty". The bins will be collected on the next round (two weeks later) but **only** if the lid is by then in the 'down' position. The new policy applies to parts of the district that already have the new scheme of landfill waste wheelie bins and food waste collections.

This follows a recent fatality at a local authority contract (NOT East Devon) when an operative was apparently attempting to push down the waste bin lid so that the lifting gear would work properly - and got caught in the mechanism. EDDC's Waste and Recycling Partnership Board agreed that the following policy should be applied rigorously:

*The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with East Devon's Waste Management Strategy through constraining the amount of household waste entering the waste stream and ensuring that only approved containers are used for the collection of residual waste and recyclable materials and to comply with the requirements of sections 46(3)(a) and 46(4) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and to comply with Health and Safety legislation.*

SITA will apply this policy following additional staff training, at which crews will be told not to collect bins where the lid is open. Technically, rubbish that is above the top lip of the bin or is stacked on top of the bin or beside it is classed as "side waste". EDDC has already informed householders that contractors will not be collecting any side waste from households in the new scheme.

Councillor David Cox, EDDC's Portfolio Holder - StreetScene, responsible for waste and recycling, said: "This is clearly a very serious safety issue and we cannot put our contractor's staff at risk. I'm sure the public will want to support us in this. Moreover, if the wheelie bin is overflowing, this will invariably be because the householder is putting material in the landfill bin that could in fact be recycled. That clearly goes against the aims of our waste strategy, whereby we want to minimise landfill waste and maximise recycling".

## **A place to grow**

A new guide is available on-line to those who currently let and manage, or want to develop, new allotments. However there is also a section on alternative gardening projects.

This guide is called “a place to grow” and can be found on the Local government Association website <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/publications/publication-display.do?id=9027596>

## **Campaign is launched to stop hate crime**

EDDC and the local Community Safety Partnership are targeting hate crime in a campaign launched this month.

A hate crime is where someone has been targeted because they are believed to be different and it is motivated by age, disability, race, gender or transphobic, religion/belief, or sexual orientation (homophobia).

Even in places like East Devon, these types of prejudices exist and it is very hurtful for victims who have to suffer the effects. A hate incident can include:

- Harassment
- Graffiti or damage to property
- Threatening behaviour
- Offensive telephone calls or texts
- Physical assault
- Verbal abuse
- Hate mail or email
- Bullying at school/college or in the work place
- Bullying via social networking sites

This can affect your brother, sister, mother, father, daughter, son, husband, wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, auntie, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew, grandmother, grandfather, friend, neighbour, or work colleague.

Anderson Jones, EDDC’s Diversity Officer, said: “We want everyone to feel safe at home, at work or school/college and on the streets of East Devon. Only by recording incidents can we build up a complete picture of hate incidents in the area and do something to stop it. If you or someone you know has been the victim of a hate incident, we want to know about it”.

Reporting forms are now widely available at many outlets across East Devon, or you can email the Devon County Council Hate Crime Prevention Co-ordinator on [hate.crime@devon.gov.uk](mailto:hate.crime@devon.gov.uk).

## **New power for parish councils to boost affordable rural housing**

Housing and Planning Minister John Healey has announced proposals to give a special planning power to parish councils to build new affordable homes.

The proposals, to be consulted on this summer, will allow a limited number of affordable homes to be built in rural villages without the need for individual planning applications where the parish council backed the new homes.

Mr Healey wants to extend 'permitted development' rights so that a maximum of 10-15 new affordable homes could be built when parish councils have set out clear evidence and design expectations. This means decisions on how many homes are required, what they look like and where they are built would be taken locally by those who are closest to what local communities need and want.

You can read more on the Communities and Local Government Website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1532435>

## **Council steps up growth in affordable housing**

EDDC is stepping up provision of affordable housing in the district by collaborating further with housing associations and also building some new homes for its own housing stock.

New developments at Colyton and Dunkeswell are nearing completion. The Powells Way development at Dunkeswell was unveiled on 12 March, while another new development off the old Sidmouth road at Colyton was unveiled on 24 March. Both these developments have been built in partnership with Hastoe Housing Association.

A development is nearing completion at Bonners Glen Axminster, providing a further 12 affordable homes. This project is a partnership between EDDC and Sanctuary Housing Association.

Meanwhile, EDDC is developing a number of new properties under its new 'Own Build' scheme which will become available for occupation by council tenants.

A development of two bungalows for tenants with disabilities is nearing completion at Manstone, Sidmouth. Meanwhile, plans are well advanced for work to begin on sites at Lympstone, Exmouth and Axminster.

Contracts will be signed shortly to build nine properties in Lympstone, two properties in Exmouth and six in the Axminster area, as part of EDDC's 'Own Build' scheme. This is funded with the help of a grant of just over £1 million administered by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the national housing and regeneration agency for Local Authority New Build (LANB)<sup>1</sup>.

Apart from Exeter City, EDDC is the only district in Devon to win funding for affordable housing development under the local authority new build programme.

Councillor Miss Jill Elson, Portfolio Holder Communities, said: "We are starting to see the fruits of seeds that we planted three years ago, thanks to the work of our Housing Strategy Team. A number of sites are either nearing completion or are about to go into build mode. This can only be good news for the many people in East Devon who are waiting for a new home that they can afford".

Colin Molton, Regional Director for the HCA in the South West, said: "The whole idea of local authority new build is very simple. It seeks to fund development whereby local authorities contribute land at nil value. The HCA provides grant and the local authority can, if it so chooses, then borrow against the future rental stream from the properties. I am pleased that East Devon is able to benefit from this initiative".

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<sup>1</sup> The Homes and Communities Agency is the Government's new single national housing and regeneration agency for England. It brings together the development and regeneration expertise of English Partnerships, investment functions of the Housing Corporation, and the Academy for Sustainable Communities, with major delivery programmes of Communities and Local Government. Its role is to create opportunities for people to live in high quality, sustainable places. The HCA provides funding for affordable housing, brings land back into productive use and improves quality of life by raising standards for the physical and social environment.

The Local Authority New Build Programme (LANB) was first announced in April, with £100 million allocated in the Budget. A further £360 million was allocated through the Housing Pledge in June.

The successful Local Authorities under **Round 1** of the Programme were announced in September last year, with 217 schemes receiving a share of £141m grant funding for 2,171 new homes.

## **Grassroots Grants**

Grassroots Grants have grants of up to £5,000 available to community groups in Devon. If your community group helps local people, is led by volunteers, has an annual income of less than £30,000 and has been running for over 12 months then you could be eligible. This fund closes at the end of the year, so make use of it now. To find out more phone Kathy on 01884 235887 or go to: [http://www.devoncf.com/applying\\_for\\_a\\_grant/index.htm](http://www.devoncf.com/applying_for_a_grant/index.htm)

## **Devon money for community buildings**

The Multi-Use Community Buildings Grant has grants of up to £23,000 available to help refurbish, improve or even build community buildings. There must be match funding available of at least twice the amount of grant from other sources and/ or local fundraising, so for funding of £20,000 you would have to provide £40,000 from elsewhere. The fund is open to all community buildings in Devon which are run by the local community on a charitable basis. The funding is from the Community Council of Devon (up to £20,000) and East Devon District Council (up to £3,000 for village based buildings). For more information contact the Community Council of Devon: [www.devonrcc.org.uk/page/village\\_hall\\_funding.php](http://www.devonrcc.org.uk/page/village_hall_funding.php) or phone 01392 383345

## **Have Your Say!**

Don't miss out on your chance to tell us how you would like your parish to develop over the next twenty years! This is all part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy consultation, the LDF will set the guidelines for planning and development in all parts of East Devon up to the year 2030. We need to receive your parish's responses by 14 May.

The six main town councils in East Devon are being consulted separately at town events and meetings, so this message does not apply to them.

In February your parish council was invited to an evening event where we explained how you could get more involved in future planning and development in your parish. At the same event we also explored community money (Section 106 funds) that is available in each parish and what it could be spent on. Most of you attended one of these events, those who did not have now received their information in the post via their parish clerks.

We sometimes speak to parish councils where they do not agree with decisions made on planning/development applications in their area, however by the application stage it is the case that we have to follow policies already written for planning and development. Having your say on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy is your chance to help write those policies and these could be in place until 2030!

We also need up to date information on what community infrastructure there is within your parish. Community infrastructure includes things like a Village Hall, play areas, recreation spaces, shops etc. This would assist us in identifying the facilities that you do (or don't) have in the parish and steer Section 106 contributions towards the appropriate projects in your area. However, until we know what you already have we cannot ask developers for contributions to what you need.

Please don't forget to complete the following:

1. Work with your community to find out where they see your parish in the year 2030, and complete the Local Development Framework form to tell us (entitled Local Development Framework with the Councils logo in the top right hand corner). There is an online version of this form which can be found at: [www.eastdevon.gov.uk/ldfparishform](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/ldfparishform)
2. Work between you as a parish council to complete the Community Infrastructure form (which is titled by the name of your parish in the top right hand corner).

Please send both of these back to us in the pre-paid envelopes we provided by **14 May 2010**.

## Participatory budgeting and play areas

Over the past year, four play areas in East Devon have been built or improved with funds set aside under Section 106 Agreements, with a fifth to be opened at Exmouth's Maer during next month's Exmouth Festival. And there are more play areas and recreation projects in the pipeline for 2010. By using Participatory Budgeting, the design, layout and improvements of all these play areas has been, or will be, decided by local residents and their children.

So what are Section 106 Agreements and how have local people got involved in the decision-making process? Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation with a landowner in association with the granting of planning permission. The obligation is termed a Section 106 Agreement.

These agreements are a way of delivering or addressing matters that are necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms. They are increasingly used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, such as highways, recreational facilities, education, health and affordable housing.

Participatory budgeting encourages people to have a say in how money is spent in their area and has many benefits. By asking residents what they want means that they can take ownership of a project, and by involving as many of them as possible it encourages communities to work together to get the facilities that **they** want.

In the cases of Carter Avenue, Exmouth; Norman's Crescent, Budleigh Salterton; and Millwey Rise in Axminster Section 106 funds are being used to provide play and recreational facilities.

At Carter Avenue in Exmouth, an old slide had to be removed from a play area for health and safety reasons. £5,000 of Section 106 money was found to fund the replacement of the slide. A play event was organised at the play area on a Saturday afternoon which included free face painting, circus skills, giant games and a chance to vote on the new piece of equipment. Leaflets were delivered to the 400 nearest households, and an article appeared in the local press inviting people to come along. 100 residents came along on the day and chose which one of the five designs they wanted to see installed. The winning piece of equipment received just under half of the votes and is now installed.

A new housing development in Budleigh Salterton meant that there was £30,000 from developers to spend on a new play area located in a green space within the development. Working with local residents and schoolchildren, we identified the kinds of activities they would enjoy. Following their feedback, three designs were chosen which met all their requirements. EDDC organised a play event and invited all the households in the new housing development to participate when everyone was asked to vote for one of the three shortlisted designs. The winning play area received over half of the votes and is now installed.

With £50,000 of Section 106 money to spend on play in Axminster, and £50,000 to spend on recreation, Axminster Town Council asked local community groups to submit proposals on how they would like the money to be spent. A questionnaire asking residents to prioritise these projects was then placed in the local newspaper. To gain a wider range of views, the District Council organised and ran a face-to-face event with local residents by taking over a market stall at one of the town's market days. A total of 227 people voted on the projects, and we are now working with the Town Council to make them happen.

Plans for further play areas in Sidmouth, Exton, Broadhembury and other towns and villages throughout the district are underway. With all these projects, EDDC's Engagement and Funding Officer, Section 106 Officer and StreetScene team will work alongside residents, Ward Members, Town and Parish Councils and the Police to make sure that everyone is happy with the final results.

For more information contact Jamie Buckley, EDDC's Engagement and Funding Officer  
[jbuckley@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:jbuckley@eastdevon.gov.uk)