

## Council news round-up January/February 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)

### **Excellent evening of funding advice and support**

Two evening courses all about funding are being run in Devon. You can learn about all sorts of things including:

- how to maximise your income with funding and through other means
- how and where to find funding
- how to write grant applications.

The event is free, including a buffet tea! They are being held between 6pm and 9pm on:

- Wednesday 17 March in Bideford
- Wednesday 21 April in Newton Abbot

Places must be reserved in advance, including a £10 refundable deposit. For more information contact Gail Hickson on 01392 383443 or e-mail [gail@devonrcc.org.uk](mailto:gail@devonrcc.org.uk). Both events are being run by the Devon Community Foundation, the Community Council of Devon and NCVO.

### **Service provision for market towns**

The Rural Services Network (RSN), working with Action for Market Towns, is undertaking research into service provision in market/rural towns.

RSN is looking for examples of innovation and good practice initiatives from service providers or partnerships, particularly where these may be of interest to other market/rural towns. The themes are:

- access to services
- stronger communities
- safer communities
- children and young people
- adult health and well being and tackling exclusion and promoting equality
- local economy and environmental sustainability

All examples should have a market/rural town dimension.

In the first instance please send a brief outline summary to [evidence@rsnonline.org.uk](mailto:evidence@rsnonline.org.uk) together with telephone and email details.

### **Community Payback – how to get involved**

In Devon & Cornwall Probation Area over 160,000 hours of Community Payback are completed every year by offenders on a community sentence. This equates to approximately £1m of free labour provided to local communities as offenders pay back for the crimes they have committed.

Around 50 000 hours are ordered in the Exeter, Mid and East areas. Stoke Hill Junior School benefited from the building of an amphitheatre in the school field, trees in Haldon Forest were

maintained under supervision from the Forestry Commission, Exmouth Town Centre has benefited from a clean up and Age Concern in Tiverton is currently benefiting from some redecoration work.

Community Payback projects range from litter removal to clearing dense undergrowth, and environmental projects such as repairing and redecorating community centres or removing graffiti.

Offenders usually work as part of a team, monitored by a supervisor, and will work all day with short breaks, although there are some opportunities for individual placements.

To be considered your project must meet the following criteria:

- it must benefit the local community
- it must not take paid work away from others
- no one is to make a profit from the work
- it must be challenging and demanding
- it must be worthwhile and constructive
- offenders must be seen to be putting something back into the community.

The Community Payback team will assess the project for suitability and for health and safety implications.

Once the work has been completed a plaque will be displayed with the Community Payback logo, if appropriate. This will indicate where offenders have positively contributed to improving a neighbourhood.

Anyone can nominate a project, so, if you are an individual, member of a club, community group, faith group or voluntary organisation and have a project that fits the criteria above, visit the Devon & Cornwall Probation website or email: [community.payback@devon-cornwall.probation.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:community.payback@devon-cornwall.probation.gsi.gov.uk).

Or call your local Devon & Cornwall Probation office:

**Sam Dan (Exeter & East Devon Community Payback Manager)**

**Peter Smith (Community Payback Project Co-ordinator)**

Tel: Exeter 01392 421122

Devon & Cornwall Probation Area, 3 - 5 Barnfield Road, Exeter EX1 1RD

## **Charges for pre-application planning guidance from 1 February**

EDDC's Planning Service has introduced a scale of charges for pre-application advice. The change, which follows a resolution from the Council's Executive Board on 2 December 2009, came into effect on 1 February.

The Service has produced a charter\* setting out the scale of charges, outlining what the Council will expect to receive as part of any pre-application enquiry, and listing what customers can expect of the planning service. Agents for major planning clients have been sent letters advising them of the changes. The purpose of the charges is to allow the Council to properly resource advice to prospective applicants to ensure that they submit quality applications and to avoid those applications that have no prospect of success.

East Devon is not the first council in Devon to introduce such charges; South Hams has done so for some time. Pre-application advice is seen as a positive tool to enable quality schemes to come forward sooner rather than later.

The money raised will be used to improve still further our excellent pre-application advice service. The charges are modest and would save potential applicants money in the long run by avoiding applications that have no chance of success and ensuring that when applications are submitted they will not then need fundamental revisions, which can lead to additional substantial architects' fees and so on.

Whilst the Council will continue to encourage applicants to use this service, it will not be mandatory. Householders will not be required to pay for such advice. Other groups such as parish councils, registered charities and affordable housing providers will also be exempt.

The Government encourages pre-application advice and does not rule out local councils charging for good quality advice provided those charges can be reasonably justified and there is a proper customer charter in place before any such charges are introduced.

Charges will range from £125 per meeting or advice session for small applications (a single new house or house conversion) to £750 for major applications (residential development of more than 200 houses or non-residential floor space of more than 10,000 square metres).

\* The charter can be viewed at: [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/development\\_control\\_planning](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/development_control_planning)

## **Kerbside collections in Honiton & district start on Wednesday 24 March**

EDDC's new kerbside recycling and waste collection service is set to roll out to 10,720 properties in the Phase 3 area from Wednesday 24 March.

The new service should further improve East Devon's recycling rates. In the Axe Valley, where the system was introduced in August last year, the recycling rate has now been increased to over 50%. Similar rates are being achieved in Sidmouth and Ottery (Phase 2, June 2009). The towns and villages affected by the change from 24 March are: Honiton, Dunkeswell, Smeatharpe, Stockland, Dalwood, Northleigh, Southleigh, Farway, Offwell, Payhembury, Awliscombe, Broadhembury and areas in-between.

In brief, the change will mean:

- weekly collections of recycling materials (currently fortnightly);
- new weekly collections of food waste;
- fortnightly collections of landfill waste.

Food waste will be taken to the Holsworthy Bio Gas Plant in North Devon – an anaerobic digestion plant where it is turned into a gas that generates electricity for the National Grid. In the Phase 1 area, over 1,000 tonnes of food waste has been collected so far, in only eight months. This quantity of food waste generates enough electricity for 40 properties for one year.

Each household should by now have received a delivery of three new waste containers: a small food waste caddy for the kitchen; a larger food waste container to put out by the kerbside; a wheeled bin for other waste to go to landfill – again to be put out by the kerbside; some residents are being provided with gull-proof sacks as an alternative to wheeled bins.

All households should already have a green box for recycling and residents should carry on using these in the same way as before – with two important changes: recycling will now be collected weekly; residents can now recycle plastic bottles in addition to the items put out before.

EDDC's [website](#) contains full details of the changes. There is also a telephone helpline: **01395 571515** and members of EDDC's StreetScene team will be available to speak to or visit residents who have any concerns about the new system, or perhaps have special needs.

The bins supplied to households are manufactured in the UK and the new fleet of recycling and waste collection vehicles conform to the very latest European exhaust emission standards.

Councillor David Cox, EDDC's Portfolio Holder responsible for the waste and recycling service, said: "Everything should now be in place for the start of the new collection regime on Wednesday 24 March. This is quite a major change for residents and for the collection crews, so we may experience a few teething problems in the first week or so. I would ask everyone to follow the guidance in the leaflets and most importantly to have their containers out at the kerbside by 7am on Wednesday mornings.

"We all need to do as much as we can for the environment. It's vital that we reduce landfill and increase the number and volume of the materials that we recycle. Councils play a large part in this by collecting and processing the waste, but we can't do anything without the help and co-operation of our residents".

## **Play it safe**

**28th April 2010 - Ipplepen Village Hall, 10am - 4pm**

Is your play area up to standard? Have you considered the legal duties? Are you confident at undertaking inspections?

Managing your play area and conducting regular inspections need not be a chore. This course is aimed at improving the knowledge, expertise and confidence of volunteers, playground managers, clerks to parish councils or local councillors. The event will be delivered by Mike Langsford RPII, level 3 play safety inspector, and Charlotte Weedon, DPFA secretary. The following topics will be discussed:

- what makes a “good” playground inspector”
- your observations – are they up to it?
- legal & moral duties
- the Disability Discrimination Act
- the paperwork
- accident statistics
- risk
- a systematic approach to health and safety
- inspections
- funding

The event will include a ‘walk and talk’ around a playground, looking at equipment and surfaces.

### **Get Accredited**

There is also the opportunity to take your level one (Outdoor Routine) RPII certification. You will be assessed on the day and it costs £60.00. For more information contact Charlotte Weedon (01392 383345) [charlotte2@devonrcc.org.uk](mailto:charlotte2@devonrcc.org.uk) or see <http://www.playinspectors.com/RPII-Inspectors>.

This course costs £30.00 per delegate (including lunch and refreshments) Please note that this event has been highly subsidised.

## **Annual Conference of East & Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership**

**Wednesday 21 April 2010 at Broadclyst Victory Hall**

### **9.45am Networking & Displays**

An opportunity to view displays and informally talk with staff from organisations involved in working in partnership to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. These include the Police, Fire & Rescue, Devon Youth Service and so on.

### **10.15am Presentations by Partners**

Short presentations from Partners about the work done over the last year to reduce crime and disorder.

### **11.15am Break with Tea & Coffee**

### **11.45am Presentations by Partners**

Short presentations from Partners about the work done over the last year to reduce anti-social behaviour.

#### **Partnership Priorities for the next year**

Questions

### **1.00 pm Buffet Lunch**

RSVP by 12 April 2010: Community Safety Partnership, Lowman House, Lowman Green, Tiverton EX16 4LA or email: [lmaksymczuk@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:lmaksymczuk@middevon.gov.uk) or telephone: 01884 234997.

## **EDDC Rural Champion – Councillor Philip Skinner – A profile**

Created nearly 3 years ago, the key role of Rural Champion is to drive the council's priorities, primarily: affordable housing and promoting a thriving economy. He recognises the vital importance of communications and of place shaping.

### **Affordable housing:**

The Rural Champion has been helping in the Council's drive to identify potential land for affordable housing due to the critical shortage and established need across the district. Improvements to provision are now being achieved.

### **A thriving economy:**

The Rural Champion has been working closely with the Portfolio Holder – Economy, the Business Champion and the Council's Economic Development Team to help to identify employment land with real potential throughout the district. He believes that 'a thriving economy' should be the Council's number one priority saying that the viability of the district relies on a vibrant economy and a working population. He emphasises the importance of promoting and helping to facilitate our local economy whenever possible through Committees and working with Council teams.

### **Communications:**

Communications, particularly in rural areas, need to be 'fit for purpose' and meet modern expectations. Together with the Portfolio Holder – Communications and the ICT Team, Philip is trying to address the national and local issue of inadequate broadband speeds and width. In addition work has been done with the Community Safety and Data Quality Champion to streamline the town and parish council e-mail address system. These have been standardised (for example [clerk@talaton.eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@talaton.eastdevon.gov.uk)) – to help the public contact their local council. There is potential and support to roll out this initiative across the whole of Devon.

The Rural Champion works with and relies on local Ward Members to contact him in respect of rural issues specific to their areas.

### **Planning/place shaping**

Good planning decisions are vital – both locally and strategically. The Council has to act proactively to identify a rolling 5 year housing land supply to ensure that the Council isn't vulnerable to applications for unwanted developments that will be difficult, for planning reasons, to refuse. Important strategic work is being carried out in respect of the Strategic Housing Land Area Assessment and the Local Development Framework. This recognises the importance of development and holistic 'place shaping' for the benefit of our district.

### **Contact details**

Please let the Rural Champion know if you have any specific rural issues that you would like him to be aware of or wish to discuss with him – [pskinner@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:pskinner@eastdevon.gov.uk)

## **Concessionary bus passes**

The Government is making changes to the age of eligibility for concessionary bus travel. Alterations are being made to harmonise eligibility for pensioner benefits – in line with the state pension age. As the pensionable age for women gradually increases from 60 to 65 over the ten year period from 2010 to 2020, so too will the age of eligibility for the concessionary bus pass for both men and women. EDDC will be producing leaflets and posters illustrating the range of new eligibility dates. The changes will not impact on anyone already in possession of a bus pass.

Another change in legislation means that from April 2011 East Devon District council will no longer be liable for the administration of concessionary bus travel. These responsibilities will be passed to Devon County Council. However, existing concessionary bus passes will remain valid until their expiry date.

## **Sharing to Save: Local Government Reorganisation, budgets and shared services**

The decision about Local Government Reorganisation in Devon has now been announced. The option for a unitary Devon was not supported by Government and this means that East Devon District Council will continue to exist. Subject to Parliamentary approval, Exeter City will become a unitary Council with effect from 1 April 2011.

East Devon District Council is faced with budget shortfalls. The Council's annual budget is made up as follows:

40% of the income we need comes from central government;

30% comes from Council Tax payers;

30% comes from a range of fees and charges, for example car parking, planning applications and interest on investments.

Due to the recession, interest on Council investments is down and income from fees and charges has fallen, for example fewer people are submitting planning applications and car park revenue is down.

Looking ahead to 2011/12, it is anticipated that there will be significant cuts to the grant we get from central government. During the budget process this year, meetings have been held with town councils and residents, together with an on-line survey to find out how best to meet the budget shortfall.

Through the on-line survey, people were given a list of 14 options and asked to select the three options that they most agreed with, and the three options they most disagreed with.

The respondents agreed most with:

- ❑ Stopping supplying 3D flower displays, flower beds and plant containers (56%)
- ❑ Increasing the standard car parking charge by 10p per hour, with an improved season ticket offer for East Devon residents (49%). Although 31% of respondents disagreed with this.

There was also some support for:

- ❑ Stopping planting flowers at the entrances to towns (40%)
- ❑ Grass over roadside flower beds and return land to owner for them to look after (33%)

The proposals respondents most disagreed with were:

- ❑ Reduced street cleaning in the summer months (45%)
- ❑ Stopping the grant to the Citizens' Advice Bureau (43%)

This feedback has been taken into account during the service planning and budget meetings. The Council is also investigating shared working with South Somerset District Council. Sharing services is about cutting costs to be able to maintain frontline services.

At the moment, 20% of district councils in England are either in a formal partnership arrangement with a neighbouring district or are seriously talking about it. They are doing this to help save taxpayers' money and preserve services. At the same time as exploring how to work in partnership with South Somerset, the Council will continue to review its service delivery to try to identify cost savings and efficiencies.