

Update from Councillor Malcom Prowse – North Devon District Council

Councillor MP informed the meeting that finances are tight for N.D.D.C. Due to inflation, wage rises were twice what had been forecast/put into the budget, this has led to a £1M shortfall in a budget of £14M.

Councillor MP provided an update on the recent improvements to the Barnstaple Pannier Market, which are now complete. In addition funding of £3M has been won which will go towards improving Bridge Street and Bridge Chambers. Tenders have been received for Boutport Street and the planning is underway for this work to be carried out. The town improvement projects include a plan to provide access from Bear Street through to Queen Street car park. The access will be much improved with an avenue through to Butchers Row and work to be carried out on the Butchers Row area. Feedback regarding the town centre at Christmas was positive and the Moon exhibition in the Pannier Market was well received.

Antisocial behaviour orders in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe - Improvements have been noted in both towns due to the increased presence and support of police and marshals. Work is continuing due to securing funding for a six month extension of the marshal scheme. One area for support/work is to reduce drug abuse in the Cattle Market toilets. This may include redevelopment of the Cattle Market toilets and the toilets at Barnstaple Bus Station.

Councillor MP encouraged the PC to visit the new Watersports Centre that has opened recently at Ilfracombe. The centre is very good, with a café and enough things to do for a full days visit.

Devon District Council are still looking for Government funding for social change, housing and affordable homes. Affordable housing is still a challenge; four schemes are currently in place, in Parracombe, Ilfracombe & Woolacombe. It's proving difficult to get registered housing associations to take on housing as they're unable to afford maintenance costs. One approach is to try and get developments to register a proportion as 106 housing to keep costs affordable.

New Bill/Act – Levelling Up. This will affect the local plan as the 5-year land supply is no longer relevant. With the new criteria developments are more likely to be granted. N.D.D.C. and Torrington are working together to review and revise the local plan. Parishes can now be asked to produce neighbourhood statements related to developments in their area, this is more of a bottom up approach and allows PC's to set their own plans. For example Loxhore parish has increased from 74 people to 100 without any mass development.

Councillor MP informed the meeting that 78 families are currently in temporary accommodation in North Devon, as was reported on the ITV news. N.D.D.C. is borrowing to buy housing, which they can then obtain housing benefit for from the Government. This approach is cost effective and enables families to be housed. Some of the Boutport Street development will be used to provide accommodation of this type.

The Parish Councillors and Parishioners then raised questions on recycling collections as a number have been missed in recent months. N.D.D.C. is now considering 3-weekly collections for black bin (non-recyclable waste). It was felt that this would be achievable, as most parishioners are now recycling more of their waste.

