

Report from Councillor Alan Connett

I would be grateful if you will share with members of the Parish Council and formally record my report in the Parish minutes. Thank you.

There are a wide range of issues being dealt with across the area and below is a summary of current or topical issues.

County finances

Council Tax for Devon County Council is highly likely to increase by a total of 4.9% from April 1st.

This is made up of the maximum 2.99% permitted by the Government PLUS a 2% increase in the levy to support adult social care services.

In a report to the county council Cabinet for 10th January, the current year-end overspend is estimated to be £4.5million.

Alongside that, the overspend on the special educational needs budget is predicted to reach a cumulative total of £165 million by the end of March.

This deficit, under Government direction, will be carried forward to future years to be dealt with. The in-year increase is forecast to be just short of £40million.

South West Exeter update

It's been announced that the Southern Spine Road through the new **Matford** housing development has been dropped from the Government funded programme to deliver essential infrastructure.

In February 2019, Devon County Council was awarded just over £55 million by the Government from the Housing Infrastructure Fund to help deliver the infrastructure at South West Exeter. This included four signal junctions on the A379, upgrading the Devon Hotel roundabout, the pedestrian and cycle bridge, community centre/GP surgery AND the Southern Spine Road.

In a report to the county council Cabinet on 10th January to confirm a near £500,000 budget under the HIF programme to deliver 'Alphington Village enhancements' the county council included a line to say the Southern Spine Road is '*now proposed to be delivered by the developers without HIF funding*'. As you can imagine, I am asking for more details about this 'decision' and what the implications are for the development at **Matford**.

The Southern Spine Road will link (when built) the different development sites at Matford to the south of the A379. I am told by County officers that **a knock-on consequence for Exminster** is that the long awaited 'break' between Deepway Lane and Old Matford Lane, which would stop it being a through road, will now have to wait for the developers and their timetable.

Devon Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

Proposals for the local cycling and walking infrastructure plans were published for the county council cabinet meeting on 10th January. The key areas are:

- Heart of Teignbridge
- Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam
- Exeter

It's quite a substantial set of documents which I am still working through.

There is a proposal (E17) to invest in a cycle/walking link from Ide to Marsh Barton Station and Industrial Estate.

However, it's not until you get to the end of section 5 of the Exeter Plan (para.5.6.1) that there is this reference:

*"As part of the Exeter LCWIP potential opportunities for cycling connections to the wider villages and settlements and growth areas that are outside Exeter have been proposed. This will support active travel access from areas on the edge of the city through new infrastructure links and/or creation of green lanes; and provide strategic connections to existing settlements and areas of future development within cycling distance of Exeter. Potential opportunities are shown at figure 6..." **Kennford, Exminster and Ide** are referred to and the report adds "These have been derived from an initial review of priorities, in combination with professional judgment by officers about the likely feasibility.*

Personally, I am disappointed that the clear, obvious and much needed route to **Kennford** and beyond that for people to be able to cycle (or walk) to Haldon appears not to be an ambition included within the plans. Similarly, for **Kenton**, a safe route to reach the Exe Estuary cycle path would be a real bonus and help deal with the ever-present risk presented on the A379.

Mobile Libraries

As previously reported the mobile library service has been cut and, I understand, ends next month. By separate email, I have sent Clerks details of and a link for the grant funding pot (maximum £300 per bid) if parish councils/communities wish to set up a reading room or buy books to help stock a village/parish library etc.

The mobile libraries visited **Dunchideock, Exminster, ide, Kenn and Kennford, Kenton and Starcross.**

And finally..

Over 28,800 potholes were reported to Devon County Council between April and the end of November last year.

At the start of December there were 1,505 potholes awaiting repair according to County Hall.

In **Kennford**, I have asked the Highways Inspector to inspect the re-instatement of the main road in the village, near Gisson and the old Weighbridge, following utility work by contractors.

I continue to report potholes and general highways matters including, at **Kenton**, the overgrowth of muck and vegetation along the pavement at South Town.

Cllr Alan Connett

Devon County Councillor