

County Councillor update February 2024

BUDGET

The budget was passed, and I gave the figures in my previous report.

Many councillors including me have been seeking better funding for our highways in general. We continue to lobby central government. Unfortunately the £8million granted was sucked up by inflation, increase in wages and materials. Our MP has a petition to seek further funding from Westminster.

The councillor locality funding pot has increased from £5K to £8K which is good. I have earmarked over £1K spend already.

Regarding funding, I was able to help grant funding for a stair lift for the Tavistock Scrapstore. It was good to attend their opening & well done to all the volunteers!

HIGHWAYS

Tavistock continues to endure essential, planned, and urgent workings. My in box has many comments complaining about the road works and other say something must be done! fortunately the works are getting done in the quiet time of the year. Drainage and gully clearing continue. In Gulworthy Mill Hill there will soon be exploratory works done where there has been significant flooding and pooling of water.

Highway officers have been looking into the wall building opposite the Gulworthy Hall, and school.

Many pot holes have been filled in, but during this unprecedented rainfall, more port holes pop up like a plague! The teams continue to work through this awful weather, and it can't be nice working in such horrid conditions.

New crossing area opposite Bishopsmead. The area was designed by a reputable firm of traffic engineering consultants appointed by the developers and is in complete accordance with contemporary national design guidance. The scheme was also subject to a full independent Road Safety Audit, Stages 1 and 2 prior to construction, and Stage 3 will be carried out following construction. The highway officer involved in the planning has inspected the area and driven around the area and can understand how some residents may feel the area is of concern, by virtue that it is different, and that people will get used to it, it is not considered dangerous.

TRANSPORT

I presented a petition to Devon County Council on the 15th of February to hopefully attract resolution in re-instating the no89 Tavistock bus which goes along Whitchurch Road. Currently changed to the No86 bus, we have a reduced service which is adversely affecting Tavistock South East area.

HEALTH

I have been advised Tavistock Hospital X-ray machine is defunct. I have contacted the MP as I firmly believe we need to get this re-instated ASAP.

Children's centres continue thankfully and will be family hubs, I am advised. The local library remains a useful centre for advice and information too.

Life in general has been busy with the issues associated with the **essential road works & Utility updates** and the proposed introduction of **on-street car parking** ticket display and charging over one hour.

Originally the DCC highway officer hadn't factored time to call a round-table meeting, so I instructed the officer to call one. I think it unacceptable not having some discussion and shared views.

I firmly believe that had DCC officers called a meeting to explain why DCC was looking at the possibility of introducing parking meters, had they described issues associated with bus subsidies and enforcement in a calm, well-described way, we may have been able to understand better. As it is, the BID has employed a consultant, incurring expense & having to seek funding for example for the festive lights from local councillors, plus our community and traders have additional distress.

I have mentioned (forcefully) at County Hall, that this is unacceptable and Tavistock residents and local councillors deserved better.

When DCC called the meeting, invited and accepted were representatives from the Tavistock BID, Chamber of Commerce, the Mayor and Clerk of Tavistock Town Council and hub members for WDBC with portfolio for parking and for economy and the senior WDBC officer for business.

All accepted but the senior officer for WDBC, who ultimately cancelled the meeting with senior officer for highways Meg Booth, the reason being "the wrong people had been invited by DCC".

I had hoped to have a meeting where DCC would explain why it was considering the proposal, plus I thought it would have been a useful "springboard" to invite everyone to consider further discussions to a broader look at parking in general.

Parking is a huge subject. This opportunity was lost once WDBC cancelled.

For your information, the only different attendees were an additional member of the BID and the Leader of the WDBC who chaired the WD called meeting.

The WD officer who had declined the DCC meeting, was able to attend the WD meeting.

Clearly the issues associated with the proposal of on-street parking consume so much time. I have been asked to present a petition against any proposals for on-street meters & will be happy to do so. I will be speaking at the Cabinet meeting too.

Scrutiny at DCC might call a Cabinet decision in for further investigation.

If councillors are unhappy with an issue I am associated with at County, please contact me. it was most disappointing the meeting I asked DCC to call had to be cancelled because WDBC opined "the wrong people" were invited. I am sure we could of worked out something had I been approached.

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