

District Councillors Report to Bickleigh Parish Council 22 September 2022

From **Cllr Barrie Spencer**
Bickleigh & Cornwood Ward, South Hams District Council

It is easy to think that nothing ever happens at SHDC other than waste and even then we have our doubters.

Ukraine

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Government launched the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. At the time both Councils were called upon to provide a range of services to facilitate the scheme. This included carrying out property checks before Ukrainians arrive, conducting welcome visits once they have settled and ensuring support to meet their immediate needs.

Together South Hams and West Devon have created a shared project team to ensure that both Councils are as effective as possible in meeting the needs of the guests and their hosts. Support has also been commissioned from both the Citizens Advice (CA) and the Council for Voluntary Sector (CVS). Citizens Advice are providing support to individuals who require help with claiming benefits, jobs, childcare, and immigration enquiries and the CVS have supported with arranging community events and supporting volunteers and support groups.

South Hams is now home to 155 Ukrainians (as at early September) who are fleeing the war in Ukraine, from 66 family groups, and in West Devon 139 Ukrainians from 51 family groups. Working with the voluntary sector and Devon County Council, both South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils continue to play an important role in delivering the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme and helping Ukrainians beyond their initial six-month sponsorship.

Sadly this support effort is still required as the war continues.

More information is available on the SHDC website by typing Ukraine into the search engine.

Waste Collection arrangements

I would love to say that the whole sorry saga with FCC will be confined to history on 03 October 2022 when the complete waste collection service will be brought back in house for the first time in three years. However, as more information is established about the operations of the service it is apparent that there is much to do to bring the service back up to a standard. This is likely to take a while to sort out. You will have seen a letter from SHDC, through your letter box, explaining what is happening. Garden waste will be continued until the end of October and the Council has committed not to leave bins full over the winter period which should mean a final/final collection some time at the beginning of November. The details are being worked on at the moment.

There will be many questions from residents and I will be pleased to provide answers where I can. I should mention that the Waste Working Group still meets regularly but Councillors are not allowed to attend, contribute or see minutes.

Composting

One school of thought suggests that the collection of garden waste collection should not happen at all. We could all be using home composting as our contribution towards climate change. I suppose that the thought of dragging waste vehicles around the country does seem contrary to the principles of recycling in our own back gardens.

Community composting sites are local sites for storing and processing garden waste usually in compost bays or pads with an end product called a 'soil conditioner', which can then be used again locally to fertilise the soil for optimum growing conditions.

I would ask the Parish Council to consider community composting as part of their contribution towards climate change reduction, if this is viable. Of course, it is not so for every Council. There is a pot of money sitting at SHDC waiting to be claimed to help communities expand or launch a community composting scheme. Rather embarrassingly, to date no applicants have come forward

<https://www.southhams.gov.uk/community-composting>

Whether community composting is viable or not, I would also ask the Parish Council to support home composting and encourage residents to give it serious consideration. More information is again on the SHDC website.

Broadband Update

Having acceptable levels of BB is key to SHDC thinking and they have engaged a specialist to support the rollout, which has been considerably delayed.

Efforts are continuing to be made to support greater connectivity and the roll out of broadband to some of my Ward residents has been made progress is slow and we are working on trying to improve engagement with Connecting Devon & Cornwall (DCC).

At the end of the day SHDC have no direct influence on the rollout of broadband but they do continue to lobby with partners to speed up the process.

Our role is evolving but aims to:

- Provide signposting to residents and businesses by creation of webpages and a dedicated officer <https://southhams.gov.uk/community-broadband>
- Identify digital connectivity solutions to homes/businesses struggling with poor broadband
- Supporting communities in viable digital connectivity projects where they fall outside any Government or commercial fibre rollout
- Identifying further funding to support digital connectivity projects

Facebook

Can I remind members of the Parish Council of my Facebook Group page. This is the only way I have of distributing news quickly to you, residents and the surrounding community quickly. This is the only way that you can get up to the minute knowledge of what is happening at SHDC. Please join the Group as soon as you can and please also encourage your residents to do so. Thank you. Look for –

- ***Cllr Barrie Spencer – Bickleigh & Cornwood Ward***

Sustainable Community Locality Fund

I know that you are aware that I receive the sum of £2,000 per annum to spend on local projects that are within my Ward. There is a small amount of funding still available for those projects which you might have and have yet to tell me about. Please email or ring me for more details.

Climate Change Funding

In addition to the Locality Fund, I have an additional allocation of £3,000 to be spent on local climate change and biodiversity initiatives. This amount is a one off amount and must be spent by the end of this Council year.

Barwood Development – expansion of Woolwell

I continue to have ongoing meetings with the planners and the Urban Fringe Development Team regarding the Barwood development. I am meeting with them again on 06 October.

Plymouth City Council have now applied for planning permission for the Woolwell to the George road improvements and this is likely to see works start as early as January/February 2023 if it is agreed. This will open the door to the developers of the extension to Woolwell and residents seeing some 400 homes built using the newly constructed roads.

Aldi

The Audit & Governance Committee of SHDC have called in this case asking questions about the amounts spent on the abortive project.

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22 September 2022