

District Councillors Report to Bickleigh Parish Council 24 November 2022

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

Please accept my apologies for not being available to attend your meeting; I have a long standing commitment elsewhere.

I am pleased to be able to report the following –

Waste Collection arrangements

In my previous report I reported that collections had improved significantly since the transfer of service in house and away from FCC. Fingers crossed, this is still the case, however, we are not sitting back and basking in the glory. We continue to make headway into the inherited estate acquired from the previous contractor.

As I have said before the problems we encountered are not going to be solved overnight but we have made a good start.

I would encourage those who wish to continue to receive brown bin collections to apply online and to do so before 22 January 2023. Applying before this date ensures you receive the full benefit of the new paid service for garden waste from the earliest possible opportunity. This new service runs from 06 March 2023 to 31 March 2024 with the exception of four weeks over the Christmas period. Those who apply after this date will still receive the garden waste collection service but only from the date they apply.

I know that waste has not always been the best news item over the past few months but I sincerely hope that the path going forward is an improved one.

You can find answers to many of your questions by following this link, including the online application form –

<https://www.southhams.gov.uk/article/9264/Garden-Waste-Service>

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. 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.

I still have a small amount of funding available and am always interested in spending my full allowance. Call me if you wish to discuss your project.

Barwood Development – expansion of Woolwell

I continue to have ongoing meetings with the planners and the Urban Fringe Development Team regarding the Barwood development.

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. Plymouth Live have reported that the planning has been approved with Phase One starting in January 2023. This road is a complete disaster as it stands at the moment without any of the proposed works taking place. Look out for further disruption on your journeys out of Woolwell.

This will open the door to the developers of the extension to Woolwell and residents seeing some 400 homes built initially without further road improvements using the newly constructed roads. The other 1,600 houses as part of the Woolwell extension will follow on.

The Plymouth Live report can be found by following this link –

<https://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/news/plymouth-news/tavistock-road-widening-plan-agreed-7852616>

Freeport

I provided you with a comprehensive report in my previous report. There is nothing new to add at this time.

EV Charging Strategy

A Task & Finish Group was established recently to look at the Council's overall strategy for EV charging in the District. I was appointed as its Chair and will be working with other Councillors and Officers to devise a strategy that allows us to move forward with this important development.

There is some limited information at this link –

<https://www.southhams.gov.uk/electric-vehicle-charging>

Devon County Council

DCC have issued a statement on 01 November regarding their financial position. It is certainly not good and is not helped by the Government's delay in agreeing its spending plans.

He states that as things stand there is a £75m shortfall in their budgets from 2023/24.

You might see any or all of the following as practical effects of the financial issues they face –

- a freeze on staff recruitment in non-frontline areas
- delayed planned investment in IT and infrastructure projects
- cut its heating and lighting bills
- squeezed all external contracts
- stopped some routine road maintenance
- reviewing its school transport contracts and public transport subsidies

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/grave-budget-warning-from-devon-county-council-leader/>

Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest

The Plymouth and South Devon Community Forest (PSDCF) is one of England's newest Community Forests and a partnership project between Plymouth City Council, South Hams District Council, West Devon Borough Council, National Trust and the Woodland Trust.

The project aims to deliver 500 hectares of new woodland by March 2025 and is funded by 'Trees for Climate' until March 2025 as part of the Department for Environment, Food, & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 'Nature for Climate' fund which is being delivered by England's Community Forests.

The boundary of the PSDCF has been extended further into South Hams and West Devon, offering potential support to many more landowners and communities to develop and undertake woodland creation (see the eligible area in full detail by following the link below. This support will cover numerous planting types, including large-scale woodland creation through to hedgerows, agroforestry, and other small-scale planting below one hectare.

The grant scheme has just started to welcome applications, with funding available until 2025 for woodland creation (including design, planning and planting advice, support for fencing, gates, paths as well as trees themselves), with ongoing funding to support the maintenance of the trees. If you know of a landowner, farmer, Parish Council, school or community that may be interested, please encourage them to contact the PSDCF team to arrange a discussion of their plans at psdcf@plymouth.gov.uk

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1RjWC_NTfo-vt2-35MOChDwSw1oSmjf0&ll=50.51013245498654%2C-3.935890600000067&z=10&fbclid=IwAR33c2hPkLv2JtI0zeB6rHoIA0gx5LXPjL3QIOR0ARkwOdeQ7QbKvPFnnxE

Road Works in the Ward (Bickleigh & Shaugh Prior)

There are various sets of proposed road works that span both Bickleigh & Shaugh Prior parishes

Rather than repeat them here I am providing you with links to them. Full details are provided on my Facebook page including start dates, durations and locations.

Improving Access to SHDC services for those who need it

While the vast majority of our residents can, and do, interact with us online or via their smartphones, in order to support those that can't or have a higher level of need, we will shortly be going live with a Home Visit process.

This will be administered by our Customer Services and delivered by our Locality Officers. This provides additional support wherever they live in the district. Being on the ground will enable the requested service to be delivered but also a simple assessment on whether additional help, referrals or support can be offered to increase the value of visits to the customer and the council.

As Customer Services will assess during a call if a home visit is needed, it still doesn't support customers that we aren't in contact with or aren't requesting support.

Ward Member's local knowledge will be important to provide that additional level of support.

Members can request a home visit on behalf of customers that need that additional level of support and may be struggling to access our services in other ways.

The process is ready to start taking referrals imminently. Please let me know if there are any residents who you think may need this additional support.

Cost of Living/Wellbeing & Community Grants

As you may be aware, through our Cost-of-Living Response Plan it was agreed that we would launch two funds to enable communities to respond locally.

I'm pleased to advise that the grant applications are now open until 16 December.

Grant Fund 1 – A total of £25,000 available for schemes directly responding to cost of living – operating of warm hubs, provision of warm meals to vulnerable residents etc. Grants can be up to a maximum of £1,000.

Grant Fund 2 – A total of £25,000 available for schemes that will support wider Health and Wellbeing – both physical and mental. We will look favourably on applications trying something a little different and so, groups can apply for up to £2,500 from this fund.

Find out more here: www.southhams.gov.uk/winter-fund

Proposed Telecoms Mast Upgrade – Towerfield Drive

I have received a letter from the telecoms contractor confirming their proposal to upgrade the existing telecoms facilities at this site (PL6 7TN). The existing facility is in the corner of the field behind the CSA building - Clearbrook House - in the open field.

The letter can be viewed on my Facebook page – Cllr Barrie – Bickleigh & Cornwood Ward.

The contractor is inviting consultation within the deadline stipulated in the letter.

Bickleigh Green – Christmas Tree

The Bickleigh Village Group contacted me at the beginning of the year looking for assistance in the provision of a permanent Christmas tree for the village green. Up until now villagers had purchased a cut tree, and disposed of it, each year. They presented me with a request for funding using my Locality Fund. The tree was to be approximately 6/8 feet high, with a sustainable root ball to allow it to grow and be used from year to year.

I was really impressed by their desire to save the cutting of a tree each year and their precise requirements which were well thought out. I was able to source a tree for them and arrange delivery. 42 Cdo, whose base is at Bickleigh Barracks supplied the muscle to plant the tree. The Maristow Estate provided permission to use the green.

This was a fantastic example of cooperation between the Group, myself, 42 Cdo, Bickleigh Parish Council, Heathfield Cross Christmas Tree Farm and the Maristow Estate. The Group has gone on to arrange a permanent power supply to operate the lights, funded by grants from the Maristow Estate. Well done to all.

Council Tax Reduction Schemes

There are currently a number of schemes available that allow your Council Tax payments to be reduced.

Reductions are available for such things as single person occupancy, disabled residents, empty homes, apprentices, students, carers and care workers and those who are severely mentally handicapped.

Details of these schemes and how to apply can be found by following this link-

<https://www.southhams.gov.uk/council-tax-discount>

In addition, each year the Council has to decide whether to continue with, replace or revise its Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants in its area.

This year the Council has decided that changes need to be made due to the cost-of-living crisis, which is putting pressure on household budgets. We recognise that the scheme needs to provide as much support as possible to those most in need.

Council Tax Reduction is a discount for council tax available to people on a low income. The amount of discount that you receive is based on your household income.

The Council is seeking your views. Follow this link to find out more. Comments need to be submitted by midnight on 27 November.

<https://www.engagement.southhams.gov.uk/council-tax-reduction>

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