

Cllr Andrew Saywell – Report for Petrockstowe Parish Council, July 2021

Thank You!

As this is my first Parish Council meeting I've attended in Petrockstowe since the May elections I would like to say 'thank you' to Petrockstowe and Torrington Rural for re-electing me as your County Councillor. It is an amazing privilege to represent Petrockstowe at County Hall and I will do all that I can to repay that trust, work hard for everyone, and represent everyone however they so voted.

Cabinet Position

Since the Election, the Leader of the Council, Cllr John Hart, has asked me to join the Cabinet at DCC. I will be taking over the portfolio previously held by Barry Parsons, former County Councillor for Holsworthy Rural, and will cover 'Organisational Development, Workforce and Digital Transformation'.

It is a very interesting and wide ranging brief, covering all aspects of the Council's work. Nevertheless, my local constituency work will remain a priority and I will continue to fight hard for Torrington Rural.

Coronavirus

Infections have been rising across Devon at Torridge, but there has been a clear vaccine effect with new infections coming predominantly from younger people, and those older people who have tested positive developing mild or no symptoms at all. Hospitalisations and deaths remain thankfully low.

- Stats – As of 20th July the DCC area of Devon now up to 28,862 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.
- Since the 15th July that is a weekly increase of 2904 infections.
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were 143 new infections in the last 7 days, North Devon was 442 in the last 7 days, West Devon 109 cases in the last 7 days.
- The bulk of the Devon wide increase comes from Exeter, Teignbridge, East Devon and the South Hams.

My advice to people would be to continue to remain cautious, but also not to panic. I will continue to follow Covid precautions as and when it is appropriate, and will continue to take lateral flow tests.

The removal of legal Covid restrictions will be good news for our local businesses, especially those in the hospitality sector. Others I know may feel more uneasy. The people of Torrington Rural have shown great fortitude and common sense throughout this pandemic, I believe they will continue to do so in the coming months and that thanks to their behaviour and a high vaccine uptake, we will keep local Covid infections low.

Above all the key message remains, **get your jab when you are called up!**

Second Dose appointments have been brought forward from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. I have brought my second dose forward to July and would urge anyone else in similar circumstances to do the same.

Rapid Lateral Flow Testing

Rapid Lateral Flow tests can be ordered off the Government website or collected from **DCC Mobile Community Testing Vans**. The Mobile Service is currently in Torrington **Tuesdays 1.30pm to 5pm** and **Thursdays 9am to 12.30pm**.

Full times and availability of mobile testing sites can be found online here - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/rapid-testing-devon/rapid-lateral-flow-tests-site-locations-and-opening-times/>

Remember, lateral flow tests are only for people who DON'T have symptoms and are designed to pick up cases which are asymptomatic. If you have any symptoms book a PCR Test through the Government website.

More information can be found online at [devon.cc/testing](https://www.devon.gov.uk/cc/testing)

COVID Vaccinations

The rollout of the vaccine in Devon and in Torrington Rural continues to go well.

I sent a briefing note from the NHS to the Parish Councils earlier this week but the main points for vaccine rollout:

- **All adults aged 18 and over** on 1st July are eligible to book their vaccination.
- **Second doses brought forward from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. Anyone under 40 is being urged to bring forward their second vaccine dose to 8 weeks after their first.**
- **888,142 people in Devon received their first vaccine dose up to 16th July, while 694,844 second doses have been given.**
- **9/10 adults have received their first dose and 7/10 adults have received a second dose.**
- **Latest estimate is 90% of people aged over 50 in Devon have received both doses. 68.5% of 18-24 year olds in Devon have received a first dose, rising to 70.8% for 25-29 year olds. For 30-34 year olds it rises to 84.3%.**

Return to the Office at DCC

Despite the removal of legal Covid restrictions the majority of DCC's workforce will, for the time being, continue to work from home. The enforcement of isolating contacts of people who have tested positive makes office working problematic... e.g. you would not want a whole team of social workers forced into self-isolation if one of them tests positive in the workplace and their colleagues are 'pinged'. However, staff who need to use or work in an Office will continue to be allowed to do so, though Covid measures will for the time being remain in place.

In the long term the Council is looking at flexible or 'agile' working arrangements though work on this is ongoing and is unlikely to be finalised until later in the autumn.

DCC Bids for Community Renewal Funding

A programme of bids totalling more than £12.2 million has been submitted by Devon County Council to a new Government funding scheme which aims to support communities and businesses to recover after the Coronavirus pandemic.

Devon's bid is made up 16 projects from across the county which have the potential to generate around 620 jobs, support the creation of 400 new businesses, and help 3,000 people to retrain.

Torrige activity accounts for £3million of the £12million bid, including bids for the biosphere, agriculture, and upskilling young people and self employed workers. I recently met with Torrige District Council's Economic Regeneration Manager Chris Fuller and stressed to him that if these bids are successful that I would like to see funding drawn down into our area, and not focused exclusively on the larger towns.

As ever – any queries please don't hesitate to get in touch.