

Councillor reports May 2021

Councillor Saywell

Elections

Thank you to Petrockstowe and Torrington Rural for re-electing me. It is a huge honour to be re-elected and returned with an increased majority and 55% of the vote. I will do all that I can to repay that trust and represent everyone, however they voted.

County Council business is relatively quiet at the moment and I don't expect things to get fully up and running again until after the Council AGM on the 27th May, however if there are any issues that come up within the Parish then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Coronavirus

- Stats – As of 17th May the DCC area of Devon now up to 20,452 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.
- Since the 12th May that is a weekly increase of 79 infections, with most new infections coming from South Devon.
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were just 3 new infections in the last 7 days, North Devon was 10 in the last 7 days, West Devon 6 cases in the last 7 days.
- Infection numbers are now broadly static over the past couple of week, seeing 10-15 new cases a day on average, but given low numbers we are seeing marginal rises/falls but can play out as large percentage swings.
- We are seeing infection cases predominately in young people and working age adults (picked up through asymptomatic testing) so it is important we all still adhere to the public health measures and restrictions (Hands, Face, Space, Fresh air) both within work and outside work.
- DCC are still encouraging people to get a rapid Lateral Flow test twice a week, even if you have been vaccinated as you can still catch COVID and be infectious. Please visit [Devon.cc/testing](https://www.devon.gov.uk/covid-19/testing) to find out how you can get tested.

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:

- **711,164 people in Devon received their first vaccine dose** between 8th December – 9th May, **while 378,188 second doses have been given.**
- **Latest estimate is more than 90% of anyone over 50 in Devon has received their first dose. In total 71.2% of the adult population in Devon, those aged 16 +, have received a first dose.**
- Phase 2 over the vaccine programme (under 50's) has commenced. Please wait to be contact and then you can book your 1st and 2nd jab.
- **If you have an appointment for a first or second dose these appointments remain in place and its really important that you attend it as planned.**
- Even when you have been vaccinated, you must still continue to follow the COVID-19 safety rules – remember hands, face, space, and fresh air!

This remains a huge logistical exercise, very much dependent upon the speed and rate of vaccine supplies. Please wait for the NHS to contact you when it is your turn. The roll out is getting more localised, those who cannot travel far should be able to get their jab administered locally.

Local Covid Testing

Rapid Lateral Flow community testing is now available in Torrington. This is for anyone without symptoms but aimed specifically at key workers/people who cannot work from home etc.

The DCC Mobile Testing site at Torrington is available on:

- **Tuesday** 3:30 pm to 7 pm – Sydney House Car Park, EX38 8AA
- **Friday** 11 am to 2:30 pm – Sydney House Car Park, EX38 8AA

My understanding is no appointment is necessary to get a test at these walk in locations. Home testing kits are also available. More information can be found at **devon.cc/testing**

Local Highways Matters

I am aware of the ongoing flooding issues near Aish Cross and will raise this and other matters with our new Neighbourhood Highways Officer when I have a meeting with him later this week to discuss the various Highways issues within Torrington Rural.

Hybrid Meetings

Going forward, I would like the ability to still join Parish Council meetings through a virtual platform like Zoom, even if the rest of you are meeting face to face as it will help cut down my environmental and travel costs. It also makes it much easier for me to attend multiple Parish Council meetings if they are hybrid rather than having to rush from one end of Torrington Rural to another to make more than one meeting.

Having discussed this with Fiona I am hoping to join the July meeting through Zoom, but should it fail to work then I will attend the meeting in person (other commitments permitting).

Thank you again for your support in the Elections and as ever, if there are any DCC matters you'd like to raise with me then please get in touch.

Councillor Wiseman

As the situation with COVID continues to ease TDC is concentrating on getting back to business and starting to drive the economy forward. Our first real world TDC meeting will be held on Thursday with strict in place. I'm looking forward to seeing fellow councillors in real life.

Over the course of pandemic TDC has handed out over £49,500,000 in grants and financial assistance, including the latest "Business Restart Grants" amounting to nearly £5,000,000 to businesses based in Torridge. To qualify Businesses need to have premises subject to business rate and should of been contacted by the team already. If you think you qualify but have not been contacted, then email TDC through the website.

TDC is also developing redevelopment schemes in Bideford with the aim of benefitting from substantial government grants, to help drive the local economy forward.

At the recent AGM, as independent councillors makeup 50% of the council all the chairmanships of the committees where granted to independent councillors. Cllr Ken James retaining the position of Leader of the council and Cllr Doug Bushby the new Chair of the council.

Keep Britain Tidy has awarded Westward Ho! a Blue Flag again this year and also a Seaside Award, one of only 56 beaches to receive both accolades.

The Boundary Commission has begun a review in to parliamentary constituencies, and will be publishing their proposals on 8th June, for an eight week consultation period when they will be interested to hear from residents about the extent to which the proposals reflect the local ties in the area. The final report will be published in 2023.