

## **Devon County Council News**

### **June newsletter to parish councils in Broadclyst Division from Cllr Henry Gent**

#### **Election result for Devon County Council**

The Liberal Democrats won 27 seats out of 60, and have formed an administration with Julian Brazil as Leader and 9 out of 10 of the Cabinet positions. Reform won 18 seats and are the second largest party. Conservatives won 7 seats. The Greens won 6 seats and are joined by 2 Independents, in a group of 8, with one Cabinet seat. Only 14 of the 60 county councillors held a seat on the county council before the election.

In this Division I topped the poll, and Nat Vanstone of Reform came second, and we were duly elected.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/>

#### **Children's Services**

Shortly after the election an Ofsted report into children's services at DCC was published. It rated the council as "inadequate" and said "serious weaknesses remain", based on an inspection in September 2024. In addition, the council has over-spent on Special Education Needs by about £20m in 2024-25, despite the government bail-out of March 2024, known as the "safety valve" agreement. The new Leader, Julian Brazil, has taken personal responsibility for children's services and appointed two other cabinet members to oversee this service.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgj8629gwzdo>

#### **Potholes**

Brazil has also put fixing the roads as a top priority, bringing the contract back in-house if possible.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/new-leader-makes-vulnerable-children-and-fixing-roads-two-of-his-top-priorities/>

#### **My role on the county council**

I have been appointed as Chair of the Farms Estates Committee, and as Vice Chair of the Investments and Pensions Committee. I am also to sit on the Health and Adult Care

Scrutiny Committee, the Land and Property Committee, and the Highways and Traffic Orders Committee for East Devon.

### **My relationship with your parish council, councillors, and residents**

I am aiming to send out a newsletter, like this, to all the parish councils in the Division at the beginning of every month. I am not aiming to attend all the meetings of all twelve town and parish councils in the Division. I do appreciate getting an annual calendar of meetings, or an email invitation to attend. Electronic invitations for the entire calendar of meetings for the year would be great. I will try to attend if the chair or clerk notifies me of a particular agenda item where I might want to support the parish council. If it would be helpful for me to attend a parish council meeting, please let me know in advance and I will confirm if possible. It would be helpful for me if that item can be near the start of the meeting, but if needs arise I will put aside the whole evening.

I am more than happy to take up issues with DCC officers when I am asked to do so by the clerk or chair of your parish council, especially when backed by a parish council resolution, and also when asked to do so by parish councillors and all other residents. I am trying to reply very promptly to all emails Mon-Thurs unless I am on leave.

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### **20 mph zones**

I believe that there are 5 parishes in our Division who have sent an Expression of Interest to DCC, wishing to instigate or extend a 20 mph zone. There is at least one further parish where I think this is a wish of the parish council but I am not sure if an Expression of Interest has been sent to DCC. However under the previous Conservative administration 20 mph zones have seemed to be expensive, apparently as a result of the interpretation of national guidelines. Only a small budget was allocated and only a small number of schemes were funded per year. There is the option of self-funding using precept or NCIL, but approval by DCC, let alone funding, has been hard. I am therefore pleased to say that the first Notice of Motion to the new council was from a Green county councillor, calling for a new policy on 20 mph, as other counties seem to be able to implement schemes more readily. It may be some time before we know whether any change is going to happen but in the meantime please can all parishes consider whether want to apply, or renew or reiterate their previous expression of interest in a 20 mph zone or any other speed restriction request. I will always support speed restriction requests which have been requested by resolution of your parish council.

### **CIL Funding**

This item of news is of interest mainly to Broadclyst parish and Cranbrook town and surrounding areas. DCC has now secured funding for the 3 following projects, all of which are to be managed by DCC:

1. Part of the new Cranbrook-Exeter off-road multi-use path, linking Tithebarn and Cranbrook, via Mosshayne Lane. Also connects with the Clyst Valley Trail. Much of the route will be developer-funded. DCC has secured funding for the remaining “gap”, including a new bridge over the Clyst, with money from East Devon CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and the Consolidated Active Travel Fund from central government. (total costs about £4.5m).
2. London Road enhancements at Cranbrook. In recent years this road has been a sort of “by-pass” for Cranbrook, but as the town extends southwards it will be more like a thread linking the town together, and it must be safe to cross, and attractive for walking and cycling. Some sections of the enhanced route will be delivered by the developers, and DCC has got CIL funding for one of the gaps. (cost £805,000).
3. New primary school at Tithebarn (approx. cost £6m). At the time of writing more detailed costings are awaited and we don’t know if the funding is sufficient or when the school will be built. DCC have got a significant shortage of places for primary school pupils in Broadclyst and Cranbrook. 18 applicants living in Tithebarn, in the catchment of Monkerton school, but more than 1280 metres away, were refused places for admission in September, even though the school did their best by providing 6 extra places. 9 of these applicants were refused places at all of their chosen schools, and offered places at the nearest school with a vacancy, often St Nicholas, in Heavitree. 4 applicants living in Westclyst were refused admission to Westclyst school. In Cranbrook at St Martins, I understand that admission has been refused to siblings of pupils already at the school. At Cranbrook Education Campus, the school is also over-subscribed for Reception in September. Our inability to provide school places close to home for small children is very disappointing. I think that part of the problem is that in areas of new houses, many of the new residents have young families: this was my experience when canvassing for the election: behind the adult in the doorway was often a toddler! I will be pressing as hard as I can for new places to be created as soon as possible at Tithebarn and at the other new schools that are planned.

*Cllr Henry Gent*

