

County Councillor's Report, November 2018

Wilmington meeting with Highways England

On 19th October I attended a meeting with Highways England, organised by the A35 Action Group, with representatives of Widworthy and Offwell parish councils. There was general agreement that HE are developing a promising 'route treatment' to manage speeds on the A35 between Honiton and Charmouth roundabout, centred on average speed cameras, with crossings and other measures in Wilmington, but various concerns were expressed about aspects of the scheme, which will be forwarded to HE.

My main concern is that the proposed timetable seemed to have slipped by a whole year, compared to that previously discussed, and I am writing to HE at regional level to ask that they return to speedier design and delivery.

Seaton Area Health Matters discussions with the RD&E

We have just received an information pack from the RD&E for an important meeting with them on 5th November, which I will attend. At the time of writing I have not yet had time to analyse it.

Community Hospitals debate at the County Council

At the Council meeting on 4th October, I proposed an amendment to the Cabinet proposal. Cllr Claire Wright, my fellow Independent, had proposed a motion asking for the Council to support keeping all hospitals as centres for health and wellbeing in the community. The Cabinet had proposed to add 'where appropriate', which opened up the possibility of not defending some hospitals when the NHS produce their plans.

I tried to amend their proposal to welcome the new Secretary of State for Health's remarks criticising the closure of community hospital, and succeeded in inserting the idea that the Council would work 'in the direction of retaining all hospitals', but the Conservatives still added 'where appropriate'.

EDDC turns down listing of Seaton Hospital

In a related development, EDDC has turned down Seaton Town Council's application for Seaton Hospital to be listed as an 'asset of community value', despite other Devon councils listing their hospitals.

A Dorset and East Devon National Park?

The County Council also approved a Cabinet recommendation to invite the national review panel on National Parks and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty to Devon. This followed my initiative in raising the issue of whether we should support a Dorset and East Devon National Park. I think there could be advantages in tourism promotion and possibly also in managing threats of inappropriate development. The County has not committed itself on these issues, however.

Devon's Housing Needs

Due to the chaotic weather on 12th October, I missed the Tiverton launch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (Devon)'s reports on Devon's Housing Needs and on the impact of Government policy on housing development in Devon. However I have now read these reports and I think they are extremely important because their thorough research suggests that the Government is imposing excessively high housebuilding targets on Devon.

Unfortunately, the report is not available online, but I am investigating the possibility of supplying a copy to each of the town and parish councils in the Seaton & Colyton division.

Lack of preparations for a 'No Deal' Brexit in Devon

At the County Council, I asked what preparations Devon had made for the UK crashing out of the EU without a deal on 29 March 2019. The written answer provided talked about would happen at the end of a 'transition period' in December 2020. It was obvious that whoever wrote the reply didn't realise that without a deal, there would be no transition period!

The Leader, Cllr John Hart, in whose name this reply went, did make it clear when I challenged this that he understood the risks. But the fact remains that the County Council, which is the emergency planning authority, has made no significant preparations for a potentially serious disaster which government policies could be leading us towards.