

CLLR JESS BAILEY – DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL (OTTER VALLEY) AND EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL (WEST HILL AND AYLESBEARE)

REPORT TO WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL

4 APRIL 2022

Boundary Commission Review

I attended the Boundary Commission public hearings on 21st March in Exeter Guildhall. I objected to the splitting of West Hill and Ottery St Mary into two separate parliamentary constituencies on the basis of the close ties between the two communities. I raised concerns about the confusion which would arise because of severing the close connections. My comments can be found here

<https://www.facebook.com/JessBaileyOtterValleyDevonCountyCouncillor>

Local Plan

EDDC is carrying out a further call for sites as agreed at the Strategic Planning Meeting on 8th March. In that meeting I emphasised the importance of trying to develop on brownfield sites rather than plundering the green fields of East Devon. I am pleased to see that in the call for sites there is particular reference to brown field sites. What I cannot see, however, is any reference to further involvement of the parish and town councils in this latest call for site, despite members of the committee including myself pressing for this. The agenda for tomorrow's strategic planning meeting can be found here:

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1675&Ver=4>

New Devon County Council website launched to help Ukraine

A new Devon County Council website has been launched to help refugees and sponsors with the latest information.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/new-website-to-help-support-ukrainian-refugees-launched/>

Race Equality Audit at Devon County Council

Earlier this year Devon County Council published the findings of a race equality audit. The report, which contains very concerning findings, concluded that “structural racism exists within DCC because of inaction from White stakeholders and the absence of clear, structured and sufficient leadership”. The full report can be found here

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/equality/performance-and-monitoring/raceaudit21>

Devon County Council are seeking to address the issues raised in the report through the scrutiny committees, and by bringing an action plan first to cabinet and then full council. I anticipate that the action plan will be brought to the cabinet meeting on 20th April, but the agenda has not yet been published.

Children's Scrutiny Committee at Devon County Council

This Wednesday 6th April at 10.30 am there is a children's scrutiny committee which is being convened to consider the Ofsted Visit Letter dated 6th March 2022. Although I am not a member of this committee this is a really important matter which I feel should be brought to your attention. This can be watched live via Teams from a link on this page <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=428&MId=4650&Ver=4>. In March 2020 Ofsted's inspection found that there were serious failures in the services provided to children and young people in Devon. There were two monitoring visits in September 2020 and May 2021 and this latest letter follows on from a further visit in February this year.

The headline finding of the Ofsted Visit Letter dated 6th March 2022 are:

A surge in referrals about children who may be in need or at risk of harm during the COVID-19 pandemic, acute staff shortages and high caseloads in the initial response teams (IRT) are all contributing to many children and families not yet receiving the help they need at the time they need it most.

In particular, many children for whom there are concerns of significant harm are not seen quickly enough. Some families are unnecessarily subjected to repeated child protection investigations; managers' recommendations are not always followed, and their application of thresholds for different levels of intervention is inconsistent. Professional curiosity is hampered by a lack of time to reflect on the best way forward for families. Consequently, many children remain in unsafe and neglectful circumstances for too long.

However, in the last four months, a permanent senior leadership team with a clear understanding of what needs to improve has begun to address the serious weaknesses in Devon. During this time, the introduction of a new practice model, supported by external partners, has become increasingly understood by social workers and they are enthusiastic about the future. Elected members and corporate leaders now prioritise children and families and acknowledge the need to make changes more quick

Little Glade – EDDC planning committee on 16th March

I spoke at the planning committee on 16th March and objected to the planning application. Unfortunately, the committee did not share my view and the view of the Parish Council that the proposed dwelling is too close to the adjacent property, particularly given its size. I drew the attention of the committee to other councils who have a minimum of 20 metres distance between buildings, but this was disregarded. I am disappointed by the decision but I do intend to press for a supplementary planning document which sets out minimum distances to be progressed as part of the local plan work.

Sewage discharges in East Devon

South West Water attended the EDDC scrutiny committee meeting on 17th March, following my proposal last year that SWW should be invited to attend to answer questions about the awful discharges into our rivers. My report on this meeting can be found here <https://jessicabailey.home.blog/2022/03/17/south-west-water-appears-at-scrutiny-committee-to-answer-questions-about-sewage-discharges/>. The next scrutiny meeting is on

Thursday 7th April where the committee will discuss the structure for future meetings with South West Water.

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=148&MId=1770&Ver=4>