

## BUDLEIGH SALTERTON TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES** of the Annual Town Meeting held at the Public Hall, Station Road, on Wednesday 5 April 2017 at 7.00pm.

### **PRESENT**

Cllr C A Kitson (Town Mayor)  
Cllr A J Dent (Deputy Town Mayor)  
Cllr Mrs L D Evans  
Cllr A N Gooding  
Cllr S V Hall  
Cllr D J Harrison  
Cllr M C Hilliar  
Cllr A L Jones  
Cllr C Richards

**Town Clerk:** Mrs J E Vanstone

**Others Present:** County Cllr Mrs C Channon, thirty-four members of the public and one representative of the press

### **Welcome by the Town Mayor**

The Town Mayor, Cllr C A Kitson, welcomed everyone and said how good it was to see so many people in attendance.

### **106. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs M L Kenneally-Stone, Cllr Mrs C A Sismore-Hunt, Cllr T D Wright and Mrs M Jones.

### **107. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Wednesday 30 March 2016 had been circulated prior to the Meeting. It was unanimously agreed they be signed as a true record.

### **108. Guest Speaker**

Mr C Jenner, FAB Link Project Manager

Mr Jenner thanked the Town Mayor for inviting him to come and speak about the Project which is a joint venture between FAB Link Ltd and RTE. FAB Link Ltd was established to develop and own the FAB Project and its shareholders are Transmission Investment and Alderney Renewable Energy. The project is financed by private investment.

He said the project was to connect the national grids of Britain and France via 170km cable running under the English Channel then on to a substation at Broadclyst.

He explained that the Channel has the best tidal stream currents in the world and they had a licence to tap into that.

The UK has some of the most expensive electricity in Europe and this project would bring significant savings by trading low carbon energy between the two countries.

All in all, there would be 220km of dual cables costing approximately £1m per kilometre.

The team had been working on the project for a while and especially the last two years, finding a suitable location.

They had recently submitted key planning consents for a convertor station at Broadclyst and a Certificate for Lawful Development for the underground cables. FAB has the same powers as the National Grid or Gas companies and so there should be no hiccups. They were also seeking the necessary permissions from land owners.

It was hoped that by September 2017 the preferred contractors would have been hired and a number of regulatory checks carried out.

Construction would start in mid-2018 with a two or three-year build so it was hoped to be operational by 2021/2022. They were on track with the finance and bids were being received from prospective contractors.

Consents would be sent to Exeter Airport and they were working closely with East Devon District Council. There would also be improvements to the roads in the area and landscaping of the site.

After the consultation in July 2016, some adjustments to the route had been made; this was partly because of the beavers in the River Otter. Some changes were also made at Hawkerland.

The company was committed to traffic management and waste management. Most of the construction traffic would go on temporary tracks and all hedges etc would be reinstated after the work was completed.

The horizontal drilling at Budleigh Salterton beach should be OK and will not impact on the existing storm outfall (he understood there were some plans for improving this). He confirmed that no work would be undertaken in the Lime Kiln Car Park during work July and August.

Similar applications had been submitted in Alderney.

He then spoke briefly about the footpath route. He explained that Permitted Development Rights do not allow them to make improvements to the footpath so this would be covered by a planning application. He said they wanted to get the design right and would be delaying it for a while so it was suitable and adequate.

They could not discount the road route until the footpath route had been fully explored. 82% of responses to the consultation preferred the footpath route. Numerous surveys had been carried out and they were fully aware of the archaeology in the area and all this would be taken into account.

They wanted to make the path an all-mobility surface with the same access permissions as now; it would retain a general undulating appearance. They wanted to make sure the cables were safe and buried whatever happened with the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) and did not want to increase the possibility of flooding anywhere else along the route. The footpath would be sympathetic to the area so it may occasionally be flooded if and when the LORP goes ahead.

Locally, they had been negotiating with landowners re Compulsory Purchase Orders and Property Rights, they had spoken to the Cricket Club and the cables would not affect any future landscaping etc for the cricket pitch.

He concluded by saying that all in all, everything was on track. He then asked if anyone had any questions:

- Mr M Webb said that French power was cheaper because it was nuclear.
- Mr J Falby asked what effect Brexit would have on the Project. Mr Jenner said there would be no impact on the delivery of the project. There were already connectors between EU and non-EU countries although the currency exchange may affect purchase of equipment.
- Mr Jenner was also asked about access to Granary Lane. He said he was speaking to many parties about this including Devon County Council and Clinton Devon Estates. He said they wanted the finished path to be appropriate for the area, users and residents alike.

The Town Mayor thanked Mr Jenner for keeping in contact with the Town Council and the comprehensive update. He said there was a lot going on of which residents were not aware!

## 109. Reports

### **Chairman of the Town Council**

The Town Mayor, Cllr C A Kitson said he was pleased to report he had had a busy and active council year with many aspects of town council responsibilities managed through a committee structure chaired by a member of the Council team; their reports would be later in the meeting. He said the Clerk, Mrs J E Vanstone and her assistant, Mrs K Harrison ensured that the Town Council (BSTC) functioned appropriately and efficiently.

He explained that all BSTC meetings were open to the public although, apart from planning, very little interest was shown. He would like to encourage more public interest and participation.

Throughout the year BSTC gave limited financial support to local groups and events, such as the Scouts, Christmas Lights etc. BSTC had funded the switching unit for the Football Club floodlights to be used for night time landings by the Devon Air Ambulance, which was vital for the town. The Council had also provided a cycle rack outside the Public Hall and had arranged for a post box outside the medical centre to replace the box lost when the sorting office had closed.

The Town Improvement Fund had been established a few years ago and had since funded the provision of railings along part of the sea front, the repainting of the street lamps on Marine Parade. Suggestions for other projects were always welcome.

The Council also funded the grass cutting in some public open spaces (previously carried out by Devon County Council (DCC)) and had funded a contractor to water some of the excellent Budleigh in Bloom floral displays.

Current projects that BSTC was involved in were the FAB Project and coordinating the provision of three public access defibrillators around the town. BSTC also paid for the cleaning of the Brook Road toilets ensuring the continuance of this important shoppers' car park. The legal transfer of the Jubilee Shelter was progressing with East Devon District Council (EDDC) and the provision of a multi-use games area at Greenway Lane recreation ground was being planned.

He hoped the following committee reports would give further detail of the many aspects undertaken by BSTC and the thanked his 'team' of Councillors for the work done to ensure Budleigh Salterton was a good place to live.

### **Chairman of the Planning Committee**

The Chairman, Cllr A J Dent, reported that during the previous year 89 applications had been received for BSTC to comment on – this was two more than the previous year. Of these 52 had been granted by EDDC and five refused. Three applications had been withdrawn by the applicant. Thirteen applications were for work to trees – ten had been approved and three had a split decision. A decision was still pending on sixteen applications. There were only five applications where BSTC and EDDC differed in their opinion.

He explained that the East Devon Local Plan was in place and ratification of the Budleigh Salterton Neighbourhood Plan was awaited. The steering group led, by Roger Sherriff, had done a magnificent job in pulling together all the necessary information and Roger had involved representatives from a wide selection from the community.

When the Plan was presented to EDDC Cllr Mark Williamson, the lead councillor for Neighbourhood Planning, had said:

“Those volunteers who have worked on the Budleigh Salterton Neighbourhood Plan deserve double recognition. They are the first town in East Devon to bring a Neighbourhood Plan to submission stage, and they have done so in just two years. The plan is very well designed and will be easy to use in making important decisions about the future of this historic and much-loved town. It shows that even in a sizeable town it is possible for residents to have a voice in the planning process.”

He then went on to say that the planning process had settled down over the last couple of years and Budleigh was now expected to receive only a 'modest' number of applications for developments. This was reflected in the 89 applications received this year compared to the 150 received two years ago – most of these applications were improvements or extensions to existing properties.

The development in what is affectionately known as 'Doc Evans Field' on the B3178 by Badger Homes was now well under way and would soon be offering new homes for families at a variety of price levels; some of them will be affordable and others will be for social rent.

An application from Tesco was still awaited; company representatives had said they were committed to bringing one of their Tesco Express stores to the old and empty Priors shop in Fore Street.

He said that as councillors their role was to establish a sound base for the future so that the town can both survive and thrive and he was really happy to see developments and new businesses in the High Street like L'Image, Vanilla Sky, Earls, Sixpence and the Pebble Gallery. Punch Taverns had finally seen fit to invest over a quarter of a million pounds in refurbishing the Salterton Arms which boded well for the future and long may such improvements continue.

### **Chairman of the Finance Committee**

The Chairman, Cllr C Richards, said he was pleased to once again be able to advise that the town's finances were very healthy. That said, due to the fact that costs continued to rise, there was a small increase in the local precept for the next year which amounted to less than £2 per annum for a Band D property. That rise was occasioned by the fact that both County and District Councils continued to cut back on services such as cutting grass verges and doing various pieces of maintenance. Therefore, it was left to BSTC to 'pick up the pieces' or in other words, pay the bill to keep the Town looking smart.

When the budget for 2017/2018 was drawn up, the overall increase in the cost of running the Council was kept to 4.7%. However, as some will have seen from Council Tax bills, the rise was quoted as 6% and the reason for that was that Central Government had reduced the Council Tax Discount Grant, which is passed on by East Devon District Council, from £3467 in 2016/2017 to £1525 for 2017/2018. This reduction was what had pushed the increase from 4.7% to 6%. Sadly, in all probability the grant may be even less, or completely disappear in 2018/2019.

In the past year BSTC had spent a considerable sum, including paying the bill for the work which was done in the previous year, to make the seafront more presentable with the new railings above Steamer Steps. As previously mentioned, much of this work had been funded by the Town Improvement Fund which was set up to pay for all the jobs which were not really BSTC responsibility, together with other small improvements, all of which have to be done to keep the town looking smart.

In the past year as austerity had bitten, there had been even more requests for help from local organisations. These included the Museum, Budleigh in Bloom where BSTC funded the watering of the flower beds, the Exmouth & District Community Transport Group who run the Ring & Ride Bus, the local Scout group, BUDFAS, the Royal British Legion, St Peter's School PTA plus a large donation to the Chamber of Commerce towards work on the Christmas lights. Funds were also provided to enhance the lighting at the Football Club to enable the Devon Air Ambulance to land at night. All in all, donations to these and other organisations had totalled almost £9,000.

He saw no let-up in requests for help in the year ahead and the Council had already committed over £3,000 of next financial year's Donations budget!

Another continuing expense was the Public Hall. He did not want to steal Cllr Evans' thunder when she gave her Public Hall Committee report later in the meeting, however, from a Finance Committee point of view, it was worth noting that the Council had spent almost £7,000 on general maintenance and over £16,000 on updates and improvements – the largest item being the refurbishment of the toilets.

On the overall budget, he was hopeful that the small deficit forecast in this year's budget projection would not occur. He had forecast a small budget deficit for next year but the Council had healthy reserves and after that he expected BSTC to be back in the black.

He concluded by repeating what he had said at the outset – the town's finances were healthy and it was his intention to see that, with prudent management, they remained that way.

### **Chairman of the Public Hall Committee**

The Chairman, Cllr Mrs L D Evans started her report by congratulating the residents of Budleigh Salterton. The Hall had been refurbished because that was the wish of the residents, and it was being used to raise thousands of pounds for not only local charities, but charities that help so many. As all would know Budleigh Salterton residents were not only generous with their time, but in their support of so many different good causes. The Hall did not make a profit but it was a much-valued amenity for the town so in her opinion it was worth it!

She apologised for repeating anything the Chairman of the Finance Committee had already spoken about, but the two areas were linked. She said that she requested purchases for the Hall, he scrutinised them and then they found a half way point!

The year had started with the refurbishment of the toilets and she was pleased to say they had met with approval especially from the ladies! She was not certain about the gents but had not received any complaints so assumed all was OK!

The inner and outer foyers and stairway had been decorated and this had been an ideal opportunity for the three Joyce Dennys paintings to be reframed. She said they were worth a look.

The Cellar boiler room door way had been blocked up for security reasons - the cellar was a difficult place to access and HSE definitely did not like the steps!

The Stage lighting had received attention and the stage walls were gradually being repaired and painted as and when caretaker could fit in.

The usual problems when running an old building had been encountered, with the heating being the major complaint – the hall is difficult and expensive building to heat.

As mentioned last year the Age Concern unit suffered badly with damp and this had been dealt with just after Easter. She did not believe the damp would ever totally be eliminated from the building because of its age, the lack of a damp course and it being a single brick building.

With the opening of the HUB, Age Concern would be relinquishing the tenancy of the Norman Centre so discussions would be taking place as to its future use.

She said that in last year's report she had concluded by saying she did not have anything on her wish list, but things could change. As predicted by her councillor colleagues she had come up with something!! The Finance Committee had agreed for 2017/18 the purchase of: lapel mics which would be useful to all who hold meetings within the hall and replacement carpeting for the inner foyer as the current carpet tiles were beyond cleaning.

She apologised for the lack of lights on the Hall last Christmas year, but there had been a failure. However, Mrs Vanstone was consulting with the Town Christmas Lights Group to agree an alternative for future years.

She said she was always looking to the future and had already mentioned the heating in the Hall. She thought a new boiler would need to be purchased within the next few years, plus the upgrade of the radiators. She thought it would be advisable to get a heating engineer to offer suggestions on the best course of action.

It had been brought to her attention that the black-outs on the arched windows on either side of the stage were unsightly. She would look at the possibility of installing thermal blinds for this area for the 2019/20 budget as the two windows in question had not been double glazed.

The wonderful floorboards in the hall could not be sanded much more due to nail heads etc, so a solution would need to be found and the Committee was investigating how better access can be created to enable repairs to the clocks without having to hire a 'cherry picker'.

Certain users of the Hall had requested that the Committee investigate the use of suspended 'muffle boards' to improve sound within; she believed they had them in Axminster Civic Hall. She thought this was a good idea but it would have to wait!

She thanked Mrs Vanstone and Mrs Harrison for their diplomacy when dealing with the running of the Hall. She also thanked Mrs Meredith, Mr Moore and Mrs Gliddon for ensuring the Hall met hirers' expectations, and for dealing with any problems. She thanked her fellow Councillors as she did realise that sometimes it was difficult to understand when she said "it's got to go"!

The Hall and surrounding outside area would be used the coming weekend for what she hoped would be a very successful Food & Drink Festival, and the very popular Jazz Festival would be taking place over the weekend 21 to 23 April, May would bring Gala week and BSTC's contribution was subsidised hire of the Hall. Imperial College would be here in July and the Art Exhibition in August.

She asked that everyone checked the Notice Boards and Website for up and coming events; she would also post events on Facebook which she hoped were of interest to all.

She concluded by saying that if anyone wished to hold an event that they consider the Public Hall. A new leaflet had been printed and she asked that if anyone wanted to pass on one, to feel free.

The Town Mayor thanked Cllr Mrs Evans. He said the leaflets looked good, adding the Hall diary was pretty full, with bookings being taken two years in advance.

#### **Foreshore & Footpaths Committee**

The Chairman, Cllr D J Harrison reported that the FAB Link continued to edge closer and he thanked Mr Jenner for his update. The bonus of the project would be a more accessible footpath running from the Cricket Club up to South Farm Road. He hoped this would allow less able-bodied residents and visitors to complete a fairly level circular walk returning beside the river or vice versa.

The previous winter had been a little kinder and it was heartening to see the western end of the beach starting to repair itself with noticeably more pebbles appearing at The Chine. He thought this would please the naturists!

The 2016 Bathing Water Quality results, announced by DEFRA in November 2016, had revealed that Budleigh Salterton along with six of the District's other beaches, had received an "Excellent" classification, which is the highest and cleanest class. These results were the best that the District had ever received and were based on combined figures for 2013 to 2016.

Bathing Water Quality was based on guidelines produced by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which were translated into UK law in 2015. Bathing Water Quality is measured by the amount of bacteria within a water sample and counts are undertaken throughout the bathing season to see if the water meets WHO standards. The directive sets limits for a number of bacteria and all countries within the EU have to make sure their popular beaches meet these standards. These popular beaches are known as designate bathing waters.

He said the town should be proud of the beach and he hoped this standard continued.

The exceptionally dry summer of 2016 had contributed to the good results, along with the Environment Agency setting out guidelines to the farmers whose livestock were close or able to enter watercourses. Monitoring of the watercourses would continue.

He thanked the committed local people and groups who made a great effort to keep the town tidy: the members of the public who carried out a daily litter-pick – the Otter Valley Association and Clinton Devon Estates who organise the River Otter clean up – Budleigh in Bloom – Knowle Village Traffic Group members who cleared the footpath from Knowle Village Hall to Bedlands Lane and the EDDC StreetScene operatives. Budleigh Salterton Residents should be proud of their glorious seafront and he hoped it would remain unspoilt by developers.

### **Community Gardens Committee**

The Chairman, Cllr M C Hilliar reported he had taken over as Chairman of the committee in May 2016.

With the help of two plot holders, Steve Hagger and Jerry Hitt, he had been able to carry out three inspections of the Gardens over the course of the year. It had been interesting to see the plots change from weedy to thriving! During his time as chairman he had had two troublesome plots to deal with but was pleased to report they had new tenants who were keen and the plots were improving. He had also seen fifteen plots change hands. Unfortunately, two plot holders had been evicted due to lack of productivity which meant the waiting list now stood at just 24.

He thanked Mr Hagger and Mr Hitt for their help over the past year and the Town Clerk and her assistant for their assistance.

- Mrs V Short asked how long those on the waiting list had to wait. Cllr Hilliar explained that the next person on the list had been waiting for just over a year adding that if someone refused a plot, their name went to the bottom of the list.

### **County Councillor**

County Cllr Mrs C Channon said she had had the privilege of serving the town for 24 years and she was amazed how quickly the time had flown by. During that time, she had enjoyed being the town's representative and had always fought the corner for the residents. The boundary had changed over the years – when she was first elected her ward had stretched from Sidmouth to Budleigh Salterton with all the villages in between. Twelve years later Sidmouth had been removed from the ward and Aylesbeare and Woodbury had been added. This year the ward would be changing again with the removal of all villages except East Budleigh and the addition of part of Exmouth.

She had thought long and hard before deciding whether to stand for re-election once again but was aware that there were a number of unfinished matters which she wanted to resolve.

The main project was the setting up of the Health and Wellbeing Hub at Budleigh Hospital. She had been involved with this project for four years and it was with great joy that she had heard that the contracts had been signed and work was in progress. Like so many, she wanted the project to be a huge success. It was an opportunity to see the integration of social care and health providing a seamless service from cradle to grave, fighting the loneliness of the housebound and supporting families and young people. She was delighted that the beds at Exmouth Hospital had been retained but everyone needed to continue to fight to retain and expand other services so there was a valuable link between the two hospitals. She was pleased that at long last the minibus purchased through the Parishes Together Fund could be used for its original purpose. She thanked Cllr S V Hall for his assistance with this during his time as Town Mayor.

The new classrooms at St Peter's School were ready and there was still a piece of land beside them for further expansion. With new housing being built at the edge of the town, there would be more children requiring school places so extra accommodation would be needed. Devon was deeply engaged in a battle with central government to provide fair funding for schools and she was grateful for the support given by BSTC.

She was pleased to help facilitate the setting up of the Friends of Budleigh Library and was encouraged that their committee goes from strength to strength and that DCC had found a solution which meant that not a single library had been closed.

She supported all the festivals held in the town and believed they had done a great deal to place the value of Budleigh Salterton on the national map. She reminded everyone that the Food & Drink Festival was being held in the town over the following weekend. She hoped it was a huge success as it really helped support the local economy.

She explained that each year DCC gave its councillors a sum of money to help the local community. She had helped with the following: Lights for St Peter's Church – electricity on The Green for the Literary Festival – grants to the Jazz, Music, Literary and Food Festivals – toilet refurbishment at the Football Club – BUDFAS Young Art Project – the Raleigh Mission – camping equipment for the Scouts – the Community Gardens – Knowle Village Hall – Fairlynch – Budleigh in Bloom – the Buy Local project and Knowle Village Traffic Group. She said it was important that all residents had use of the locality budget.

She concluded by thanking the Clerk, her assistant and members of BSTC past and present for their help and support. She said that as a team they had achieved a great deal, not least a successful outcome for a recent set of Traffic Orders which should make the town a safer place.

### **District Councillors**

#### **Cllr S V Hall**

Cllr Hall said that in addition to EDDC matters he would quickly report on the forthcoming Traffic Order. He explained that he chaired the Budleigh Salterton Traffic Group and Traffic Orders would be processed shortly after a three-year uphill struggle to get them approved. The outcome had been achieved through real teamwork and cooperation with County Highways Officers, the local PCSO, members of the public but mostly due to the unstinting efforts of County Cllr Mrs Channon. He explained that it would be a composite order tackling the worst examples of safety and access issues around the town. He said after the meeting he would be happy to give details to anybody interested in knowing where the affected areas were.

As far as District matters were concerned, he sat on the Audit & Governance committee which oversees the EDDC financial position and how its accounts and value for money reports were presented to the general public. He was pleased to advise that the independent internal and external auditors found no major cause for concerns.

He remained Chair of Licensing and had done this for the last 7 years. During the previous year there had been two major initiatives and policy proposals were currently out for public consultation. The first was for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licences. New tougher measures were being introduced for vehicles and drivers in order they are both fit and proper thereby ensuring the safety of taxi users across the whole district. Most of the proposed changes had arisen as a result of the terrible events in Rotherham and Rochdale. There would be more thorough checks of backgrounds (such as criminal records) particularly if the applicant was from outside the EU where records were not always available plus more cross-referencing with other authorities as to whether applicants hold licences elsewhere. In addition to this there would be guidelines on driver dress, code of conduct, presentation of vehicles, spoken English assessments and local area knowledge.

The second policy would control indiscriminate street trading across the district. There is an increased risk that as the economy gets tougher people will resort to small start-up easy-to-run businesses without overheads, particularly at seaside resorts. EDDC wants to ensure that, through licensing, there will be a tough and thorough vetting procedure when applying for a licence which will need to be paid for. Just as with alcohol licences, members of the public (including traders) who could be adversely affected will have the opportunity to object.



In conjunction with Licensing, colleagues in Environmental Health had established two new zones within East Devon called Public Space Protection Orders. Working with the Police, this provided extra powers to disperse gatherings of people when abusive behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse was affecting the general public. He concluded by reminding those present that the Jazz Festival was on over the weekend 21, 22 and 23 April.

#### Cllr A J Dent

Cllr Dent advised that his areas of responsibility lay within Planning and Scrutiny: he was a member of the Development Management Committee (commonly known as the DMC) and he was also Vice Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee which acted as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet and Council.

He explained that at Scrutiny the matter of Broadband and 4G had been discussed. Broadband was now largely effective in Budleigh but there was considerable concern for rural areas which still had a dire service. At an update at the Scrutiny meeting in March members had learnt that suppliers, other than BT, were being encouraged to come on board to improve the delivery of fast broadband to outlying areas. As many would be aware the mobile phone signal in the town, and especially in East Budleigh, was very poor. The Town Council had supported a proposal to upgrade the mast behind the sports club and there was another application for a new mobile phone mast to be installed at East Budleigh.

The Scrutiny Committee had also discussed the hot topics of Hospital closures and bed blocking and the proposed changes to healthcare models had been the subject of public consultations and at Scrutiny meetings. In November the Committee heard a presentation from Rob Sainsbury, Chief Executive of the NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) but were unable to support the proposed changes to the way that health services were delivered until a workable 'care at home' service could be both funded and staffed.

In Budleigh it had been the best part of four years since the hospital had closed but the project's team had finally got the go-ahead to become a 'wellbeing hub'. Work had already started on the alterations.

A major issue for the NHS was the growth of the elderly population and the lack of a suitable 'care at home' service. The NHS had plans to deal with this but to date the government had been unwilling to provide sufficient additional funds. The result was that hospital beds were being occupied by a lot of elderly people who could not be discharged as there was no support package for them once they got home. In retirement hot spots (like Budleigh) this was likely to become a critical issue. Resistance was faced from both well-meaning conservationists as well as the East Devon Alliance when plans were submitted for new care homes and developments for elderly people. In his view, this was short-sighted nimbyism as councillors were just trying their best to create a society which met future needs. For example, the proposed 60 bed care home and associated housing opposite Tidwell House was turned down on countryside and heritage issues. This development was strongly supported by local doctors who were all too aware of the need for such facilities in future years. He felt this decision may be regretted in the future.

He said as the town's representatives at District he and his fellow councillors would continue to work to improve the services provided and invest for the future. During the summer the expanded waste collection service would extend to Budleigh and would include plastics, cardboard and electrical items. Similarly, investment in improving the whole of the Exmouth seafront was designed to promote the town as a modern and all-weather facility for holiday makers as well as locals.

He concluded by saying that he was committed to the creation of a prosperous and digitally connected future.

### Cllr T D Wright

Cllr Wright had forwarded his report as he had to attend an EDDC Cabinet Meeting which was deciding the way ahead for the relocation of the offices to Honiton. The facts were that the building at Knowle was totally unsuitable for running an up to date business best able to serve the community. The cost of even basic work to render the building watertight and warm would cost several million pounds which would have no long-term benefit. Even at the worst case financial scenario there would be considerable savings to be made over 20 years by moving to a purpose-built HQ on land owned by EDDC. That, coupled with a move of many services to Exmouth, where most of the Council's clients lived, would allow delivery of a more efficient, cost-effective and flexible range of services. He added that many residents found it difficult to get to the current offices in Sidmouth.

He was also EDDC's representative on the Police & Crime Panel which scrutinises the work of the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC). This Panel had only been in existence since 2012 and after finding its feet was now an effective body in raising issues with the PCC.

He also sat on the Beachwise Forum, which was a body dealing with water quality on our beaches. The Forum works with South West Water, the Environment Agency and agricultural interests to work to improve water quality. The result of this work had been reflected in the much higher water quality on Budleigh beach and the placing of the new electronic sign which warns water users of events that may affect the water quality. These warnings are issued in real time, not as in the past merely reporting on poor samples taken days before.

He also chaired the East Devon New Homes Bonus Panel, a body that decides on applications for money from the Parishes Together Fund to pay for community projects. The PTF encourages parishes to come together to do things to enhance the lives of their communities. The projects were varied, from drain and gully clearance to more imaginative schemes. Funding had just been approved to enable a professional drama group to visit all our secondary schools with a production that deals with sexual exploitation of young people. The cast stay in character after the play to talk through problems with the young audience. This would be of benefit to every parish and town that has young people who attend the schools in East Devon. He concluded by advising that he continued to play a very active role in managing the Budleigh Youth Club and Venture Hall.

### **Neighbourhood Plan Group**

Mr R Sherriff reported on the Budleigh Salterton Neighbourhood Plan (NP). He said that Budleigh Salterton had applied for an area in 2015 and a steering group set up to formulate a plan. 5000 Questionnaires had been sent out and 700-800 returned. These responses had formed basis of the NP.

He then explained that there were four focus groups: Housing & Environment – Transport – Business – Community & Wellbeing. The focus groups were chaired by members of the Steering Group and they in turn gathered groups of residents who had a particular interest. Over the following months, the focus groups had formulated plans which were put to a public meeting.

Slowly the plan had evolved into a pre-submission document and copies had been sent to all stakeholders in the town which included every organisation and was available to all residents. Copies were also sent to Clinton Devon Estates, EDDC, the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Natural England.

He said the NP views must link in with policies within the EDDC Local Plan.

Eventually a submission document had been produced which in turn was sent to EDDC for a six-week consultation. Following this a few minor changes were made.

He explained that as of 3 April, the NP had been sent to an Independent Examiner who would look through the plan checking that it follows guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework. Following this it was hoped that the final document would be ready for Referendum in the summer.

He concluded by thanking members of the Town Council for their support.

**110. Open Forum**

- Mr J Falby thanked the Town Council for its support over the previous ten years of Budleigh Film Society. The Society had been extremely successful and was self-financing, taking no money from the Council.
- Mr M Jones wondered if a priority sign could possibly be placed at the top and bottom of Salting Hill. Cllr Hall said this would be discussed at a future Traffic Group meeting.
- Mr M Webb commented on the state on the Iron bridge in Upper Stoneborough Lane. Cllr Dent suggested these comments be forwarded to EDDC.
- Mr Webb also commented about the state of the flag of St George on the seafront. He said the flag was very tatty and needed replacing. The Town Mayor said this had been reported to EDDC the previous week. Mr Webb wondered if the Town Council could take over responsibility for the flag and asked why the Union Flag was not flown, except for special celebrations.
- Mr D Hicks asked if members knew when the Feathers might re-open. Cllr Hall said he was unsure and this was a Licensing issue.
- Dr A Jennings commented on the Conservation Area (CA). She said that Budleigh Salterton was the only town wholly within the AONB and was worried that the CA was not being fully respected especially the application to demolish Abele Tree House. She thought that Cllr Dent had taken it upon himself to promote this application at EDDC which was against the wishes of the Town Council whose members had voted three times against the application. The Town Mayor said that the CA featured strongly in the NP but felt Councillors could not comment on individual cases.
- Mr J Falby was aware of the town's boundaries but was worried about the travellers who had taken up residence in the lay-by on the East Budleigh Road. County Cllr Mrs Channon said she too was worried about this situation. She said that the only way to move them on was if there was a travellers site for them to move to. The issue had been discussed at length by the Traffic Group and it had been referred to the EDDC Environmental Health Department.

There being no further business, the Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and the Meeting closed at 8.42pm.

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Chairman

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Date