

**Budleigh Salterton**  
**Annual Town Meeting – 27 April 2021**

**Reports**

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**Town Council**

**Chairman – Cllr M C Hilliar**

I would like to start this report by saying how wonderful it has been to be the Chairman of the Council and representing this town, when restrictions allowed, at some small events.

Although the past year has been different and the town has not been able to carry out its full roster of events and functions, I am so proud of the many organisations, committees and groups that have come together to support as many people as possible during the pandemic.

Throughout the year the Town Council has had a representative on the Covid committee, and I would like to thank Cllr Mrs M P Lewis for taking on this role and to our Town Clerk, Jo Vanstone, for attending these meetings as well. I am sure Cllr Mrs Lewis will tell us more about the fine work that this group has undertaken over the past year.

I am also pleased that the town council has been able to continue to provide financial help not only to the Covid Support Group, but to so many other organisations, such as the Exmouth Community Transport group to purchase a new bus to replace their older vehicle. And of course, the Town Council I am sure will continue to support groups and organisations in the town to restart once we can return to normality.

Although the past year has been difficult, I am so pleased to see new businesses opening on our High Street, with the launch of Budleigh Unwrapped and The Gingerbread House as well as the recent news that Earls will be changing to Brook Kitchen. And even today there are interested parties who are looking to start a business in our High Street. And I am sure that now that the shops can reopen many people in our local community will come down and support our businesses and help them to recovery from Covid-19.

As a member of this community, I am so enormously proud at how we have come together to support one another and to make sure that everyone in our community receives the right help and support needed to make it through these difficult times. However, there is light at the tunnel and hopefully soon we will be able to return to some form of normality in the not too distant future.

I would like to complete my report by thanking my Deputy, Roger Sheriff, the Town Clerk Jo Vanstone and the assistance Clerk Kate Harrison for all the support they have provided me over the past year. Without the Clerk and the Assistance Clerk this council would not be able to function, and I am so grateful for their guidance. And finally, I would like to say thank to my fellow councillors and the community for your support over the past year.

I would like to finish off wishing Cllr Sheriff all the best for 2021.

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**Planning Committee**

**Chairman – Cllr R D Sherriff**

Between April 2020 and March 2021 the council considered 78 planning applications. The vast majority were extensions and general property improvements. All the decisions made were based on the relevant policies of the towns Neighbourhood Plan. When it comes to planning decisions BSTC is purely and advisory body the final decision is made by EDDC who are the statutory planning authority. On seven occasions EDDC overturned the BSTC decisions. The reasons were invariably a difference of interpretation of Neighbourhood Plan policies between the two authorities.

At the previous Annual meeting in 2019 it was reported that work on the Evans Field development had stalled due to a disagreement between the new developers and EDDC over the issue of affordable housing provision. This issue has been resolved and work is ongoing to complete the project.

The largest planning decision the council had to consider was the Lower Otter Restoration Project. The council received a large number of objections to this planning application, most based on what was felt to be a flawed consultation process. The council asked for the project to be delayed in order to address these concerns. Because of timescale restrictions this was not possible. But a meeting was arranged online to enable concerned residents to talk with representatives from the Environment Agency and CDE. Approximately 100 residents attended. As you are aware EDDC unanimously agreed the plan and work has commenced.

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**Finance Committee**

**Chairman – Cllr D J Hayward**

2020-2021 years to be remembered by us all, a year of many uncertain happenings, all because of the unforeseen Covid 19 Virus that would come to affect us all, no matter what walk of life you came from you would have all had to make changes, Budleigh Salterton Town Council was not excluded from this event,

The Budleigh Salterton town council finances had to be closely monitored over 2020 - 2021 and by doing this, it has kept the finances in good stead, being in a positive position financially has enable the Budleigh Salterton Town Council to support many different groups over the past year, for instance, Exmouth and district community transport group, Fairlynch museum, Royal British Legion, one major area of interest being the funding of the lights for Budleigh Salterton football ground, these were in such a poor condition they required to be replaced, this not only will benefit the town's enthusiastic teams who use the ground , but also a great benefit for the air ambulance if and when required to land in this designated area, supporting the emergency services always to be top of any donation list, another that was part of 2020 and 2021, the fire station project, a building that was thought to be lost to the town, a trust was formed and the purchase was made and with a Grant from the Budleigh Salterton town council the project is looking very promising for the community, It's looking to have a lot of interest and will be a benefit of that I am sure in coming years , I personally watched them making an empty shell into a workshop space that will be enjoyed by many .

The year has also unearthed within the public hall, the rot of all rots was found and then followed to try and expel, this became a never ending challenge, and financially very expensive, even more so the fact that the public hall being closed, the income that usually comes from renting the Public Hall was severely reduced, a challenge, but the work being necessary and the time to commit was untimely in our favour, the works commenced, and now complete making the Budleigh Salterton Town Hall a great asset for all the community to benefit from.

2021 and 2022 will be a year of restarting and rebuilding for many, and yes, I hope it will only be positive for all, and that the Budleigh Salterton Town Council will be in a position to continue to support and contribute to the community as it has done over many years, and for many years to come.

To conclude, I will quote from the 2019 report from a previous Chairman of the Finance Committee, Courtney Richards: "BSTC could not be complacent because in the years ahead he was certain that more and more services and their costs would be devolved onto local Councils such as this one. He was confident that whoever took over the Finance role would continue to exercise a tight rein over the expenditure such that overall, the Finances remained 'in the black'."

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**Public Hall Committee**

**Chairman – Cllr Mrs L D Evans**

The Public Hall is a Grand Old Lady, but she's needed some major repairs over the past 18 months.

Re-occurrence of Damp was spotted early on in the ladies loos, result the first sign of Dry Rot in the building. This escalated from a corner in the loos to under the floor of the Inner & Outer foyer areas, the floor boards & joists had given way. Specialists in treating Dry Rot were called in.

There was still a problem, where was the damp coming from, so the drains were examined, solids were flowing, but liquid not everything was going to the sewer. The old clay pipes had moved on the joints. Result: pipes have been flushed, lined, and drains & manholes repaired as necessary.

By now the dry rot had been found in the Council Office, Norman Centre and Stage Changing Room.

All these areas had to have the plaster removed from all walls, so that every last tendrill of root could be eradicated. Heritage Preservation have carried out all necessary repairs, walls treated, plastered and the areas are in process of being painted. New flooring has been laid in the foyer.

I hope when you all re-enter the Hall you won't spot any difference, it will look the same, except for New Doors Inner Foyer which were replaced due to cost of repair to the original ones.

You will also find Perspex Screens, and floor markers indicating a walkway to be followed.

The lower light fittings in the Hall have been replaced with LED, as lights were obsolete and we were unable to get replacement parts.

Hidden away upstairs in the roof space a new safety access steps have been built so that the clocks can safely be maintained.

The roof of the Hall has also received attention, slipped slates, leaking gullies.

All these works have been carried out within the Covid 19 restrictions rules.

The Town Clerk, Mrs Vanstone must be congratulated on the work she has undertaken to site manage the work undertaken. The residents of BS who've been asked and given advice & time thank you. Special thanks go to Steve the Public Hall Caretaker for undertaking the additional work. It's now down to Julie & Paula to do additional cleaning so we're ready to open as there's brick dust everywhere!

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**Public Hall Committee cont/...**

Once we are allowed it will be Great to hear chatter & music coming from The Hall & Norman Centre, both being used for the Town by its residents.

Don't be alarmed by Covid rules when hiring the Hall, the Office has done all the hard work and they are there to help.

Enquiries regarding hire can be made to the TC Office or on the web site.

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**Foreshore & Footpaths Committee**

**Chairman – Cllr R D Sherriff**

As with all aspects of life in 2020/21 Covid has impacted on life on the Foreshore at Budleigh Salterton. Tasks that should have started have not and only a few of the tasks that should have been completed have actually made any progress.

Just before the first lockdown we started to re-stain and repair some of the 150 benches on the seafront. Only 15 were done (which is 14 more than in 2019/20). We hope to recommence work shortly.

East Devon District Council (EDDC) have continued to cut back the vegetation on the slopes by Steamer Steps and continue to monitor this area in case of a re-occurrence of the caterpillar infestation of 2018-19.

In 2019 volunteers organised by Bob Wiltshire weeded the Foreshore from Steamer Steps to the BS Club. Because of Covid distancing restrictions and staff shortages EDDC could not carry out this task in 2020. EDDC will try to clear the affected areas during the coming year, they have already sprayed the weeds down from Steamer Steps.

The council are aware that the railings along the entire foreshore area are in need of maintenance work. We will look to get quotes to carry out this task during the coming year.

The seafront was subject to a couple of cases of vandalism during the year. Windows at the Jubilee Shelter were smashed. These have now been replaced at a cost of over £1,000. One of the toilets on the foreshore was recently broken and EDDC have completed the repair.

The seafront has 2 new flagpoles. A replacement for the broken one on Marine Parade and a new one at Lime Kiln Car Park.

EDDC are aware that some of the toilet door locks on the toilets west of Lime Kiln are faulty and they will endeavour to repair them shortly. Likewise, they are looking to refurbish the shelter just west of Lime Kiln. Alas no timescale for this job.

Because of the extra numbers of visitors to BS last year the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust put up a number of advisory and information signs in the area of the mouth of the river Otter. Despite these signs the use of Paddleboards and Kayaks on the river has increased substantially. They are monitoring the situation and its impact on wildlife in the estuary and are in consultation with lawyers to assess the legal implications. The company hiring such equipment on the beach are aware of the issues and have been asked to advise clients to only launch from the beach.

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**Foreshore & Footpaths Committee cont/...**

BS beach had an extremely busy summer and the vast majority of visitors treated the beach area with respect and left their litter/BBQ's in the designated areas. As a council we should like to commend the staff EDDC StreetScene for all their hard work emptying bins up to 4 times a day in peak summer and ensuring the foreshore area was clean and tidy. Because of Covid regulations the same staff were required to clean the toilets 4 times a day. This they did and despite the hugely increased use the toilets were invariably clean, tidy and hygienically safe.

Thanks, must also go to the BS Lions for carrying out weekly beach cleans throughout the year and the Marine Conservation Society for their group beach cleans. As well as this thanks to those public-spirited residents who walk the beach clearing litter on a daily basis. Thus ensuring that our beach is clean and safe.

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**Community Gardens Committee**

**Chairman – Cllr A F Chaplin**

2020 was a year of lockdowns and restrictions that meant anyone with an allotment had a way to escape the confinement of their home even for a short period every day.

In February there were 6 people on the waiting list and as the demand throughout the year grew for allotments, the list also grew to 19.

In order to satisfy this increase in demand a rigorous inspection was carried out in November by myself and Jerry Hitt.

Following the inspection, a number of plot holders received a letter asking if they wished to continue or give up their tenancy. This resulted in 7 plots changing tenants over the end of year period.

The current waiting list is 16.

During the new year a number of plots have been given wood for replacing the corroded edging.

A new notice board has been installed for plot holders to advertise any surplus wares, which they are to store on their own plot rather than dumping their surplus in the drop off tarmacked area.

The rubbish which has accumulated over a period has been cleared and a new larger notice is proposed to be erected stating no dumping of rubbish will be tolerated.

Westbank (the Hub) have taken a plot and are encouraging locals to join in with their Community Allotment.

Overall the allotments are looking very good and well attended by all plot holders who have put in a lot of work over the year.

The committee is pleased to report that for a fourth year running there was no increase in plot rent and this meant that plot holders, young and old could enjoy the growing of their fruit, vegetables, flowers etc and tremendous views for a small financial outlay.

Finally I would like to thank Jerry Hitt for his time to assist with the plot inspections and to Kate Harrison and Jo Vanstone for their tremendous hard work in keeping the administration side of the Community gardens running like clockwork.



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**Budleigh Salterton Traffic Group**

**Chairman – Cllr A L Jones**

This group is not an actual committee of the Town Council and even though we have a wide remit, we are unable to make decisions. The group is made up of several parties, being County councillors, East Devon District Council councillors, Budleigh Salterton Town councillors, various town residents and possibly and very importantly the Town Clerk, who acts as our secretary, and an officer from Devon County Council who can get to the right people quickly and who can also answer a wide range of questions on the spot; this gives us a wide scope.

It is not possible to cover all aspects at this meeting but I will mention a few of our successes to give you an idea of our thinking on many subjects.

We lobbied hard for the resurfacing of the Exmouth Road and through having a Devon County Council officer on the group, were able to get our thoughts right into the team at Exeter. We have driven forward the railing repairs on Fore Street – new posts have been manufactured and installed to replace the ones that were broken. The re-siting of the old lamp post at the junction of Fore Street Hill and Coastguard Road with a plan going forward to make it something of a feature at the entrance to Budleigh Salterton.

One of the larger items was to initiate a survey looking into the High Street problems and produce thoughts of easing congestion, and also seeking some method of curing difficulties in the Granary Lane area.

We now have a councillor from East Budleigh on our group and we look into the problems in that village as well.

We always feel that there could be a lot more done in various areas, but money and all the other villages requiring maintenance and highlighting their local problems, confines our aspirations sometimes, but we are pleased with our progress through this year and hope we can continue being successful through the coming year.

Thank you and stay safe.

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**Budleigh Salterton Covid Support Group**

**Committee Member – Cllr Mrs M P Lewis**

The Mayor has asked me to make a short report on the Budleigh Salterton Covid Support Group.

This was established at the beginning on the pandemic at the instigation of Steve Hitchcock, Headmaster St Peter's Primary School, who chairs the group. The aim being to integrate support for the residents of Budleigh Salterton. Depending on the severity of problems in the local community we have met either weekly or fortnightly, via zoom.

The group consists of Rev James Henley on behalf of the churches, Marc Jobson Manager of The Hub, Lorraine Ralph on behalf of Budleigh Salterton Relief in Need Charitable funds, Richard Allen on behalf of the Lions, Dr Brian Taylor on behalf of the Medical Centre, Chris Dearsley on behalf of East Budleigh, and finally John Hiles on behalf of Otterton plus myself and the Town Clerk, Mrs J E Vanstone. Through this group, working across so many dimensions of the town, we have been able to ensure that needs were identified and responded to.

Budleigh Relief in Need Charity has supported 41 households through a mixture of regular payments and for some, one off grants totalling £46,350. A voucher scheme has been used by 53 households in local shops and now includes shops in the outlying villages. Lorraine Ralph has helped 30 applicants for the winter hardship fund, and has successfully obtained £5000 from East Devon District. Budleigh Salterton Town Council made a donation of £4000 to the charity.

The churches have been very supportive, especially in collecting donations for the Food Larder and local shops have hosted donations points.

The Lions have been invaluable in not only volunteering at the Hub, but also the delivery of information leaflets to residents. The Town Council paid £355 for the printing of the leaflets. Richard has been responsible for the social media information provided.

Throughout the pandemic, The Hub has been pivotal in co-ordinating help and support to individuals, from delivering prescriptions, helping with shopping, befriending schemes, providing meals, to transport to medical appointments (including the vaccine centre)

The staff at St Peter's knowledge of families in needs and links to services has ensured younger residents and their families have had their needs met, from ensuring enough food to the provision of chrome books for distanced learning.

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**Budleigh Salterton Covid Support Group cont/...**

Our role in the group as Town Council has been to support and facilitate, in particular to ensure that the needs of all residents are considered, providing information and help when necessary. The council currently manages the charity website, at a cost of £50.

The Town Clerk and I feel this group has been a very worthwhile use of our time, and that the council's input has helpfully integrated well with initiatives within the community. We feel this approach could be used in other contexts where collaborative community wide joint working could be beneficial for all concerned.

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**County Councillor**

**Cllr Mrs C Channon**

What a strange and rather frightening year this has been. It is good job that we were not able to look into our crystals balls twelve months ago and see the year ahead. The Covid pandemic has brought out both the best and the worst in us. I am full of admiration for the residents of Budleigh Salterton for the way in which you have displayed such excellent community spirit and concern.

Local volunteers have sought out the vulnerable, shopped for those homebound, delivered hot meals, transported people to hospital and vaccination appointments. It is at times like this we see the value of close-knit communities. The staff at St Peter's School have done an excellent job in both continuing to teach children of key workers whilst at the same time providing on-line lessons for children who were not permitted to attend. I am pleased to report that attendance is now at 95%. The Town Council has continued to operate through virtual meetings and the Budleigh Covid Support Group has helped families who are struggling financially. Local people have contributed generously to the food banks and the Easter Egg collection, in particular, was most impressive. It is my joy to live in such a caring town.

Now we need to move on. We need to regenerate our economy and help businesses and families recover from the damage that the pandemic has done. Devon County Council has made a commitment to lead on such a recovery. Part of the reason that we managed to keep the effect of Covid limited in Devon is due to the fact that Team Devon has worked in collaboration with Districts, Towns, Parishes, Health, Police and the Voluntary Sector to support Devon residents over this pandemic. Let us hope that this will continue in the future.

Devon CC organised food vouchers for the 15,000 young people eligible for free school meals over Christmas and Easter holidays. We have invested in skills and training, supporting Bicton and Exeter Colleges and more recently rescued the Flybe Academy. We have also made major improvement to some of Devon's vital road arteries and in spite of delays during the lockdowns several key roads in my ward, such as West Hill, Links Road and parts of Northview Road have now been resurfaced. A multi-million pound programme to install fast Broadband is under way and soon the access to WiFi in areas like East Budleigh, Otterton and Woodbury Common should be greatly improved. The need for technology over the last twelve months has made this a key priority.

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**County Councillor cont/...**

With respect to Climate Emergency we have already reduced the carbon footprint of Devon by 50%. Currently, you may have noticed that we are changing street lights to LED lamps, which not only save money but carbon emissions. We need to plant more new trees and we need to look for more land to further this work as it offsets the carbon footprint. The Cabinet of Devon CC met recently to discuss a Notice of Motion tabled by Cllr Hodgson from Totnes who represents the Green Party. It recommended that the Council endorse the Notice of Motion and encourage local MPs to support the CEE Bill. In doing so the Council will ask local MPs to work with Government colleagues to provide a national network of necessary legislative changes and additional resources to facilitate the unprecedented levels of behaviour change, skills development, technological development and investment that will be necessary to meet Paris Agreement commitments.

During the year I became a member of the Advisory Board for the Budleigh Hospital Health and Well-being Hub (which incidentally in April will be remarketed as Seachange to make it sound more inclusive). They have done some splendid work during the last year co-ordinating volunteers to deliver meals, shop and support vulnerable people and it is wonderful how many local people have volunteered for this work. There is a plan to open a new medical day support unit at the Hub quite soon. A spotlight review in 2020 made recommendations to improve services for unpaid carers across Devon. In March this year Devon Carers won a National Award in the Support for the Carers category of the Health Service Journal Awards and last week Matt Hancock said a personal thank you to Devon CC for organising such a highly efficient Vaccination programme.

The funding for Devon Schools has improved but there is still some distance to go to bring us to the levels given to London Boroughs and one or two other areas. James MacInnes, the Devon Cabinet member for Children's Services, now chairs the National F40 Committee, whose remit is to address this anomaly. So this campaign is still very active.

It has been a very busy year. Virtual meetings are too easy to arrange at little cost, so unfortunately both the number and the length of them has increased considerably. Most of our officers have been working from home and it has taken much longer to get answers to questions and queries. However, there is nothing to suggest that the administration is tired and has run out of ideas, which I saw recently suggested. I, and my colleagues, can find still plenty to do and I can assure you that we still have the energy, enthusiasm and experience to deliver.

I would like to thank all the members of the Town Council and the Clerk for all your support. You are the eyes and ears of your local community and play a very valuable role. I would also wish to thank Alan, Paul and Tom, our District Councillors, for working with me as a team. It is the only way to get things done!

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**District Councillors**

**District Cllr A J Dent, District Cllr P M Jarvis and District Cllr T D Wright**

The last year has been dominated by the COVID pandemic. All face to face meetings were cancelled and held via Zoom instead. For the most part the broadband signal was sufficient but certain rural areas have a very slow connection.

Council officers at District have largely been working from home while making every effort in providing support to the community. Some of the major issues tackled have been:

- Distributing over £60 million of government funds to local businesses
- Managing Universal Credit which has increased by 40%
- Manning a central Hub to direct callers to appropriate services
- Maintaining the kerbside recycling and waste collections against a background of sickness and increased loads

Looking ahead, there is considerable concern that the government want all councils to resume face to face meetings. Whilst the vaccination roll out has been a huge success, not everyone is fully protected and the prospect of meetings in close quarters is causing justified worries.

To date the government has not authorised hybrid meetings where both face to face and remote connections can be held simultaneously. We await further developments on this issue.

Locally, a number of issues have been worked through. These include the sale of the Fire Station which is currently being converted for use as a social hub and workshop. Shandford Care Home was closed and subsequently sold and we believe it will become a centre for assisted living. Not least has been the closure of Age Concern due to dwindling funds and lack of external support.

A number of planning issues have arisen:

- The Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP). This is an Environment Agency backed project designed to bring the valley back to it's original form and to encourage more diverse wildlife. Survey work has begun and construction work will start in May. It will take a year or more to complete and then several years to settle and establish.
- The lack of a surfaced path from the entrance to Evans Field along the B3178 has caused considerable concern. To date we have been stymied in our efforts to get the developer to take action and the matter is in the hand of solicitors. We will keep chasing this at every level.

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**District Councillors cont/...**

- Other developments – Lloyds Bank conversion to flats; creation of a new parking area beside the Old Council Chambers and obtaining permission for guest accommodation at the Abele Tree House Coach House have also been active topics.

At District level the continued reduction in government funding has created serious financial issues, highlighted by the closure of Leisure Centres, swimming pools and tennis courts. Some £1.5 million is having to be found to keep these valuable health and wellbeing services operational.

All three ward members are on the District Licensing Committee where the main issues have been the problems facing pubs and restaurants - hence the increase in pavement and car park 'pop-ups'. Also the loss of business faced by taxi firms.

On a more positive note, a proposal to install 30 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points in car parks across the District is being presented to the District Council on 21 April. If approved, this will mean there will be one such charging point (serving two cars) in the Rolle Mews car park.