

Budleigh Salterton

***Annual Town
Meeting***

21 April 2022

Reports

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Town Council

Chairman – Cllr R D Sherriff

This year has been very much like Ground Hog Day. Every time we think we are emerging into the sunlit uplands of normality another variant of a variant of a variant comes along to confuse us mere mortals. This year hasn't been as bad as 2020/21 and I've been able to attend a number of events on behalf of the council.

It's good to see a number of new businesses in the High St and the cafes and pubs returning to a semblance of normality. Council meetings are no longer held on Zoom and although we are meeting face to face in the Public Hall, government guidance means that we are still making some decisions using delegated powers.

As you are aware in Spring 2021 East Devon District Council (EDDC) decided to re-wild The Green. Unfortunately, they didn't think to consult the Town Council first, the result being very unsatisfactory, with the town clerk and town councillors bearing the brunt of resident's justifiable complaints. Since then, we have engaged in an extensive consultation process with EDDC and Budleigh in Bloom and while there will be some targeted re-wilding it will not be as extensive or intrusive as last year. A number of commemorative trees have been planted on The Green and new benches installed under the government's 'Welcome Back' scheme.

EDDC's budget for general town care has been drastically cut, which has meant that many parts of the town were looking untidy and unkempt, with leaves left uncleared and weeds growing everywhere. The council took the decision to engage a local resident to clear leaves and remove weeds. This has proved to be very successful and while clearing weeds etc is like painting the Forth Road Bridge the improvements have been tangible.

A great deal of work has been carried out by Councillor Harris in preparing and producing an Emergency Plan for the town and we now have a Climate Change working group comprising of both councillors and members of the community. My thanks to Councillors Harris and Hilliar for their work in both these areas.

The council has continued to support the various organisations helping those residents in need both as a result of Covid or changes in people's personal circumstances.

Finally, thanks to Jo and Lynne for their unstinting support both to me and the council as a whole. Also to Councillor Hilliar who has provided me with invaluable support and advice as my deputy.

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Planning Committee

Chairman – Cllr M C Hilliar

Between April 2021 and March 2022, the council considered 96 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, Budleigh Salterton Town Council is purely an advisory body the final decision is made by East Devon District Council who are the statutory planning authority. On two occasions East Devon District Council overturned the Budleigh Salterton Town Council decisions.

Out of the 96 planning applications received the town council approved 77, refused 3 applications, had 3 applications withdrawn and we still have 13 applications waiting a decision by East Devon District Council at the time of writing this report.

Although the development of the Cricket Club falls outside of the Budleigh Salterton Boundary the council voted to support the plans for their new state of art club house and changing facilities I hope the club will enjoy many happy years here and I hope the new club house will be here for future generations to enjoy.

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Finance Committee

Chairman – Cllr D J Hayward

2021/22 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 able to continue to support and contribute to the community as it has done over many years, and for many years to come, this was a statement I made at the end of 2020 – 2021, but little did we know that Covid was going to continue to have a major impact through the full year of 2021 - 2022, and still in some areas little has changed, no matter what walk of life you come 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 over 2021 – 2022 have been very closely monitored, this always the aim of the Budleigh Salterton Town Council, and by doing this we are in good stead. Extra efforts that have been made over this past year to reduce our spending, not always possible, but this year we were successful, and being that we are in a positive position financially, the result was no additional increase in this year's precept required, this will only benefit our Town's residents, and go to prove that we are working in their favour.

In the coming year 2022 - 2023 we have many projects that we would like to pursue, many of these are included within our five-year Town Councils Plan, and with the continuation of all the efforts made by all councillors within Budleigh Salterton Town Council, much will be achieved, of that, I am sure!!!

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Public Hall Committee

Chairman – Cllr Mrs L D Evans

It's been an eventful 12 months from dealing with:

Covid and the rules - Perspex screens, hand sanitiser, QR codes. Added to this came the discovery of Dry Rot, collapsed/cracked drains, roof repairs and the associated add-ons of plumbing, painting, new flooring & carpets and doors having to be replaced.

The Hall lighting has been upgraded to LED, old broken lights could not be repaired as obsolete (if you look around the Hall the strip lights in Dormers & the uplighters positioned around the hall). The uplighters have been much appreciated as they don't give such a harsh light as the old original lights.

Covid held up work, but it meant the Hall & Norman Centre being closed work could progress eventually, it's been a long haul. I hope you all agree both the Hall & Norman Centre are something we as a Town can be proud of.

All this work has come at a cost, but thankfully the prudence of our finance chairman over past years has meant the work could be done.

In both venues hires are returning, we allowed concessionary rates on a graduated basis for start up, taking into account hirers were not able to have maximum numbers. Rates returned to normal with a slight increase as of 1 April 2022.

The Hall is being used by our community, and fulfilling a need for our residents, from shopping with the farmers market to exercise (Zumba, Pilates, Dancing) and Bingo, Films, Festivals and a great deal of talking.

The Hall is well cared for thanks to our Clerk & Caretakers. Please use it!

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Foreshore & Footpaths Committee

Chairman – Cllr R D Sherriff

Over the period of the pandemic EDDC Streetscene's priority was to focus on fulfilling their legal requirements by emptying bins and cleaning the toilets 4 times a day. With more visitors than ever this task was particularly challenging especially over the weekends during the peak holiday season. I would like to put on record my thanks for the excellent work they did during these challenging times.

Consequently, they didn't have the time or the manpower to carry out every day seafront maintenance. As a result, the seafront was starting to look tired and unkempt. As I stated in my Chairman's report we have now employed a local resident who has been trying to remove the worst of the weeds along the seafront. He will continue to do this throughout the coming year.

With the lifting of restrictions EDDC are now in a position to undertake more maintenance work. They are making good progress painting the 150 seafront benches and new 'No Cycling' signage has been installed. The information boards at Steamer Steps and at Lime Kiln Car Park are due to be updated. The Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust have installed an information board on the plinth at Lime Kiln car park. A new replacement flagpole on Marine Parade has been erected and a new flagpole has been erected at Lime Kiln car park - this is to fly the Clean Beach Blue flag.

EDDC acknowledge that the shelter by Lime Kiln is in a particularly bad state of repair. They are assessing whether it is worth repairing, if not it will be removed and replaced. This will not happen this year. The railings around the gun emplacements are in a poor state of repair and EDDC will endeavour to repair and repaint them as soon as possible.

EDDC have installed 12 new beach huts for hire by the Information Centre. Many thanks to our District Councillors who fought hard on our behalf to ensure we maintained the ability to hire out huts.

Many thanks to Budleigh Lions and the volunteers from the Marine Conservation Society for their regular beach cleaning sessions, their work keeping our beach clean is greatly appreciated.

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Community Gardens Committee

Chairman – Cllr A F Chaplin

The first half of 2021 was the country's progressive roadmap out of Covid restrictions due largely to the successful vaccination programme. More and more people felt confident to attend to their allotment and enjoy the fresh air and socialise at a safe distance again.

The year started off with a waiting list of 16 and plot inspections were carried out in April, August and November.

Following the inspection, a number of plot holders received a letter asking if they were struggling, wished to continue or give up their tenancy.

This resulted in 11 plots changing tenants.

Despite this the current waiting list is 22.

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

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.

A new larger notice has been fixed to the main entrance gate regarding dumping of rubbish stating that tipping is illegal and may result in a fine or imprisonment.

Seachange who have plot 82 are encouraging locals to join in with their Community Allotment have an open day on May 17th from 10am to 1pm.

The committee has decided to increase the plot rent by £2.00 to £25.00 per year from January 2023.

For a very small outlay plot holders, young and old can enjoy the growing of their fruit, vegetables, flowers etc, and enjoy tremendous views.

Finally I would like to thank Jerry Hitt and the committee members for their time in assisting with the plot inspections and also thanks to Jo Vanstone and Lynne Ward for their tremendous hard work in keeping the administration side of the Community gardens running like clockwork.

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Community Infrastructure Levy Committee

Chairman – Cllr D J Hayward

This year I have become the Chairman of the Community Infrastructure Levy Committee, choosing to take control of the CIL monies being somewhat of a major challenge, the process for accessing the funds that we are eligible for have many constraints, hurdles that must be overcome before any of the monies are released. My understanding of CIL in its entirety is at an early stage, but in time I will gain the knowledge to be able to deliver additional benefits to our Budleigh Salterton Community in the coming years, this by allocating more time to accessing the CIL funding.

Cllr Michael Hilliar has produced a very good little CIL document, this a live delivery plan document that stands as a basic guide for what, why and when regarding CIL.

To date, two major projects have benefited recently from the CIL funding: Budleigh Salterton Football Club Floodlight Replacement - the Town Council felt that the CIL fund should be used for this project as the club provides facilities for the community, also it provides lighting to illuminate the landing site for the Devon Air Ambulance, which supports the whole community, and the club provides sporting facilities not just for the community of Budleigh Salterton, but also for Exmouth and the parishes of East Budleigh and Otterton. The Budleigh Salterton Workshop Trust Refurbishment works - the Town Council felt that CIL funds should be used for this project, the Trust had purchased the former Fire Station, the building requiring refurbishment to make it accessible to all, a redesigned layout to include a more suitable staircase to the second floor, the facility is now open, and used by many members of the community with plans to make its courses/workshops available to all ages.

Let's hope 2022/23 is a year that will see change, working together for the best of all our futures,

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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 Devon County councillors, East Devon District Council councillors, Budleigh Salterton Town councillors, various town residents and possibly, and most importantly the Budleigh Salterton Town Clerk, who acts as our secretary, and together with the officer from Devon County Council is there to keep us legal and able to get to the right people quickly and who can in many cases also answer a wide range of questions on the spot; which gives us a wide scope.

As I said at the last AGM, it is not possible to cover all aspects at this meeting but I will mention a few subject that we have discussed to give you an idea of our thinking on many subjects that arise.

I will highlight them where possible, (1) general speeding issues around the area, especially on West Hill/Exmouth Road, where there are no pavements. Flexible bollards were discussed but DCC say this is not feasible. DCC are going to measure the speeds in this area including the High Street as well as speed watch have not yet responded to our request for their assistance. (2) investigating a priority scheme on Salting Hill (3) investigating a pinch-point at Raleigh Wall to help pedestrians at this dangerous point. (4) various blocked drains and overgrown hedges. (5) several dropped kerbs have been installed, which makes it safer for disabled people and (6) the general state of the road surfaces in this area, which is an ongoing concern for all road users.

Evans Field is an ongoing battle at present, mainly through the lack of footpath to link up with Bedlands Lane, lack of street lighting and the possibility of extending the 30mph speed limit to the new entrance. DCC had removed this item from the request list as the officer felt that the B3178 was classed as a rural road – County Cllr Mrs C Channon is following up on this decision and is investigating an outcome in our favour.

There are many other smaller items but this is just a flavour of things we are doing, or hoping to do.

Through having a DCC officer on the group we are able to get our thoughts right into the team in Exeter.

Two of the ongoing and possibly most impossible, larger problems are the High Street problems and producing thoughts of easing congestion; and also seeking some method of curing difficulties in the Granary Lane area.

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Budleigh Salterton Traffic Group cont/...

We now have a councillor from East Budleigh on our group so we will be looking 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 pressures from all the other villages in Devon 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.

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Budleigh Salterton Emergency Group

Chairman – Cllr A J Harris

I was elected as Chairman of the Emergency Group during the past 12 months. The Budleigh Salterton Emergency Plan, first developed several years ago, has been updated and broadened in its scope to consider a diverse range of potential emergencies that could affect the town. Whilst the work done on the plan is welcome and long overdue, the plan is still some way from completion and in its current form could not be immediately referenced in an emergency situation to give the necessary guidance to ensure that the required resources were made available to manage an emergency.

Nonetheless progress has been made and the priority now is for local organisations and businesses in Budleigh to be approached to confirm their agreement to be part of the town plan. Once this is done, then the plan can be called upon in the event of an emergency situation that requires immediate but temporary local management until the arrival of the emergency services. The content for a grab bag of equipment that may be required to ensure effective short term management of any given situation has been identified and now needs to be purchased.

So, in summary, good progress has been made, but in the next few months the plan needs to be finalised and equipment purchased to ensure Budleigh Salterton is able to at least put in place a first response to an emergency arising.

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Budleigh Salterton Climate Change Group

Chairman – Cllr M C Hilliar

On 22 July 2019, Budleigh Salterton Town Council passed a motion “to declare a Climate Emergency and to create a Task Force or Climate Emergency Group”, along with many other councils across Devon and the wider United Kingdom. On 28 October of that year, the task force submitted a report to the full council with the actions that the Council should take to address the Climate Emergency.

Budleigh Salterton Town Council is aware of the significant implications of climate change for all Devon's communities. This change is already affecting our environment, infrastructure, economy and health and well-being. If not addressed, the impact on future generations will be profound and the ability to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals will be severely compromised.

The task force was originally set up with two members of the town council: Cllr David Hayward and Cllr Penny Lewis along with District Councillor Paul Jarvis and County Councillor Christine Channon.

During 2019 members of the Town Council's Climate Task Force worked on establish a strategy to address the emergency and its Terms of Reference and Action Plan were created.

Unfortunately, due to the global covid pandemic the group's plan to proceed with the action plan adoption and expansion of the group had to take a backseat for a while. However, in August 2021, the task force was able to meet, virtually on zoom, and it was decided that the task force would be changed to a climate change group and this group would be expanded to include representatives from the following local groups and organisations; the Budleigh Salterton Chamber of Commerce, Clinton Devon Estates, Otter Valley Association, St Peters School, Budleigh Salterton Lions, Budleigh Salterton Community Workshop. Also, at this time I joined the group and was elected as chairman.

In early February 2022 the group met for the first time and decided to introduce the action plan to the new representatives, and we also updated our terms of reference so that we were more in line with Devon Climate Emergency and our neighbouring Town Council, Exmouth. It was also established that many of the items noted in the previous version of the action plan had been started or completed. However, we are still a long way off from completing all our actions. A copy of our latest terms of reference and action plan was approved by the town council at the end of March 2022, and this can be found on our website.

The group is hoping to hold another meeting after the May 2022 council reshuffle where we will look at more ways we can build and expand our action plan and involve the wider community.

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Budleigh Salterton Covid Support Group

Cllr Mrs M P Lewis

As reported last year the Budleigh Salterton Covid Support Group was established at the beginning of 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. During 2021/2022 we have continued to meet via zoom, albeit less frequently as systems for supporting people and dealing with the virus have become more robust.

Covid is still being experienced in our community, across different age groups. The change in regulation and guidance has seen a rise in infection however, overall, not resulting in the severity of illness previously seen..

Financially, the previous specific covid support organised locally is no longer in place, however in general more people are applying for help to the charity Budleigh Salterton Relief In Need (BSRIN). Applicants' needs vary. BSRIN are looking at packages of support for local people enduring difficult circumstances for example; fuel costs. The Trust also directs people to what is available from wider agencies and groups.

The Covid Support Group has provided an excellent community wide approach to supporting our town and targeting help where it is most needed in a fast and responsive manner. It provides a blue print for future challenges.

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County Councillor

County Cllr Mrs C Channon

This has been another strange and somewhat frustrating year. Originally, I was not intending to seek re-election to Devon County Council in May 2021. I had served 28 years and was conscious of my increasing age. However, I was finally persuaded to let my name go forward. I had only been the Councillor for the Exmouth Littleham Ward for four years and I was aware of several issues which still needed experienced attention. Three candidates put their names forward for selection but I was the one chosen by my Party and I was re-elected in May.

Devon County Council is still holding some of its meetings in the virtual mode and whilst this may save travelling time and the increasing expense of petrol, these meetings have become far too long and sometimes lack the focus of a meeting in person. A few weeks ago I took part in a meeting that started at 9.15 hours and ended at 13.35 hours. This was a strain on both the back and eye muscles!

In addition, most of our officers have been encouraged to work from home. Over the last two years several senior officers have chosen to retire and working from home has not provided their replacements the opportunity to build up the kind of continuity needed for the good team work which has always been a strength of DCC. Councillors have found it has taken so much longer to resolve problems and get decisions to deal with quite important matters. This is probably most noticeable with regard to Highway matters. We have a very good relationship with our local Highway Neighbourhood Officer, Emma Stamp, and she has worked well with us to try and expedite some of our local concerns but the pandemic has created a large backlog of work, caused either by staff absence due to illness, or the unavailability of raw materials or equipment. Hopefully as we learn to “live with Covid” things will start to improve.

DCC continues to spend the largest part of its budget on Adult Social Care; Budleigh Salterton and Exmouth Littleham represents one of the largest wards for residents over 65 in the country. Littleham has a huge number of residential/nursing homes and an ever-increasing number of warden supported apartments. Working in Partnership, Seachange and Exmouth Hospital offer a good service in Primary Care but it is now apparent that the lockdowns have increased the need to support the degree of loneliness and dementia which is now apparent in our area. There was a considerable overspend on Adult Care last year and 2% of the increase in your DCC Council Tax is to address that.

Shandford was sold by auction in 2020 but it has taken Abbeyfield until quite recent times to pass the proceeds to the newly-formed local trust which will administer these funds. This Trust will provide financial assistance towards the cost of care and home care services, facilities and associated amenities and fund the provision of residential care to support older persons of limited means in the Budleigh area.

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County Councillor cont/...

I am delighted that we have been able to re-open the Information Bureau since the last lockdown. It has now returned to summer opening hours from 10.00 to 16.00 hours from Monday to Saturday. I am one of the willing volunteers and get a lot of satisfaction helping both the local residents and visitors who value the facility. They have recently launched their new website "Love Budleigh".

Our local library provides a popular and helpful service and is now back to its former opening hours. We are very grateful to the Friends of Budleigh Library for the support they give.

DCC has declared a climate emergency and is a founding member and principal funder of the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership. It intends to engage Devon's residents, businesses and visitors to develop a plan to achieve a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across the area by 2050 at the latest. The next version of the Devon Carbon Plan will be available for adoption from August 2022.

This year I have spent donations from my DCC Locality Budget, supporting the Fairlynch Museum, Budleigh Music Festival, Bounce and Rhythm at BS Library and paid for the cost of replacing the railings to the disabled entrance to St Peter's Church.

I would like to thank our three District Councillors, Jo Vanstone and Budleigh Town Council for all their help and support. Budleigh Salterton has a wonderful record of partnership working. People who come to live here tell me that they are overwhelmed by the strong sense of community which is so friendly and interactive. It is only by good teamwork we can offer our residents the services they deserve.

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District Councillors

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

COVID

Thanks to the success of the vaccination programme, all restrictions have been removed but the virus still circulates, albeit in a less virulent form. East Devon and Budleigh have high numbers of those infected and the effect on hospitals, schools and council employees is severe.

At the end of March there were near record numbers of patients in RD&E. Fortunately very few were on ventilation.

At East Devon District Council all meetings other than full Council are still being held remotely and officers continue to work from home.

FINANCE

As Government has largely withdrawn supportive funding to local councils, they become more reliant on funds raised from council tax and the revenue from fees and charges whilst struggling to maintain both statutory and non-statutory services.

No good news with regard to inflation, the general cost of living, fuel prices, gas and electricity prices or interest rates. Clearly, we are all in for a very difficult time in the coming months.

WASTE AND RECYCLING

Housing growth in the District has been slightly faster than originally predicted and the StreetScene team now collects from over 70,000 houses every week.

StreetScene have been seriously affected by staff shortages through sickness and difficulties in recruitment. A number of collection rounds have been affected and delays across the District continue.

LOWER OTTER RESTORATION PROJECT

Work continues much on schedule with a target completion date set for spring 2023. The base for a new road has been completed and will soon be connected to the new bridge across the River Otter for access to South Farm. Work on the footpaths either side of the new wetlands are being upgraded.

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District Councillors cont/...

CAR PARKS

A general increase of the hourly cost from £1.00 an hour to £2.00 for 21 car parks and £1.50 per hour for many of the remainder has been agreed at full council.

The decision was made without an EDDC Car Parking strategy in place, no strategy planned for the foreseeable future and no consultation with communities or businesses. A number of us objected and voted against these proposals.

The result is that from April both Lime Kiln and Rolle Mews car parks will cost £2.00 per hour. Station Road car park is likely rise to £1.50 per hour.

For local residents, the annual car park permit is the best possible way to keep car parking costs to a minimum. At present this is £100 a year for one town with additional towns costing £20 each.

From April this will increase to £120. The cost for additional towns has yet to be published.

PUBLIC TOILETS

EDDC will be keeping 14 of their public toilets across the district, and will update and refurbish these sites at a cost of £3 million to provide modern, safe and accessible toilets.

EDDC will be charging people to use these refurbished toilets when they are open, using contactless payments. Pre-paid cards will be made available for those with disabilities or for those who receive certain benefits.

EDDC is working on the marketing information for the 13 other sites which the Council is no longer able to support from April 2023.

The priority for these 13 sites is to find alternative uses which favour community or local business.

EDDC will shortly be writing to town and parish councils to update them on the Public Toilet Review and discuss next steps with them. Whilst EDDC progresses these discussions most of these public toilets will remain open until April 2023.

In Budleigh the two seafront toilets will be retained. Brook Road will be closed and the Station Road car park toilets will be the subject of negotiation between the Town Council and EDDC.

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District Councillors cont/...

LONGBOAT CAFE

The extension that the new operator installed was done without planning permission and as a result an enforcement notice was threatened. After our intervention the planning officers agreed that if the extension could be made temporary i.e. movable, then they would consider it more favourably.

This has now been done along with a considerable amount of internal rearrangement and operational improvements.

Whilst not everyone likes the design, we felt the service provided was a valuable addition to the local tourist economy and attracted many visitors to the seafront.

BEACH HUTS

As you may have seen there are twelve new beach huts at the Longboat end of the seafront. These have finally been provided by EDDC for the Information Centre to rent out but it took a considerable effort by us ward members, along with the Chair of the Budleigh Chamber of Commerce, to achieve this result.

Originally, due to the financial pressures on EDDC, officers had recommended these huts - which were in a very poor state of repair - should be removed and the sites offered to the public as are all the other sites on the seafront.

To them and the Portfolio Holder, this made financial sense. To us in Budleigh, it was a substantial loss of a major holiday attraction and an essential source of income for the Information Centre.

We ward members actually had to 'call in' a Cabinet decision for it to be reversed and the council persuaded to invest in the new huts that we now see. If you're wondering why they haven't been painted it's because they are under warranty for two years and to paint them would negate that warranty.