

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT for EAST BUDLEIGH with BICTON

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2021

What a strange and rather frightening year this has been. It is good job that we were not able to look 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 East Budleigh and Bicton for the way in which you have displayed such excellent community spirit and concern. You have sought out the vulnerable, kept the shop open, held virtual Parish meetings, and even made masks for a care home. It is at times like this we see the value of close-knit small communities. The staff at Drake'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%.

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 keys roads in my ward have now been resurfaced. A multi-million pound programme to install fast Broadband is under way and soon the access to WiFi in East Budleigh should be greatly improved. The need for technology over the last twelve months has made this a key priority.

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. I am delighted that East Budleigh is planting so many new trees and we need to look for more land to further this work as it offsets the carbon footprint.

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.

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. I would like to thank all the members of the Parish 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 for working with me as a team. It is the only way to get things done!

Christine Channon
30th March 2021