

AUGUST 2021

REPORT TO WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL

CLLR JESS BAILEY, DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL AND EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

B3180 – HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC ORDERS COMMITTEE (HATOC) – 23rd JULY 2021

I called for an item on the agenda of this committee to discuss ways of addressing concerns around road safety. I felt that bringing it to committee was the best way of progressing matters given the delays that the B3180 Group had experienced.

At the meeting I read out the B3180 Action Group's summary of issues. Cllr Alison Carr from West Hill Parish Council kindly attended virtually and spoke in support of action being taken with regards road safety – in particular speeding traffic and the excessive use by HGVs.

I explained to the committee that the Action Group had been working with the Parish Council for 2 years to progress road safety matters on this road and had made a number of interventions eg the mobile VAS and also the village signs had been moved. I also said that as a member of the Community Speed Watch I had been on the B3180 that particular week and in one hour there had been 30 cars speeding of which the average was 38mph.

I said that the Parish Council and the Action Group wanted to work with Devon County Council but had been told that it had to go through the SCARF process and that prior to this speed data had to be collected. I said that we had been given no indication when this speed data could be collected and in fact I had been told that there is a big backlog with speed collection data as a result of Covid. I explained that the delay was a source of immense frustration because the Group had been waiting for such a long time already. So I said I would like some clarity and to move things forward and for the speed collection and results of the SCARF process to be brought with a report to the next HATOC in November.

In response, on the issue of the HGVs the highway manager Tom Vaughan told the committee that the B3180 was part of the strategic network for Devon so they could not restrict who used it. He did however say that the B3180 would go to the next SCARF meeting and the speed data would be collected before this. He also agreed that a report will be prepared based on the data and SCARF which will be brought to the next HATOC meeting. He also said that the meantime he will keep us informed with how matters are progressing.

Although the next HATOC is not until November (HATOCs only meet three times a year) it does feel as though matters are now moving in the right direction.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL - TREE MOTION

Last week East Devon District Council met virtually to debate the tree motion that I brought forward. I am delighted that councillors united to condemn the practice of pre-emptive tree

felling, which sees trees being removed prior to submitting planning applications. The Council also agreed that a scoping report for the tree strategy will urgently be brought forward. This will be the first stage to developing a full tree strategy for the Council.

During the debate I spoke of my experiences as a ward member of the woodland village of West Hill and how over eight years I have experienced hundreds of trees being felled. During the debate I learned that I was far from alone with other councillors facing similar experiences.

And it's not just councillors who have strong views on the importance of trees. Ed Dolphin from the Sidmouth Arboretum voiced support for the formation of a tree strategy for EDDC and resident Gary Sherman spoke eloquently about his concerns in West Hill on the impact of tree removal on wildlife and the need to take action and show leadership.

I tabled the motion to give greater prominence to trees and very much bring them to the fore. Motions are a good way for councillors to highlight what they see as the key issues. My motion prompted a response from the environment portfolio holder Cllr Jung prior to the meeting and at the start of the debate I explained how I wished the motion to be amended. It now reads as set out below.

When it came to the vote the Council unanimously supported the motion and I anticipate that the scoping report will be brought to the Overview committee meeting in October.

I'm really pleased that as a result of my motion the Council has expressed its opposition to pre-emptive tree felling and that it is now full steam ahead to progressing the Council's tree strategy.

MOTION WORDING.

This council recognizes the immense contribution that trees make to our District - shaping the landscape, providing a vital habitat for wildlife, sequestering carbon to help combat climate change and playing an essential role in the eco-system by absorbing rainwater and preventing erosion.

Trees are also vital to our communities enhancing well-being, connecting people with their natural environment, providing shade and peace, cooling the streets, marking the seasons and giving our communities a sense of 'place'.

In light of the key role of trees:

This Council condemns the practice of pre-emptive tree felling prior to the submission of planning applications.

This Council agrees that a scoping and indicative report of a tree strategy be urgently brought to the next available Overview meeting.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS - EDDC

East Devon District Council convened an extraordinary general meeting on 26th July at Westpoint to decide whether to hold all committee meetings virtually until 17th January 2022, or such earlier date as it determines. There are considerable concerns around rising Covid Rates and the risks that this causes to members and staff. It was agreed to proceed on the basis of virtual meetings. These will be consultative meetings only with the formal decision being taken afterwards by the Chief Executive.

EDDC – LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION AS WARD MEMBER

I have been consulted as the ward member on the ‘hierarchy of settlements’ following the strategic planning committee held on 20th July.

<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1667&Ver=4>

The purpose of the hierarchy of settlements is to focus most housing development in the largest settlements where there are most facilities and try to resist development in very rural areas where there are no or very limited facilities. This is in order to promote sustainable development which is not heavily car dependent in the open countryside.

I support the current approach as outlined in the hierarchy of settlements and am not in support of creating further tiers, or promoting further development in very rural areas.

BROADBAND

It was agreed in the July West Hill Parish Council meeting that the clerk and myself would look to identify an adviser who could provide advice given the complexities around broadband. I will be looking to do this later this month and hope to find some time to work on this with the clerk. I am happy for my July report to be amended to form an item for the Parish Council website. As it is now some months since I have spoken to Jurassic I will also be looking to arrange a further meeting with them.

BROOKLANDS, corner of Lower Broad Oak Road and Ford Lane – TREE MATTERS

There has been considerable clearance at this site. You will recall that earlier this year I was asked to contact the tree officer about the beech tree.

Robin Offer has inspected and has advised;

It is unlikely that any of the felled trees would have been suitable for a TPO. The boundary was made up of mostly poorly formed cypress and large shrubs. The stumps left on site reflect this.

The roadside beech at the east of the property is already covered by TPO ref: 90/121/TPO.

HAYES END – TREE MATTERS

There is currently a temporary TPO on site which is due to expire on 18th August. I am advised by the tree officers that they are looking to refine the TPO so that it refers to specific trees and groups of trees before then carrying out a consultation process on this refined TPO.

DOING WHAT MATTERS – DCC PLANNED WORKS

Thank you for emailing me your thoughts about which works are a priority. I think it is fair to say that I have had varied responses so I think we need Mike Brown as highways officer to meet with the parish council to discuss and, in some cases, show us specifically which areas of concerns he means - I will initiate this meeting.