

TEIGNBRIDGE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (TALC)

Secretary: Dudley Swain 01392 833353

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Minutes

of the meeting held on Thursday 29th November 2018 at Forde House

Present:

Abbotskerswell	Kevin Farrelly; Kevin Eales	Ideford	Ashley Lamb; David Fox;
Ashburton	John Nutley; Sarah Parker-Khan		Anthony French
Bishopsteignton	Elaine Cawthraw; Henry Merritt	Ipplepen	Roger Carnell
Bovey Tracey	Martyn Evans; George Gribble	Kingsteignton	Ron Peart
Bridford	Roger Dowding; Stephen Purser	Newton Abbot	David Howe (Chairman);
Buckfastleigh	Janet Jones		Mike Hocking
Denbury & Torbryan ..	Tony Brownhill	Ogwell	Richard Broome
Dunchideock	Stephen Moor	Shillingford St George ..	Christopher Carr
		DCC	Steve Edwards
		TDC	Gary Powell
		Secretary	Dudley Swain

Apologies: Ashton (Gillian Mann); Bishopsteignton (Kim Ford; Keith Lambert); Bovey Tracey (Steven Leigh); Chudleigh (Michael McCormick); Kenn & Kennford (Andy Chislett); Newton Abbot (Carol Bunday); Tedburn St Mary (Patricia Moody); Teignmouth (Sylvia Russell); Mid-Devon Advertiser (Sandra Perraton)

1 Cllr John Hart, Leader DCC – Financial Matters

As part of a comprehensive explanation of DCC finances, Cllr. Hart gave the background to the present situation and the plans for 2019/20 budget. The coming two years will probably be significantly influenced by changes in government funding that alters the grants to DCC from business rates. Clarity about the changes is still awaited. Next year is the 2nd year of the DCC's business rates pilot scheme affecting the locally retained income; the first year enabled a £15m benefit. The business rates relief for small businesses is an increasing concern with some definitions causing anomalies, for example when a "holiday home" becomes a business and thus free of housing council tax.

Children's Services is a particular concern with an impending overspend this year (possibly to be deferred to 19/20) and increasing demands next year. Supporting some "troubled youngsters" can be immensely costly – for example, 10 individuals had cost £4.5m this year alone. Some financial options may include setting aside part of council tax specifically for children's services, helping parents to keep youngsters in the family home or considering a special needs block in the education budget. A substantial grant of £18.7m was received for road pothole repairs with Devon getting some £5m more than the next highest Authority thus reflecting our demanding situation.

Support will continue in 19/20 for rural transport. Options are being considered to see how the cost of "over 65's" bus passes might be reduced. Adults services working with the health authority, has seen quicker hospital discharges, thus a range of personal and financial benefits. Devon's ageing population is a particular financial concern, one that continues to increase because of the attractive nature of Devon to that retired age group.

The £450m budget this year will not be overspent. Note, the turnover is £1.3 billion. Council tax will increase next year, probably by the maximum permitted of 3.99%. Some poorly managed local authorities are now in financial difficulties because they did not increase tax in recent years, perhaps politically attractive but not good financially.

2 Marie Downey TDC Legal Services – Dealing with Traveller's Encampments

This topic is frequently contentious but an outline of the principles involved was explained. The gypsy/traveller community is less than 5% of Devon's population and there is no evidence of particular preponderance of criminality in this group. Some of these people are simply passing through the county, others are part of the "new age" lifestyle community. About 16% of their caravans occupy unauthorised sites, partly by choice but partly because of a lack of legally available sites.

The public are encouraged to report illegal encampments promptly so that TDC can respond in a positive way, initially by visiting the site and discussing options. Travellers are, however, usually well versed in

the rules and options. In reality, it is the owner of the affected land who must take action. This often means that the police are unable to deal with encampments, unless criminal action has occurred. Even so, it is usually very difficult to identify the culprit within the group of people.

In essence, TDC would ask the trespassers to move off their land and obtain a court Order if deemed necessary. Most travellers will normally leave prior or just after and application is made to the court for an order of possession; very few extend their stay beyond the Order deadline. There are courts costs involved and often debris clear-up costs once the site is vacated. In reality, even though fly-tipping is prosecuted, if the person committing the offence can be identified, it is not always possible to recover costs from the Traveller culprits because of practical difficulties, locating those persons due to their transient nature or even tracing their vehicles.

Additional transit sites are required both in Devon and nationwide.

3 Minutes of the meeting 27th September 2018 – Item 3, regarding the minutes of 28 June, was edited with consent of the meeting. The minutes were then approved.

4 Secretary's Report

- 4.1** The bank balance remains at £180.52. An application will be made to DALC for their normal supporting contribution towards area meetings such as TALC. It may be that the next TALC Secretary will need additional financial support for the role. The bank account has now only two signatories and a third is required. It was decided this will be dealt with under the new Secretary, following the May elections.
- 4.2** The Secretary updated TALC on the situation regarding TDC Standards Committee, including the response from Phil Shears to our letter expressing concerns. Members decided that the vacancy for a second TALC member on Standards Committee will be reviewed after the May 2019 elections unless a prior urgent need arises. Karen Trickey is now the Monitoring Officer, the previous two having left TDC in the past few months.
- 4.3** Cllr. Amanda Ford of Teign Valley ward has resigned. TDC has yet to tell those ward councils about this and they also await confirmation of who is now to be their democratic representative.
- 4.4** Planning Applications site visits. Local cllrs. are now still to be permitted to be involved in these TDC site visits but the situation remains under review.

5 Topics for Meeting 31st January 2019.

It was agreed that Martin Flitcroft, TDC Chief Financial Officer, will come to discuss TDC finances and Maureen Pearce will talk about Local Heritage Assets. Post meeting note: Phil Shears, TDC MD, has also kindly agreed to attend accompanied by Donna Best to cover this topic but also some wider aspects of TDC's activities.

6 Matters brought forward from Members

None

7 Chairman's Business

The Chairman outlined continuing concerns with council tax and local business rates income. These affect Newton Abbot but affect many Devon communities. He also took this opportunity to wish all TALC members a Happy Christmas.

8 Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 31st January 2019, 7.00pm at Forde House.

For information, 2019 dates: 28 March; 27 June; 26 Sept.; 28 Nov.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.