

District Cllrs Report – Chris Wheatley

TDC

After our AGM of Torridge District Council, the positions largely stayed the same and we still have the same leader, deputy, and chair of council. A new addition was Cllr Doug Smith of Great Torrington who has now been elected Vice-Chair of Council, following the sad death of the well-respected Peter Christie.

External Overview and Scrutiny

We have an External O&S Meeting coming up on the 18th of July joint with North Devon

Council with a focus on Dental provision and is open to the public.

Environmental Working Group

Mike Machin from UN Water Quality Alliance attended our recent meeting and since June 2019, EU Project share software Platform has been in place to integrate meters with Torrington.

Water strategy topics highlighted were about treatment of sewage, saving water with saving money, Road run offs with metals,tyres, farm spillage, drug sewage. Defra water plan of reducing public water usage down to 110 litres per day target. Discount bands for less usage of water.

Several q were raised and the main concern was our water quality through our taps and sewage in our rivers,sea ways and beaches.

TDC Joint Meeting with North Devon Council regarding Agriculture

Actions suggested during the Committee Meeting:-

- Promote use of Rural England Prosperity Fund grants (see northdevonplus.co.uk). Grants of £2.5k to £35k available requiring 10-20% match funding.

By NFU

- Speed up the planning process as delayed permissions can endanger businesses.
- Promote buying local produce or buying British.
- Look at the key asks in here NFU manifesto.
- Affordable rural housing for young people to help keep them in the sector.

By Landsense

- Overcome the problem of s106 agreements not allowing businesses to reclaim 20% VAT.
- Increase public awareness of livestock worrying, including the need for the public to occasionally accept reduced access.

By ND+

- Ease the thresholds at which planning permission is required for some works e.g. ponds.
- Source public procurements locally.
- Address animal diseases, animal health and welfare.

By Mole Valley Farmers

- Decrease Council Tax on young farmers.
- Listen to Farming Today on Radio 4 at 5:45each morning to better understand agriculture.
- Collect Council Tax six monthly to match the timing of agricultural income.
- Think beyond one electoral cycle

Actions suggested in written submissions to the committee.

NFU

- Promote the Back British Farming message - In an increasingly volatile world, food production is vital to our country's health, wellbeing, and security
- Promote the farming sector
- Procure local produce (promoting and driving local, seasonal, and fresh food purchasing, by serving more local food in our hospitals and our schools)
- Importantly, recognise that to stay competitive the industry must continue to adapt and invest.
- Through the wider planning regime support good applications that deliver jobs and growth to the economy (either direct agriculture or diversified businesses)
- Continue to push for better broadband provision in rural areas
- Help to educate our young people about food production and taking care of the countryside
- Support a growing agricultural contribution to renewable energy.

ND+

- Government legislation on slurry is also seeing a lot of farms leaving the Dairy sector. Some discussions I have had seem to say that planning for bigger lagoons will not be passed – something that the councils should investigate if they wish to keep milk being produced in our area.
- Get a better understanding of agriculture as its changing and being told to change by central government. New animal health and welfare guidance is making some of the more older buildings redundant and new sheds will need to be built to accommodate guidance from the vet. The councils should not be looking at the old buildings first for class R or Q but the need of the business if it is to stay farming. In many cases most farmers wouldn't want to convert those buildings as they are too close to their farmhouse and wouldn't want long term tenants or tourists in and out all day.
- Family businesses that split need some support. Businesses can't be left until the last minute to inheritance issues so if we want vibrant businesses they need to be supported at an early stage – so if a farmhouse needs to be built after a partnership split – what does the farmer need to do to show that this is needed for the farm to succeed?
- Look to support and promote initiatives for people and businesses to buy local produce and support wherever possible local supply chains to ensure food security.

Landsense

- As a Rural Chartered Surveyor, common issues affecting my client base where I think NDC could offer further support would be a better understanding of agricultural needs and regulations around planning, s106 agreements and their implications on taxation, infrastructure requirements, and an increase in public awareness of agricultural sensitivity such as livestock worrying, farm thefts, trespass etc.
- Working with the farming community and understanding roles and needs is fundamental

EHFN

- Signposting, convening and facilitating opportunities for business development and collaboration.
- Efficient and understanding planning processes.

- Enabling improved understanding between the farming and non-farming communities.

Mole Valley

- As all politicians barely think beyond their electoral cycle, it would be great if the council really put in some thinking of what is required for the next 10 or twenty years.
- Since grassland [and permanent grass in particular] is a good carbon sink, it would be good if the council realised the rearing of livestock in North Devon is very sustainable and resisted the temptation to jump on the vegan/ vegetarian band wagon.