

County Councillor's Report, March 2021

Devon County Council agrees standstill budget for services

The budget provides significant increases for adult and children's social care, but these are almost entirely in order to meet increased demand and costs, rather than improvements to services. The only other big increase was to improve the Council's IT systems. Services which benefit the population as a whole, like Highways and Libraries, have seen no significant increase in funding.

Independent councillors' proposals for (1) reintroduction of lengths-persons in parishes (2) funding for rural cycle routes (like the Stop Line Way) and (3) a £200,000 new book fund to relaunch the library service, after years of running down the book stock, were all rejected by the Conservatives, as were many good proposals by the Liberal Democrats.

Council Tax will rise by 4.99 per cent, compared to general inflation of 0.7 per cent

This is the sixth above-inflation rise in a row, bringing the increase to 30 per cent over 6 years. 3 per cent of this year's rise is for social care. The Government has refused to pay for this out of national taxation, forcing councils to increase council tax instead.

The Independents' proposal to cancel the other proposed 1.99 per cent rise, as a gesture of relief for council tax payers, and take the money from reserves instead, was rejected by the Tories. Our proposal would still have left the Council with over £100m reserves (to put this in perspective, even in this very uncertain year, the Council has only needed to draw on £3m of its reserves).

May elections to go ahead, but leafleting banned in blatantly discriminatory move

The Government has announced that the County Council and Police Commissioner elections will go ahead, despite concerns for the safety of voters and (especially) polling station staff raised by many councils, since most adults will still not have any protection from vaccination at this stage.

Nothing has been done to make postal voting easier - you cannot apply online, only **download an application form or phone East Devon Electoral Services on 01395 517402 for one**. You must of course be on the electoral register before you can apply for a postal vote, if you're not on at your current address. This **can** be done online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

The Government has banned canvassing and leafleting, so that candidates will have to pay commercial deliverers to distribute leaflets. This discriminates against Independents and less-well-off parties, and favours the Conservative Party, who are already posting leaflets to voters. I raised these issues as urgent issues at Devon County Council, but the Tories refused to allow them be discussed. They will come back a few days before the election!

Seaton's Beach Management Plan is now fully funded

As a member of the Stakeholder Group, I was delighted to hear that EDDC, led by my Independent colleague Paul Arnott of Colyton, had secured the funding for the scheme, which will renew the defences between the town centre and Seaton Hole.

Local vaccine rollout continues at Seaton Hospital

I received my first dose on 8th February and it was great to see the hospital being so well used. The national NHS system, with online booking for Taunton Racecourse or Westpoint, is calling 64-year-olds at the time of writing (26 February).

NHS plan to restore normal services, especially elective surgery

Health Scrutiny committee members received a presentation from the Devon NHS showing their plans to restore services in the RD&E and by using private hospitals, as the urgent demand from Covid declines.

EDDC report for Seaton Town Council on 1 March 2021 from Jack Rowland

My report this month will cover just 2 subjects:

1. The EDDC budget and precept for 2021/22.
2. The Seafront Enhancement Scheme.

The EDDC budget and precept for 2021/22

At the EDDC Full Council meeting on 24 February the budget and precept was approved that means a £5 per annum increase (3.41%) increase and for a Band D resident a charge of 151.78 per annum

I appreciate that any news announcing an increase in costs may be difficult to accept and understand during the current situation caused by Covid-19. However, I hope the following explanation will help explain the reason for the 3.41% increase from April.

As a direct result of Covid-19 EDDC has over the past year seen a fall in income and a rise in expenditure and we are legally obliged to present a balance budget for 2021/22.

The mandatory service costs involving, for one example, the waste and recycling service, have increased due to increased volumes and we have decided to retain all the discretionary services as well.

The discretionary services cover sports centres, swimming pools, parks and public toilets. As an example EDDC contracts Leisure East Devon (LED) to operate the sports centres and swimming pools owned by EDDC. In the current financial year up to the end of March we will have supported LED with up to £1.3m to keep them afloat due to the restrictions and lockdowns we have all experienced, but EDDC have only received £280k back from Central Government to offset the financial support EDDC have provided.

In addition we have decided not to increase the EDDC owned car park charges from April, but to achieve a balanced budget we are using £300k from the general reserves budget that will reduce that reserve to the lowest level allowed. Obviously we cannot continue to use those reserves going into the future to support income and car park charges will eventually have to be increased from April 2022 as by then they will not have been increased for 11 years so have not kept pace with inflation and the VAT increases over that period.

Seafront Enhancement Scheme

Town Councillors may recall that I provided an update on 25 January outlining the outcome of a meeting that was held that day with relevant EDDC Officers and attended by EDDC Cllrs Hayward, Hartnell, Ledger and myself. From that meeting it was agreed that Alison Hayward (Project Manager, Place, Assets & Commercialisation) would produce an overview and position paper in conjunction with Andrew Wood (the EDDC Service Lead for Growth Development and Prosperity). That report will also incorporate the Moridunum as an integral part of the overall scheme. Having checked on progress of the report I hope to be able to give a verbal update on 1 March regarding production and when we will be meeting again as Alison returns that day having been away for 2 weeks.

In addition to the 25 January meeting, Cllrs Ledger, Hartnell and myself met the relevant EDDC Officer to discuss the fee required if STC were to submit a new planning application and the cost was confirmed as £1386 if STC were involved and a new flood assessment risk report would be needed.

Seaton Town Council Work/Project Log

Details	Officer/Cllr/ Volunteer	Status	Action
Council Administration & Finance			
Banking	JPM	Dual authorisation set up and, once payments approved, Clerk sets up payment and Chair of Finance confirms. Separate debit card account being set up.	DC account being set up.
Finance - general and ongoing budgetary reviews, in light of pandemic (priority)	JPM	All payments made and financial records up-to-date. Petty cash & bank reconciled and approved by F&GP to 31 December. Budget kept under regular review by Council.	Update on Q2 &3 to Council 1.2.2021
Policy Reviews	JPM/HJ/JH	Ongoing review of existing policies and identifying where new ones needed.	Ongoing - will be brought to Council for approval, as reviewed and updated.
Committee Terms of Reference Review	JPM	These will be reviewed as the respective committees meet and brought to Council for approval in due course.	Ongoing
Asset register	JH	Comprehensive review and update of the Council's Asset Register.	Approved and ongoing maintenance schedules and budgets being worked on
Website (priority)	HJ/JH	The website is being kept up to date. Possible plug-ins are being looking into ensure compliance with the new Accessibility Regulations that have recently come into force. HJ/JH will check regularly that there are no accessibility issues and, insofar as possible rectify accordingly. HJ currently updating community and business listings and taking photos to add to the site.	Ongoing
Civic Regalia	JH	Costings obtained. Mayoral chain currently with Fattorini for refurbishment. Beer Men's Shed making new case	Further works may be required. Report to Council 1.3.2021
Community Grants Scheme	JH	JH will be responsible for the Community Grants Scheme, promulgating the Scheme, checking applications as received and seeking further information where required. Applications encouraged via social media	Ongoing
Members Code of Conduct	JPM	Under review. Update will be brought to Members when EDDC's updated code approved.	Ongoing.

	Council
	JH
	JPM
	PT
	HJ
	Cllr-led

Shop Front Grants Scheme (priority)	JH	JH has taken this over to assess applications as received and will seek any missing information. Complete applications will be brought to Council for consideration as received. So far, 11 applications have been approved and 9 completed and paid out. 2 are pending evidence of completed works. A further 4 applications have been followed up with requests for additional information.	Ongoing
Community Consultation	JPM/Cllr Ledger	A draft consultation documents is being prepared and it is hoped that this can be brought to Council in November for input and sign off and decision as to distribution	Draft document in progress
Asset transfer	JPM	Initial approach made to EDDC to establish a list of ownership of assets across the town.	Ongoing
Insurance	JH	Insurance quotations for 2021/22 being obtained.	Quotations will be brought to Council for approval April 2021
Staff & Member Training/Seminars			
Certificate in Local Government Administration (CiLCA)	JPM	Registered 25.9.2020. Unit 1 of 5 passed on 16.11.2020. Unit 2 started.	Ongoing
Legionella Training	JPM/JH/PT	Online training booked.	Ongoing
Marshlands			
Redevelopment (priority)	JPM/JH	Prior to commissioning a feasibility study, as resolved by Council in July 2020, a formal request has been made to DCC to seek their views on the overage provisions binding the use of Marshlands and whether these might be waived or amended. DCC responded on 13.10.2020.	Members looking at the short, medium and long term plans for Marshlands. Valuation of the site for all purposes is being arranged. Delayed due to pandemic.
Covid Safety - Marshlands	HJ	Track & Trace procedures set up by HJ and agreed with tenants in order to comply with new Government guidance. The guidance is being kept under review and risk assessments will be updated according to new regulations and easing of lockdown restrictions.	Ongoing
Building maintenance and repairs	PT/HJ/JH	JH is sourcing quotes for remedial works following the 5 yearly electrical installation condition inspection to include repairs to emergency lighting. JH also seeking quotes for remedial works following the legionella risk assessment. A legionella monitoring regime will be implemented in March 2021. HJ seeking quotes from heating engineers re radiator thermostats in upstairs offices which do not work	Ongoing as required
Asbestos Report	JH	Two quotes been obtained. A third being sought.	Contractor instructed and will attend on 1st March

Business Rates	JH	In light of the nature of the building and the somewhat confusing valuation previously carried out, JH is liaising with the VOA and preparing a comprehensive plan of Marshlands and the various obligations for business rates of STC and tenants alike.	Ongoing
Utilities	JH	JH will look at competitive quotes for gas and electricity as and when the existing contracts come to an end in 2021.	Review 2021

Other Buildings

Town Hall - lease - tenant/landlord obligations	JPM	Lease considered and the respective obligations of STC as landlord and Gateway as tenant established. JPM in discussions with Gateway trustees re lease an ensuring all safety aspects are in order. JPM meeting with Cllr Hartnell.	Ongoing
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Town Hall - roof repairs	JH	Three survey quotes received to assess repairs to TH in short, long and medium term. Wessex Surveyors approved	Survey date awaited
Town Hall - repairs to Museum walls	HJ	On hold until roof repaired, awaiting survey	Ongoing

Play parks, open spaces & other land

Allotments	HJ	Inspection by HJ & JM due in March. Annual invoices including water fees and updated tenancy agreements will be sent out in March. One empty plot to re-allocate. 37 names on the waiting list	Ongoing
Cliff Field Gardens	PT/JPM	PT continues the ongoing maintenance of the benches. Tap at bottom of gardens now disconnected and SW Water have confirmed it has been disconnected and final bill now paid. The labyrinth boards are becoming beyond repair so the cost of replacement is being investigated and will be reported to Council in due course.	Ongoing
Elizabeth Road Play Park	PT/HJ	New goalpost installed on 27.11.2020. Picnic benches will be ordered once a delivery date has been agreed. Gate mechanism now replaced.	Ongoing
Footpaths	HJ	Grant application to Devon County Council has been submitted. HJ will continue to liaise with footpath wardens throughout the year regarding any maintenance issues.	Ongoing
Tree Warden	HJ	HJ spoken to EDDC and obtained criteria for recruiting a volunteer Tree Warden for Seaton. Advert to be published	Ongoing
Seaton Down Hill	HJ	New benches to be ordered once delivery date has been agreed	Ongoing

Projects & Events - ongoing & future possibilities

Progression of Seafront Enhancement Scheme (priority)	All Cllrs	11.9.2020 - Planning Agents instructed. Awaiting contract. JPM Chased on 11/9, 25/9, 19/10 and 26/10. Response awaited. PP no longer alive	Ongoing discussions as to whether it is practicable and financially viable for STC or others to resubmit a planning application. Report awaited from EDDC Officers
Water re-fill station - seafront	JPM	Supplier of floor mounted bottle refill station approved by Council on 5/10/2020. Subsequent emails confirmed blue as most popular choice. JM confirmed price with A&S Kingdon. Location agreed with EDDC. Order placed.	Delivery due in early March. Licence being completed with EDDC
Water Fountain - 2	JM	Report to Council to agree location for second refill station. EDDC contacted and replay awaited.	Ongoing
Painting of lamp posts (priority)	JPM/HJ	JPM chased on 24/8, 14/9 and 22/10. Response received from DCC on 23/10/2020 stating that STC could progress painting. JPM raised questions on 27/10 as to whether any columns would be replaced as a result of the roll out of new LED lighting so as to avoid unnecessary works to lampposts being replaced. DCC have responded saying this may be the case but any such replacement is unlikely to be for at least 12-18 months. Contractors instructed accordingly but works unlikely to start until the new year now, due to weather.	Ongoing - provisionally planned for March 2021. Contractor on stand by ready to start when we have a date
Telephone Kiosk at Seaton Hole	PT (Maintenance) /Cllrs/JPM	Paper to be brought to Council in due course	Steer sought from Council - 1.3.2021
Town Art Trail (priority)	JPM/AGD	The new Art Boards at Marshlands have been well received. JPM meeting with AGD w/c 28 September to discuss ways forward and action required. JPM & Cllrs Ledger & Briggs met with AGD and artists on 9/10/2020 to discuss possibilities and budgets required to take forward. AGD is liaising with owners, including EDDC and permission being sought for installations. Mock ups of work prepared. Meeting with EDDC Green Spaces Officer. In principle, agreement for locations given.	Liaison with EDDC officers over artworks ongoing.
Town Guide or Town Map or alternative -2021	Marketing Working Group	Considered by Council on 5/10/2020. Was agreed not to produce TG in its current format for 2020/21 and for the Marketing Working Group to consider the Council's print and marketing strategy in its entirety and recommend a way forward.	Ongoing

Sourcing/design of new banners for town	JPM/Cllr Ledger/Cllr Briggs (with assistance from AGD)	Research to be done and brought to Council. Possibility of a fallow year for 2021 whilst lamp posts being painted etc and possible tie-in with Art Trail considered and proposals brought to Council in due course. Council agreed not to replace the banners in 2021 with a view to reinstatement in 2022 with potentially new designs as part of Art Trail.	Ongoing
Sensory Garden	Cllr Briggs/HJ	Proposal by Cllr Briggs considered by Council on 5/10/2020 Agenda. Budget agreed. HJ looking into suitable locations and products & materials	Ongoing
Red Arrows	Cllr Bowman/Promote Seaton	At Council on 9/9 it was acknowledged that this event would take sometime to plan. Cllr Bowman is working on preparing a comprehensive report on this future possible event	Ongoing
Seaton in Bloom	HJ	Once a date for the judging has been decided then HJ will start to market this event and invite entries.	Ongoing
SW in Bloom	HJ	HJ to investigate and report to Members in light of judges' comments on last entry and Cllrs discussions earlier in the year.	To be revisited during budget planning process, as to investments Council may wish to make in 2021 or 2022
Cyclefest 2021	HJ	The organisers have advised that the provisional date for the 2021 event will be either 4 or 11 July. Update - due to the 18 month road closure on the seafront, an alternative route has been identified. Postponed until September 2021 due to pandemic.	Ongoing
Firework Display 2021	JH/Cllr Haggerty with Promote Seaton	Budget request placed as part of budget setting for 2021/22 and Cllr Haggerty researching this. JH assisting. Site visit and risk assessment will take place once lockdown restrictions are eased.	Ongoing
General			
Repairs to the brick flower bed on the seafront	HJ/Cllr. Bowman	Quotes are being sought by Cllr Bowman. One obtained. JPM also approached DCC Highways, who advised that the matter be raised at the next Seaton & Colyton Traffic Meeting to gauge views and consider possible solutions.	Request made to S&CTG by Cllr Ledger re raised bed.
Repairs/painting of planters and benches in the town	PT	Ongoing as required.	Ongoing
Tourist Information Centre	JPM/TIC Working Group	JPM and Cllr Haggerty, as Chair of TIC Working Group, met with Richard Drysdale too discuss TIC and matters of tourism generally on 25/9. Regular catch ups between TIC and JPM will be arranged. Quarterly reports received from DWT for Q1 & Q2 and circulated.	Council will be kept updated.

Promoting tourism in Seaton (priority)	JH/Cllr. Haggerty (Chair)/Regular attendance by several other Cllrs.	JH will attend Promote Seaton minutes and assist with agendas and minutes and keep JPM updated of the work of Promote Seaton in order that reports may be brought to Council, as the Clerk considers appropriate on items the Council may be able to support. 5 page advertisement published in Coach UK -November edition. Monthly updates to Council.	Ongoing
Travel & Tourism Show	Cllr Haggerty	Cllr Haggerty will be attending the show in March on behalf of STC to promote Seaton. Backdrops are being sourced for the stand. JPM & Cllr Haggerty met with both Seaton Tramway and Seaton Jurassic in September.	This has been postponed until September 2021 due to Covid restrictions
Markets	HJ	HJ is researching the issue of market for Seaton and a comprehensive report will be brought to Members in due course.	Ongoing
Youth Genesis	JH/Councillors	Cllrs had a meeting with Youth Genesis on 30.11.2020. Proposal received.	Ongoing
Young Car Enthusiasts	Cllrs	Informal Zoom meeting arranged with Councillors, police and local youngsters regarding meeting with cars Underfleet. Further meeting to be arranged.	Ongoing
Completed Work/Projects			
Word Press training	JH	New staff will attend training with Blaze on 6/10 so they are able to assist in keeping the website updated.	Completed
Seaton Coronavirus Community Group	JPM	As the Re:Store CIC has now been established an set up its own bank account, Authority has been sought from the DCC Covid-19 Prompt Action Team to transfer the grant funds received to Re:Store to administer and report on. This was granted and the funds transferred.	Completed
Outdoor Cinema Event	AGD with Cllrs volunteering as stewards	The outdoor cinema event for Seaton Coronavirus Community Group volunteers on 11/9 was a great success.	Completed
Secure emails	Cllrs	Arrangements made and should now be in use by all members and officers who access STC business remotely. A new planning email has also been set up.	Completed
Covid-19 social distancing signage for the town centre	PT	In liaison with EDDC officers implementation Covid-19 safety signage around town	Completed
Removal of bunting and banners	PT/Harcombes	As is customary at the end of the summer season these are scheduled for removal. Union flags will also be removed.	Completed
New IT Provision	JPM/HJ	New PC and associated equipment supplied and installed by Core IT in Office 2 on 28 September	Completed
Seaton Down Hill	PT	Benches there have been cleaned and repainted	Completed
Cleaning of offices and communal areas	HJ	New cleaner employed-Seaton-based - K's Cleaning. Two thorough cleans were carried out initially of the whole building, to make up for the months when we were without a cleaner and going forward, Kay will do 4.5 hours a week at £15 per hour.	No further action required

Allotment Notice Board	PT	Due to the recent demise of the allotment notice boards, PT has upcycled the large notice board that was stored at Marshlands and not being used and is installing it at the allotments.	Completed
Keys	JH	JH identified and logged all keys and all stored safely and logged in key cabinet in assistant's room.	Completed
Martial Arts Club - Gates	PT/Cllr. Singh	Cllr Singh will discuss with Pink Hippos and then padlock and, if vandalised again, PT will arrange to permanently shut it up.	No further action required at this stage
AGAR 2019/20	JPM	Accounts signed off by external auditor (PKF Littlejohn) for 2019/20.	Completed
Pay roll	JPM	After a delay, due to Covid-19, payroll has now been transferred to EDDC as from October 2020.	Completed
New Member Training - DALC	New Cllrs	Training booked for 20 & 21/10/2020	Completed
Coach UK Magazine	JPM/Cllr. Haggerty	5 page editorial and advertisement agreed and published in the November edition	Completed
PAT testing	JH	After much chasing an alternative contractor identified and all of the Council's electrical appliances tested on 3.11.2020	Completed
Remembrance Day	HJ	HJ to arrange wreaths and liaise with key players regarding attendance to ceremonies, in November	Not due until Nov 2021
Art Trail Postcards	JPM/AGD	Approved by Council on 5/10/2020. Printed and distributed by AGD	Completed
Outdoor Gym Equipment	JPM/HJ	5/10/20 - Council approved purchase of equipment from CIL funds, subject to a two week consultation via social media, regarding location. Consultation completed. Results - 26 positive/5 would prefer an alternative location but, in the main, are glad it is being reinstalled. EDDC instructed to place order for supply and installation.	Installation completed on 3.11.2020
Mid-year internal audit 2020/21	JPM	Completed with only minor observations. Reported to Council on 7.12.2020	Completed
Risk Register/Risk Management Policy Review	JPM	Review of Risk Management Policy & risk register completed. Report to Council for approval 7.12.2020	Completed
Youth First - NALC Seminar	Cllr.Ledger	Booked for 17.11.2020 in Frome	Completed
First Aid Training	JH/HJ	Online training booked	Completed
Purchase of new picnic benches for Elizabeth Road	HJ	Ready to order from Marmax products once a delivery date has been agreed.	Ongoing
Purchase of new barrier baskets for railings outside the new Hub	HJ/PT	Phil painting railings in blue then HJ will order flower baskets. John Widger to plant and maintain	Ongoing
2021-22 - Budget planning	JPM	Draft budget 2021/22 prepared. Considered by F&GP on 19/10/2020 and 16/11/2020. Final consideration on 14.12.2020	Approved by Council 21.12.2020.Claim to EDDC submitted. Completed.
Electrical Inspection (EICR)	JH	Mandatory 5 year inspection started on 6 November. To be completed in later November.	Completed
Policy reviews	Various	H&S Policy, Memorial Bench Policy, Standing Orders, Financial Regs, Risk Register & Policy all reviewed and updated	Approved by Council - 7.12.2020

Elizabeth Road Play Park - goal posts	PT/HJ	New goalpost approved by Council 9.9.2020. GB Sport & Leisure engaged to supply and fit. PT has imported 2 tonnes of additional soil to prepare the ground. Three new picnic benches ordered (HJ)	Installed goalposts on 27.11.2020. Completed.
Christmas Lights Virtual Switch On Event	PT/HJ/JH	6.9.2020 - HJ & JPM met with Eleanor Carr (Seaton Eats) and June Millman (Majorettes/Carnival) to discuss possibilities, in light of Covid restrictions. Agreed to review in early October. However, 'rule of 6' subsequently implemented and so was decided that a switch on event would not be possible in 2020. New 3 year contract entered into with LITE and additional lights purchased. Christmas trees erected and lights installed. JH working with Cllr Haggerty to co-ordinate the best dlights competition.	Virtual switch on 4.12.2020
Health & Safety Review	JH	Comprehensive H&S review of Marshlands carried out by JH - noticeboard, COSHH cupboard, fire safety log book, signage and training arranged. Buildings H&S risk assessment carried out by JH and reported to Council.	Ongoing
Legionella testing	JH	Approve by Council on 2.11.2020. Done and risk assesement received.	Completed
Underfleet Play Park	PT/JPM	Recent repair to lilly basket not satisfactory. Raised with HAGS in early August and a site visit requested. PT met on site with HAGS Head of Contracts on 14/9 who agreed with his assessment and agreed to report back to his team. JPM chased this up on 25/9 and 7/10. On 19/10 HAGS agreed to replace whole unit. Delivery time approx. 5 weeks. HAGS chased on 30.11.2020	HAGS finally completed repairs to the Lily basket. Completed.
Fire Warden Training	JH/HJ	Online training completed	Completed
Review of grounds maintenance contracts	HJ/JPM	Contract now awarded to John Widger for a further three years.	Completed
Smoke detectors	JH	All being replaced. Booked for 15.1.2021	Completed 22.2.2021
Town Hall - replacement doors	HJ	Doors have been repaired by Door Care South West	Completed

