

## **West Devon Borough Council Annual Report 2020/2021**

### **Covid**

The council has been busy this year dealing with the response to the pandemic. Staff have worked hard to get Government grants allocated, there is still time for businesses to apply and grant money available. The need to prioritise the pandemic has meant that a lot of the usual business of the council has been postponed and some has been missed altogether. The council has had to change to solely online working which has had positive and negative consequences. It has meant that many more people can attend meetings and it is possible to hold more meetings because of the relative ease of attendance. Online streaming of council meetings has also taken place and are available on you-tube. Future plans will be to have a mix of online and in person meetings. I would like to thank our local communities for the support that has been offered to friends and neighbours this year and to local schools when life has become so difficult for many.

I hope local people will use the Parklands Leisure Centre which WDBC has financially supported to keep this facility viable, for all to use. I backed this because I think it is important that all children have the opportunity to learn to swim. Parklands also supports the school outreach service which is an important part of their work.

### **Grant Support**

The ARG business support grant has been successful and will continue until the end April and into May. There is possible additional grant funding available from government to continue financial support for local businesses.

There are small grants available, up to £300 from West Devon to enable community groups to restart. Apply online for these. There are also larger grants available up to £5,000 for innovative new projects.

### **Playing Pitch Strategy**

A survey of playing pitches across West Devon was made with a new strategy due in late Spring 2021. There is a long-term ambition to ensure access to playing pitch facilities for all as part of a wellbeing strategy for healthy communities. It is recognised how important access to playing pitches is for all especially young people. Residents can now use local tennis courts, multi-sport games areas, football pitches and skate parks following the lifting of restrictions.

### Multi use Paths and Green Travel networks

I have started a project to create a shared/cycle way linking South Zeal through Sticklepath and into Okehampton. This path will ideally connect South Tawton Primary School, Sticklepath village, Okehampton's new Parkway rail station and Okehampton College, eventually joining the Granite Way. A shared path will provide a safe way to travel actively between the villages and to access Okehampton without the need to use the busy lanes and roads around us. The **Beacon Shared Path** committee is currently raising funds for the Feasibility Study. These projects do take time to bring to fruition, the norm is 5 years so it will take effort and momentum to achieve. There is a lot of support for the project and particular thanks go to **North Dartmoor Primary Care Team** for their generous donation. The aim being to increase wellbeing and fitness through active travel. As well as to promote tourism to the area. There is a new government grant **The Community Renewal Fund** which could potentially fund the path as part of a network of active travel paths across West Devon. I have asked for our Beacon Path project to be included in a funding bid.

### Local Litter Picking Groups

If anyone is planning to start a local litter picking group, and I know there are many across the Borough, West Devon Borough Council have equipment to loan free of charge. This includes pickers, gloves and black bag holders as well as hi-vis jackets. Contact the WD locality office for details, the equipment can be delivered.

Cllr Lynn Daniel 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021