

## County Councillors Report – Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin - May 2025

Dear Fiona and Petrockstowe Parish Councillors,

I just wanted to say “Hello!” as your new county councillor! Even though you obviously all know me pretty well...! I’m sorry I won’t be attending the meeting this evening but I will always endeavour to provide a report if I’m not going to be present at your meetings. I’m also very willing to come out and meet with residents and councillors during the daytime (within school hours preferably) if there are issues that you would like me to investigate and help with, please just get in touch.

It’s still very early days for us at the council, we had our induction at County Hall on 9<sup>th</sup> May, and have been doing training sessions online, as well as responding to all of the emails that are coming through!

The Liberal Democrats have appointed Julian Brazil as our group leader and Paul Arnott as Deputy, however our first official Devon County Council meeting (AGM) isn’t until Thursday (22<sup>nd</sup> May) which is when we will all be voting for the leader and chair of council, committees and cabinet members etc, so it’s after that date that we will know for sure who will be leading the council (I don’t want to make any assumptions).

The county results are that the council has no single party control. Of the 60 seats, the Lib Dems are the biggest party with 27, then Reform UK with 18, the Conservatives 7, Green Party 6, Independents 2; with the Labour Party now having no seats on the council.

This is a significant change at County Hall, where the Conservatives had been in control since 2009. 80% of the county councillors are new.

Councillor Brazil, who has been voted as group Leader of the lib dems, wants to see change in the services provided by the authority.

He said “I want councillors to vote for what’s best for their community; that leads to better decisions and a better council. Everyone should feel they have a voice and have the opportunity to be influential – that’s the culture I want to engender here at the County Council. It’s good to have a mix of views and beliefs to be truly representative of the communities we serve.

I share the views of the new Lib Dem group leader, he wants to see a “new way of doing politics”, and I agree. We need change, and we need to be working together and putting our communities at the centre of our decision making.

I was honoured to be invited to speak on BBC Radio Devon from the NFU tent at the Devon County Show last week, alongside Cllr Brazil, where we talked about rural isolation. As you all know, I’m a 5<sup>th</sup> generation farmer, and we have some other farmers on the council too. We feel that central government simply doesn’t understand our rural communities, and we will make sure that doesn’t happen at county level. The rural community is so important here in Devon and has been neglected for too long, and I’m really looking forward to working with you and representing you at County level.

On Petrockstowe-specific issues, I was contacted (at very short notice!) by Highways officer Matthew Collins to say he would be visiting Petrockstowe to look at Highways related issues for the planning application for the 3 houses in the village. I contacted Malcolm as chair and luckily he was also available, we met Matthew Collins at the entrance, had a chat with him about the problems, and I was delighted that he decided to REFUSE the application in relation to Highways.

You will also see we had the road done up but that was nothing to do with me- I was wondering if it was a prize for being elected 😊

## **District Councillors Report – Councillor Chris Wheatley - May 2025**

### **TDC AGM**

Last night the focus of the meeting after voting was the re-appointments of both Councillor Ken James as Leader and Councillor Claire Hodson as Deputy Leader for the sixth year in a row. Councillor Doug Bushby was re-elected as Chair of the Council and Councillor Doug Smith as Vice-Chair. Other Committee Councillors were appointed as Chair and Vice Chair of various Committees. Please see our press release/website for further details.

Steve Hearse Chief Executive presented and update regarding TDC approval of several changes to its Constitution following recommendations from a Local Government Association Peer Review initiated in April 2024 as a friend and support not a critical inspection perspective. Key areas covered were local priorities and outcomes, organisational and place leadership, governance, and culture, financial planning and management and capacity for improvement. Out of 11 recommendations the Report noted that 91% of the actions had already been completed or progressed.

### **EXTRAORDINARY FULL COUNCIL**

Torridge District Council voted to extend the existing Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in relation to control of dogs for another three years. Since it was initially introduced in 2022, The Councils Environmental Protection Team has dealt with 117 stray dogs' incidents, 246 Reports of dog fouling, 234 barking dog complaints and 138 involving dangerous dogs. A breach of a PSPO is a criminal offence and can result in a fixed penalty notice of £100 or up to £1000 can be imposed by a court in conviction of a breach. The Council voted that dogs should be kept on a leash and all year round in Victoria Park, adjacent to Park View Terrace, and from 1 May to 30 September annually on Westward Ho promenade and excluded from on the designated area of Blue Flag Westward Ho beach from 1 May to 30 September annually and permanently excluded from Westward Ho Park's enclosed Tennis and Sports area.

### **TDC Announcements**

We are pleased to announce that the highly anticipated development of Brunswick Wharf in East-Water Bideford has taken a significant step forward as Developers, Red Earth have announced the appointment of Morgan Sindall Construction and Infrastructure Limited as the project's principal contractor.

Brunswick Wharf is set to transform a long-neglected Area of Bideford's historic

Riverside offering a restaurant, six retail units, more than 100 apartments, a pop-up cafe, surface, level car park, and a riverside walk linked to a public open square.

The car park will also double up as an outdoor events space acting as both a hub for residents and the wider community. In addition, including a shared public space, a new riverside walk, will include a shared cycle and pedestrian route that links the Tarka Trail encouraging active travel and better accessibility to the public.

Further good news is that the refurbishment of the Pannier Market in Torrington is now completed.