County Councillor's Report 24th May – Kingskerswell

After the results of the election on 6th May to the County Council I want to thank everyone who voted, and especially those who voted for me - it is great being back on the County Council and with an increased majority! I will be working for all in Kingskerswell as I have done for the last eight years and you can be assured that every issue for the village will be made known to Officers and the Council.

As ever I can be contacted at alistair.dewhirst@devon.gov.uk or by text, WhatsApp or on the phone at 07836 704127 – or just Facebook PM me.

The results were:

Alistair Dewhirst	1822 votes
Conservative Party	1590 votes
Independent	928 votes
Green Party	183 votes
Labour	171 votes

There were 4,718 votes cast and 24 spoilt votes. The turnout was 44.9%.

Out of an electorate of 630,144 in Devon the Conservatives polled 108,702 votes to get 39 councillors (an average of 2,787 votes per councillor) and the Lib Dems polled 45,395 to get 9 councillors (an average of 5,043 votes per councillor). The Liv Dems are once again the official Opposition.

Obviously, nothing is agreed until the Annual Council on the 27th May but my name has been put forward once again as Chair of Scrutiny and I will be Chairing the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee. I will sit on HATOC and will return to the Farms Estate Committee and the Corporate Parenting Member Group. I hope to be a County Council representative on the Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries & Conservation Authority (IFCA) and also sit on the Minerals and Waste Framework Plan Working Group. I have stepped down from the Public Rights of Way Committee.

The recent Covid warning from Devon's Director of Public Health should not be ignored. Along with, 'just because we can, doesn't mean we should', 'taking a cautious approach' to the latest easing of restrictions is the mantra from public health experts up and down the land. So, while the choice to hug our family and friends, or to choose not to just yet, is ours to take, Steve Brown, Director of Public Health advises caution.

Fourteen thousand randomly selected Devon households have been invited to enter a 'civic lottery' to determine who represents the county at this summer's Devon Climate Assembly. Invitations will drop through letterboxes giving households the chance to help shape and safeguard Devon's future.

It follows the recent public consultation of the Interim Devon Carbon Plan, the county's climate roadmap which outlines what every resident, business and organisation will have to do to reduce carbon emissions. The Interim Carbon Plan is being developed by the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group (DCERG) – a partnership of Devon's councils, emergency services, voluntary organisations, and business groups.

The Involve Foundation and the Sortition Foundation have conducted Citizens' Assemblies on behalf of the UK Government and Scottish Parliament. Their approach in Devon will ensure that the make-up of the 70-strong Devon Climate Assembly is fair and representative of our population.

Households that receive an invitation have until the 24th May to respond. From those responses, 70 members will be hand-picked against a criterion that will reflect Devon's demographic profile. Age, gender, ethnicity, disability, geography, socio economic status, and people's own attitude towards climate change are all factors that will be used to produce a representative Assembly.

The Assembly itself will be conducted entirely online, and no prior knowledge of climate change or digital skills are needed. Members will meet over a series of weekday evenings and three weekends in June and July to hear from a range of expert speakers to discuss the issues and form recommendations decided on by a vote.

The Devon Climate Emergency partnership, which includes all Devon's Local Authorities, will respond to each of the Assembly's recommendations to complete the Devon Carbon Plan.

Finally, Teignbridge and Devon County serving the South West Exeter area have been forced to shelve an innovative district heating system designed to cut carbon emissions and reduce heating costs for future residents because most developers are unwilling to absorb any of the additional costs.

Although house prices have risen by £25,000 per plot in Teignbridge over the past year, the majority of housebuilders involved in the proposed development to the South West of Exeter were not prepared to contemplate an additional £2,000 a plot in potential development costs, despite the scheme benefits of a 70% cut in carbon emissions compared with natural gas fired boilers.

Annual carbon savings of 2,500 tonnes would have been secured by the scheme as well as lower energy costs for those who bought the new homes. The scheme was in line with the Government's commitment to ending the use of fossil fuel heating systems.

In addition to the £7.3m Council's contribution, Teignbridge was prepared to make a £50,000 advance payment for preliminary infrastructure.

Teignbridge will continue to apply its approved carbon reduction policies and will need to approve plans prepared by the developers, but the resulting emissions savings will not come close to the benefits of the district heating network.

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