I always find DALC Conference full of positive energy, along with plentiful information and exchanges of ideas and experiences among Cllrs from different towns and parishes across the county. As reflected by Mike's boss at the DCC stand, whilst saying how he also enjoyed the uplifting and positive energy and conversations at DALC, that it is an event that probably attracts attendance by the more progressive councils.

Malcolm dropped me off early enough for me to manage to get around all the exhibitors before the AGM. Sadly, the car fire on the M5 delayed attendees using that route - which may have assisted my ability to get around every exhibit. I've brought back as much info as I can from the different exhibitors and truly missed Juliette's knowledge base of all the companies that we use and all the figures she keeps in her head! DALC is a good event for Cllrs and Clerks alike and both add greatly to the value of the input and experiences shared at the workshops.

This year I noted there were no exhibitors for town Christmas Lighting (a luxury with eyewatering price tags) - it was paired back to very practical offerings, the latest legislation coming in and tools to assist Clerks. Juliette is, I believe, well versed in what is coming, and prepared with the tools she needs. Parish Online Asset Mapping were one of the sponsors again and look like they are growing in users. I explained to them that whilst our council had voted to use them, our Clerk had not had time to start the initial populating of the mapping, as there is always a new piece of legislation or a fire to put out, a weather event to deal with and so on that diverts our staff time and resources from creating the space and time required to set up the mapping tool. They understood and admitted that this was a common issue.

Of the 4 playground equipment company's attending the event (including the local company in Ipplepen) one of them had a display of play area floorings - which I have photographed and shared via WhatsApp. I was told that 1/3 of the budget goes for the flooring, 1/3 for installation and 1/3 for the equipment.  The rubber matting that allows the grass to grow through is the most cost-efficient flooring and is about 1/3 of the cost of the other flooring materials.

The AGM noted the board is currently full, and the approval in principle vote was for DALC to look into extending 3-year terms to 4 years to reduce the turnover of directors and create less change for the staff to deal with, getting to know and train up new directors. The board is set up so that some of the directors change each year so there is always continuity.

I wasn't able to properly read or photo the slides of the AGM with all the finance sheets so these will be available now that the slides for the event have been shared from DALC.

After lunch we were treated to a presentation from Exmouth's TC Climate Champion Zoey Cooper - Climate Star Council winner. With her remit focused on Climate Championing Zoey presented numerous creative ways in which Exmouth - whilst plagued by sewage leaks from SW Water, is finding ways to reduce waste in the holiday town. One of these items being The Exmouth Cup - a reusable cup for hot and cold drinks that cafes can use for takeaways , to be returned to the cafe after use, and the colourful Sea Serpent that "eats " plastic waste that would otherwise harm the wildlife on the beaches and in the water, an electric tuktuk that goes around town and to schools hosting exhibits,  a drive on reusable  sustainable period products, and more.

Mike and I independently both chose the same workshops - the morning being the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, and the afternoon The Devon Climate Emergency / Devon Resilience Forum.

One of the big takeaways is that Police funding is allocated nationwide by the number of crimes reported, Devon has the lowest Police funding and a low crime rate, Is this because Devonians don't report crimes - and if so is this because the system is too complex to try to figure out who to call if it's not a direct 999 call - or is it that people have little faith that there will be a response if a crime is reported and so don't bother? Is Devon crime reporting trapped in a circle? We were told that if you see a crime and it's not a 999 call to definitely call Crime Stoppers - on 0800 555111. In the next weeks there will be the Crime Stoppers leaflets placed on the KKPC website, FB and notice boards to support this initiative.

There was also a general frustration that whilst the OPCC is funding youth sports in the cities to help address and decrease anti-social behaviours, the parishes across the county are struggling to find funding grants and then the provider to provide Youth Services - which has to follow all current safeguarding legislation and is thus not possible to offer in the more relaxed manner as it was in the years gone by.

The OPCC workshop provoked a lot of questions, answers and action points taken - and we will be getting a copy of the slides and hopefully the Action Points. One of the things we learned is that there are Councillors on the OPCC advisory board - and this is a position that Jane holds on behalf of KKPC. One of the takeaways is that if a crime is being committed, to call Crime Stoppers. It was also agreed by OPCC that a member of the public, when witnessing ASB / and crime shouldn't have to try to figure out what sort of ASB / crime this is, they just need to have a number to call that a qualified person familiar with the system can then triage and address. It was acknowledged that Devon and Cornwall Police are underfunded and have a reputation for being a low crime area. Funding for the police is allocated by how many crimes are reported. If people don't report crimes - either due to confusion on who to call, or lack of time available to sit on a 101 call, or lack of confidence that the police will respond, then funding is negatively affected and the OPCC needs to have far more effective messaging on many levels. It was recognised the challenges of finding grants and then services available to provide Youth Services to reduce youth ASB's and raised by more than one council - thus KKPC is not alone in our experience of the challenges of finding funding and providers of YS. This was another Action Point for OPCC to consider - the time and taxpayers money used by multiple parishes and towns to find funding and resources rather than a central point. OPCC did talk about the football academy helping Youth in Plymouth - but that is a far cry from the rest of the county.

Attending the DALC workshop "Devon Climate Emergency / Devon Resilience Forum" from the team who presented to KKPC - the opening question posed was "Its 5pm on a dark January evening, amidst a wild storm and suddenly the lights go out - what do you do? When you look out of the window you can't see any lights anywhere - and the internet / Wi-Fi is also down - you have no contact with anyone, no light or heat. What do you do?" KKPC would love to hear comments from the community about thoughts that you have if faced with this situation. And what do you think KKPC could and should do in this situation? It's a good time to reflect, with winter approaching, and consider your personal emergency plan. If you are vulnerable and need electricity - like for medical machinery or a stairlift - it is your responsibility to register with the Utility Company and ensure you are on the priority list.

The question posed highlighted and underlined the real need for us all to be aware of, look out for and check in with our neighbours, in both good times and emergencies.

One of the interesting items to emerge from this exercise is how every community represented in that large room had different needs and responses. For example, the very rural communities involved and depended on their farming community to assist with clearing blocked roads, flood rescues etc, whereas town councils had maintenance teams that they could call upon (though in this exercise we had no Wi-Fi / internet /phone contact so calling anyone out would have been problematic). Many councils were in between and oft times the logistics and topography of the community dictated the Emergency Planning response. For example, in gloriously hilly Kingskerswell, if KKPC had a community generator - which hall would this be placed in - and who would be able to get to it to switch it on to warm the hall for freezing and chilled local residents? In a storm and flooding emergency the hills in the village could prevent people from getting form one end and one side of the village to the other. Mike and I concluded that it might be more dangerous in Kingskerswell for the most vulnerable to even try to get to the local hall. I hope this this has given some food for thought to all readers and will spark many conversations through the community. KKPC would love to hear your thoughts and ideas. KKPC is already signed up to the Devon Resilience and in the Pavilion has the emergency pack - maybe each hall should also have one?

Glorious Devon covers so manty different communities and this was reflected in the wide range of answers given as the workshop progressed from our independent and individual actions on to those of our actions and responsibilities to the community as a whole as Cllrs and Clerks. Towns looked to their maintenance teams to sort things out, rural communities looked to their farming community for assistance with clearing roads and drains etc and many and varied levels of assistance in between. It was clear that each community has its own challenges and needs its own individualised plan dictated by topography, logistics and community needs and how to identify and support the vulnerable in the community.

If there is repetition in my reporting of the 2 workshops, it’s because I've combined what I originally drafted for KKPC with what I wrote in the Parish Magazine.

My thanks to Mike for opening many fire doors for me and helping me get to the right workshop rooms throughout the day!

Janet