

PRESENT:

North Ward:

Councillor P S Christie
Councillor D Bushby
Councillor J Herron
Councillor T Johns

South Ward:

Councillor S Inch
Councillor Mrs S Langford
Councillor P Lawrence

West Ward:

Councillor Mrs K Corfe
Councillor C Hawkins
Councillor D Ratcliff (Town Mayor)

East Ward

Councillor J Craigie
Councillor Mrs R Craigie
Councillor Mrs J Gubb
Councillor J A McKenzie

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs H Blackburn (Town Clerk)
Mr R Coombes (Deputy Town Clerk)
Mr T Steer (Bideford Heritage Railway Centre)
Inspector E Seear (Bideford Police Station)
Sergeant G Clark (Bideford Police Station)
1 x Member of the Public
1 x Member of the Press

117. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mrs L Hellyer (East Ward – DCC, Meeting).

118. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ANY REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Councillor P Christie declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 18 (Trustee, Bridge Trust).

119. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION OF 15 MINUTES DURATION

There was no public participation.

120. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 December 2021 were approved as a correct record.

(Vote – For: 11, Abstention: 3, Against: 0)

121. ACCOUNTS

It was proposed by Councillor Bushby, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the List of Payments be approved.

122. RESTORING YOUR RAILWAY – BIDEFORD TO BARNSTAPLE MAIN LINE SERVICE

a. The Chairman whilst inviting Mr Steer to address the Council explained that they had first met at the Bideford Name Plate presentation. The Chairman stressed that both Bideford and Barnstaple need the rail link between the two Towns.

b. Mr Steer thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Members.

He first recounted his recent experience travelling on the newly restored Okehampton Service that was fully packed and was supported by a bus feeding service; he felt the integrated service was “genius,” providing tours of Okehampton and Tavistock, returning to the station for a pound.

He introduced the name “Atlantic Coast Express,” which referred to another “name plate,” of historic value and continued with his presentation, a copy of which is enclosed and forms part of these Minutes.

c. At the conclusion of his presentation Mr Steer invited questions.

Councillor Lawrence asked whether a proposal to link the two Towns would use the old rail line, now the Tarka Trail, which is regarded as a great asset. He believed it would be difficult to copy Exmouth where a path ran alongside the rail line.

He also speculated on road crossings at Instow and Yelland.

Mr Steer indicated that the siting of a rail line would have to go out to consultation, perhaps an alignment with the A39. The Tarka Trail currently has a SWW sewerage conduit running underneath it which would present challenges for it to be recommissioned.

He reaffirmed the need for consultation but could envisage the use of two crossing gates at either end of Instow and directing Tarka Trail users to the sea front whilst utilising the current route that takes visitors / cyclists past the village centre.

Councillor Bushby was fulsome in his praise for the presentation believing that as it falls within a National Project, the planning for crossings and technicalities would lie with the Central Government.

Councillor Mrs Corfe was similarly effusive and grateful for the work that presents opportunities which would open up and be of great benefit to the Town.

Councillor McKenzie noted the old station siting would require investment in the infrastructure citing car parking limitations and the chaos that would be introduced to East-the-Water. He also warned of future flooding expectation and impact on wildlife habitats.

Mr Steer spoke of the potential for alternate station sites with the introduction of a “Parkway” station.

In the light of global warming, the disappearance of the Tarka Trail through flood reclamation, Mr Steer had liaised with the Environment Agency and DCC; a raised profile works for the line would provide for a flood defence, on the Estuary side.

The Mayor indicated a Working Group would be set up, including Town, Barnstaple and District(s) Councillors and other stakeholders; he invited Members to address Mr Steer after the Meeting.

Councillor J Craigie indicated that the Decarbonisation and Environment Committee, with Climate Change budgeted monies could work on early reports and invited Mr Steer to provide proposals.

Councillor Bushby would welcome a presentation to TDC, as Chairman; the Leader of North Devon Council had made similar entreaties.

d. The Chairman thanked Mr Steer for addressing the Council.

123. PRESENTATION BY THE POLICE SERVICE

a. The Chairman invited Inspector Seear, to address the Council.

b. Inspector Seear thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Members and introduced Sergeant Clark the new Neighbourhood Sergeant; they had both worked together in Barnstaple.

Inspector Seear explained that forty eight hours prior to the Festive period the Force across North Devon had been struck by illness necessitating a change in shift patterns.

Factory Friday was somewhat eerie as nothing happened.

Similarly, the Christmas period was quiet.

Without any organised Event focussing people in one area on New Year's Eve, 3.00 am on New Year's Day saw a draw on resources across the region. Private parties, disputes in the home, domestic issues found the Custody Cells full across Devon and Cornwall that necessitated overspill into Dorset facilities.

Locally crime is down on last year although there was a "nasty" spike in December, which dropped at the end of the month but has again risen and continued at a pace when, ordinarily, a lull would be expected. The prevalence of domestic incidents has not been too serious.

East-the-Water has seen youth disorder, public order offences, anti-social behaviour resulting in damage; there has been dialogue with TDC over criminal orders.

There has also been a spike in car crime with seven thefts; where cars have not been successfully stolen damage, including scratches, have been caused.

Jubilee Square is proving to be a focal point for younger people, at night, waiting for things to happen.

October 2021 saw high value rural thefts from farms where anything that was not "nailed down," was stolen including quad bikes.

There has been a successful arrest that has stemmed the tide albeit the ringleader used young "missing people" from around the Country to perpetrate the crimes.

Central to the Town a spate of burglaries from homes have occurred where a (tenuous) link from the offender to the householder has been made.

c. At the conclusion of his presentation Inspector Seear invited questions.

Questions / points included:

- Graffiti. Rope Walk and around the Town.
- o Tagging v Mindless Damage. Generally younger people, not always stereotypical. Resource can be allocated.
- Loud exhausts and speeding along Manteo Way and Alverdiscott Way and outside school; complaints received.
- o Advised to report through 101 which builds a case to bid for Exeter resourced operations.
- Vandalism – Heritage Station.
- o Youths known. Crime Prevention Officer to target resource.
- Relationship between street lights turned off and prevalence of car crime.
- o Merits investigation.
- Potential for voluntary partnerships to allow for officers to focus on frontline incidents over Festive period.

c. The Chairman thanked Inspector Seear for addressing the Council and sent the Council's appreciation to those that make up the Bideford Police operation.

124. DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR) REPORT

(Councillor Hawkins left the meeting.)

Members had received a written report from County Councillor Mrs L Hellyer which enclosed and forms part of these Minutes.

Councillor Christie explained that the DCC Councillors must raise the issue of schools, demanded by DCC, with regard to new developments.

He indicated that as a member of the TDC Planning Committee he was aware that DCC had demanded £1.18 million and £1.3 million from developers of two estates (Winsford / Abbotsham) towards schools with the provision that they are built first.

The Developers have refused to sign the Section 106.

Although DCC are asking for the monies there are no schools; there has been no physical expression of the money.

He demanded that DCC need to explain what is happening about the new schools; there is a need with more estates and huge numbers of children.

The Mayor believed that the Section 106 Committee, headed up by Sean Kearney, TDC had been very successful whilst working with the Asda development.

Councillor Inch had been in contact with Councillor Wilton-Love expressing his concern at there being no footpath along Clovelly Road between the Brewers Fayre and B&M; it is very dangerous.

(Councillor Hawkins returned.)

125. COMMUNICATION BROUGHT FORWARD ON THE DIRECTION OF THE MAYOR / TOWN CLERK

The Mayor advised:

- a. That the Council had received correspondence from the Mayor of Landivisiau recognising the passing of the former Councillor and Mayor of Bideford, Clifford Coates.
- b. Any councillor unable to attend a meeting must advise the office and arrange for a substitute attendee.

STAFFING, FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES (SF&GP) COMMITTEE MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 January 2022 were approved and adopted.

(Vote - For: 14, Against: 0)

126. MANOR COURT 2022 - CANCELLATION

Councillor Bushby explained the recommendation of the Staffing, Finance and General Purposes Committee to cancel the Manor Court Ceremony.

The spectre of COVID-19 could make the arrangements and logistics of the Ceremony difficult for all concerned. He spoke of need for the Mace Bearer to interview jury candidates prior to the Event potentially exposing herself to the virus.

He raised concerns that there could be a need to cancel the Event at the eleventh hour; he believed it was most appropriate to simply cancel the Ceremony for 2022.

Proposed by Councillor Bushby, seconded and

RESOLVED: That Manor Court 2022 is cancelled.

(Vote - For: 14, Against: 0)

127. PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Discussion ensued on the indiscriminate but legal introduction of poles by Air Band to facility high speed connectivity, even in conservation areas. Complaints had been received.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 January 2022 were approved and adopted.

(Vote - For: 14, Against: 0)

128. DECARBONISATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 January 2022 were approved and adopted.

(Vote - For: 14, Against: 0)

129. MARKET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 January 2022 were approved and adopted.

(Vote - For: 11, Against: 1, Abstention: 2)

130. TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 January 2022 were approved and adopted.

(Vote - For: 14, Against: 0)

131. BIDEFORD TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

The Notes of the Meeting held on 12 January 2022 were received.

132. TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL – UPDATE

Councillor Bushby advised:

- a. Bridge Buildings has been sold.
- b. TDC are taking over the contract for Leisure Services in the area.
- c. TDC will be running the ground maintenance contract “in house,” from March 2022.

Councillor Mrs Langford advised:

- d. The Scrutiny Committee had received a presentation from the CAB who had provided help during the Pandemic and were gearing themselves up locally for those residents who will suffer from the impact of increase in utility charges.

133. BRIDGE TRUST

Councillor Christie gave detail on income, Estate expenditure, Grants: individual, student, group. The Estate is valued at sixteen million pounds.

He advised also that monies allocated to flood lighting for the skate park have now been assigned to the Bideford Play Equipment Budget. Combined with the Town Council’s funding, fifty one thousand pounds has been earmarked in total.

The business of the meeting having been completed, the Mayor thanked the members for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.35 pm.

BIDEFORD TOWN COUNCIL - Accounts for approval at the Town Council Meeting - 20 January 2022

PV.NO	ALLOCATION	VAT	NET	TOTAL
1 6732	R Coombes		133.87	133.87
2 1801	EDF	38.13	190.64	228.77
3 1901	HMRC		4,423.75	4,423.75
4 2401	Staff / DCC Pension Fund		16,124.17	16,124.17
5 2401	Councillors Allowance		£5,008.80	5,008.80
6 2501	Blights	£45.08	225.42	270.50
7 2501	Jewson	4.61	23.04	27.65
8 2501	RGB	16.77	83.89	100.66
9 2501	TDC	5.00	25.00	30.00
10 2501	DS Electrical		600.00	600.00
11 2501	Living Wage Foundation	12.00	60.00	72.00
12 2501	Glendale Countryside Ltd		\$16.00	\$16.00
13 DC 36	Dunelm Mill	80.00	400.00	480.00
14 CC 27	Onford Plastics	19.00	£95.00	114.00
15 CC26	Avast Professional		99.99	99.99
		220.59	28,309.57	28,530.16
	Bank Balances at 18 Jan 22			
	- Current Account		37,162.30	
	- Deposit Account		460,440.48	

Minute Number 122.

Restoring your Railway - Bideford to Barnstaple main line service

ACE Rail presentation - Atlantic Coast Express

The presentation can found here. 

Minute Number 124.

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR) REPORT

Councillor Mrs L Hellyer

Happy new year! Please accept my apologies for not being with you at the meeting, but I will not be back from County Hall in time.

I don't have a great deal to report as there were no committee meetings during the Christmas and New year period and meetings are just getting underway again.

Locally, the Tarka trail, as you leave Bideford and go out to Landcross, has been resurfaced. This was something I had asked for last year, but the funding ran out. I have been very pleased to see this work now completed. The contractors have done an excellent job, and it is a pleasure to walk or cycle along there. The surface is so smooth that I have seen some families taking their children to skate /skate board along there.

Devon County Council (DCC) contractors have recently been in Bideford replacing various cracked paving stones. If you spot anything like that as you go around the town it can be reported to DCC via the website or Customer care centre as a potential trip hazard.

I was pleased that another job that I had been asking for was recently completed. That was getting rid of the large puddle/muddy area at Barnstaple Street entrance to the Tarka trail. A small victory, but it does make a difference.

On Tuesday 11th I was part of a "Send" (Special educational needs) task group, looking at what can be done to improve the service for families and their children. The task group will be running for several months, with the aim to report to the cabinet in September. On this occasion we met, via Microsoft teams, with representatives from the parent carer forum and learned about some of the challenges they face. This was followed in the afternoon by a masterclass looking at "Early help", and what is available to identify and help children with issues, before they become a lot worse.

At the time of writing various meetings are in my diary. On Friday 14th I shall be attending a meeting with Health and Adult Care scrutiny concerned with mental health.

The following week I will be at county hall all day from 9am on Tuesday 18th with Children's scrutiny meetings. In the morning it is budget setting, with the committee meeting in the afternoon.

On Thursday 20th I shall be at county hall all day from 9am with Health and Adult Care scrutiny. In the morning it is budget setting, and the committee meeting is in the afternoon. This is the meeting that is preventing me from attending the town council meeting.

I have various other meetings before the end of the month including a "Bus back better" meeting, which some concerned local residents are planning to attend. I will also be attending Devon community access forum and Development and Management (which is planning for highways, minerals and refuse and recycling site).

The next full council meeting is on 17th February, and this is when the budget will be agreed. There is a black hole looming a couple of years down the road, unless the government does something about the costs for the High Needs block of children. As you know, there has been a massive rise in the number of children with complex needs throughout the country. Devon is no exception and the funding just does not cover costs. It is the same for every local authority. Currently the government asks the councils to show the deficit on a separate line on the balance sheet. Fortunately, Dcc has been prudent with money and has healthy reserves. However, this negative balance is projected to be £80million in the not to distant future. This is real money that has been spent. Some authorities are down to brass tacks. DCC is ok for now, but the situation can't go on. DCC, like other authorities is lobbying central government.

The year long, Newton Abbott trial on town wide 20mph speed limit has ended. The people of Newton Abbot have rejected the scheme, and instead just asked for 20mph outside schools, nurseries and hospitals. In Bideford we already have a lot of 20mph zones, including outside the schools and Bideford hospital. I have asked for the following areas to be considered for 20mph limits: – Chanters road, Bideford outside St Mary's School. There is a 20mph zone that starts just after the school at Newbridge Close, but to me, it makes sense for the zone to start at the approach to the school. I have also added Alverdiscott Road around the school entrance. There is a 20mph zone along Mines Road by the original main school entrance, but I consider that this is needed in Alverdiscott road, as the school now uses both entrances. I have also asked if the 20mph zone in Clovelly road could be expanded to include Old Town. I will let you know when I have some feedback.

All routine issues e.g., potholes, blocked drains and gullies, overgrown vegetation, broken manhole covers, broken paving slabs (trip hazards), grit bins, damage to bridges parking issues etc can be reported direct to Devon County council.

If you google Devon county council report a problem, a page comes up with icons. Click on the appropriate icon e.g., overgrown vegetation and follow the simple instructions. You will receive an acknowledgement email with a tracking number.

Alternatively, you can telephone the customer service desk during office hours.

Customer Service desk Telephone 0345 155 1015

For out of hours highways emergencies only.

01392 380380

0345 155 1008

To telephone the control room in an emergency e.g., flooding

Telephone 01392 383329