

Updates from Mr N Parish MP

Following a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 24 August 2015

Mr Parish replied that recent improvements to Junction 27 had proved successful with traffic flowing well. Discussion took place regarding the time it took for developers to pay Section 106 monies and contributions. Mr Parish said that he would look into this and that perhaps a system could be put in place whereby the local authority led on the infrastructure with a claw back from the developer.

I understand that there is now in place a system for local authorities to ask for upfront contributions for infrastructure, and that Mid Devon is pursuing this on the proposed new developments in Cullompton. I am very supportive of such a system. I am also meeting with the local enterprise partnership to discuss ways that perhaps they could put forward monies in the form of a loan to help infrastructure to take place. This is then taken back from developers. I understand the problem at present is that so much of the development has to take place before brought up to standard and local residents have to put up with a lot of local traffic and inconvenience.

Cllr Mrs Roach asked Mr Parish if he would ask the Government to consider finding a solution to the problem that elected members did not have recourse to anybody other than the courts when they felt that they had been treated unfairly or in exceptional cases when they suspected that the Council had broken the law. Mr Parish confirmed that he would speak to Ministers to report that whistle-blowing for Councillors was difficult.

I have written to Brandon Lewis MP at DCLG regarding councillors having the ability to whistle-blow. As soon as I receive a response I will forward this to you.

Cllr Moore asked why there were no limits on the scale of anaerobic digestion green energy farm schemes to distinguish between low-impact, local diversification (treated as farm businesses with farming rules) and high-impact, industrial-scale projects (which should be treated accordingly with greater rigour as standard, non-farming businesses). Mr Parish replied that he considered on farm schemes could work very well but in larger cases the infrastructure needed to be put in place. He suggested that he was happy to discuss a specific case with Cllr Moore at another time. He felt that DEFRA could also look at this and he agreed to take this forward.

I suggest that it would be a good idea for me to meet with Cllr Moore to discuss further the implications of the anaerobic digesters within the District. The energy department is reducing the subsidy to larger scale AD plants and so this should have the effect of reducing the number of large plants. I would however like to see the smaller schemes that are genuinely using farm waste and not importing too much waste material from the surrounding district to be kept on a reasonable rate of return.

The Chairman also asked the MP how he felt about A Level education no longer being available in Tiverton. Mr Parish stated that he was not aware of this but he would discuss the matter with the Headmaster of Tiverton High School, Mr Lovett.

Reply from Andrew Lovett, Headteacher at Tiverton High School, regarding A Level education within Tiverton:

We are an 11-16 school, so officially; no. A levels are currently available at Petroc but under threat because low take-up is making the provision very expensive to maintain. I am desperate to keep some A levels in Tiverton for the good of our community and so we currently put a great deal of time and effort into showcasing this provision to our students. I have also arranged with Petroc that some of my staff deliver A levels for them. We call this joint delivery 'T6' (for Tiverton 6th). My thinking is that our students are much more likely to go to Petroc if they can continue with teachers they know and like. The jury is out on whether this is working but Petroc's governors are concerned about the amount Tiverton based A levels cost and we really need an uplift in numbers this coming year.

Cllr Mrs N Woollatt was not at the meeting but had asked Cllr R M Deed to put her question to Mr Parish. Following a recent issue with travellers camping on a local recreation field in Cullompton she asked if it was fair that the local community had to cover the cost of the removal and clear up operation. Mr Parish replied that the Government had carried out a lot of work to put in place a procedure whereby the Police and Councils had the power to evict travellers, but the costs involved had not been looked at. He offered to discuss this matter with the Police and Devon County Council.

I have written to Devon County Council regarding the costs of this and how expensive the situation was for the local community.