

Frank Rosamond

Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee

Explanatory Note

I have been contacted by a senior Parish Councillor in Clayhidon who is aggrieved that information on broadband development from CDS (Communicating Devon and Somerset) – a critical issue in the Blackdown Hills but also in many rural areas – was not distributed to parishes, but was distributed to parishes in East Devon. (The Chief Exec is happy to remedy that position and update parishes/Town councils in the future.)

My Parish Councillor enquired whether there was any canvassing of opinion from parishes by MDDC and raised the whole question of the implication of Devolution for parishes. Brexit too will bring its own demands. A new legal framework for Local Government services will be required, which are currently based on EU laws. Issues such as environmental policy, air pollution, energy, waste, workforce and employment, procurement and data protection will impact against a background to localise services where appropriate. He felt that current communication is rather superficial and would prefer more significant briefings on items likely to affect the parish, but with targeted discrimination, as parish clerks do not want to be inundated with email/web addresses. It brings into focus the many developments in local government and the extent that MDDC is able to meet the level of potential interest of parishes at a time of limited resources. Similarly there may be interest on the part of MDDC Members to be fully briefed in terms of advising their parishes.

As we move to a scenario of greater partnership across Devon and Somerset, I wondered what mechanisms were being adopted in sister District Councils across the two counties for communicating with Parish and Town Councils. Perhaps there may even be the opportunity to rationalise such briefings across the area. I therefore would suggest a Task Group to set up such an inquiry to draw together best practice from across the two counties.

I would welcome Members' views on this proposal.

Frank Rosamond

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