

On 06/01/2020 14:06, Cllr Judy Pearce wrote:

Dear Mrs Bennett

Many thanks for your letter expressing concern about planning, biodiversity and climate change. I'm afraid I have been unable to copy Cllr Frank Green into this reply as I don't have his email address.

Last March we adopted a new Joint Local Plan with Plymouth City Council and West Devon Borough Council. At the time, the Examiners congratulated us on the far reaching biodiversity and general protection of the countryside policies, as well as enhanced protection of the AONB. This Plan is not due for a revision for five years, and any attempt to revise it would not only take nearly as long as that, but would also advertise the fact that, for whatever reason, we don't think our policies are fit for purpose, thus allowing any developers to drive a coach and horses through them in the meanwhile. Besides, we would need the agreement of the other two local authorities to implement any changes. So, for the moment rigorous adherence to what we have is the best policy. We also need support from Central Government to beef up the NPPF, as it is extremely hard for us to go beyond national policy without getting continual challenge from developers. At the moment, I am satisfied that we have one of the greenest local plans of any authorities in the country. I am certain that both our officers and the members who sit on the Development Management committee, currently chaired by your local district councillor Julian Brazil, will do everything they can to see that policy is rigorously applied.

At our last Council meeting we set an aim for the District Council to be carbon neutral by 2030. We think this is realistic so long as the technology improves to allow us to do it. For instance, at the moment no electric refuse vehicle exists which could accomplish the distances ours need to cover to do a round. As far as I am aware no local authority has pledged to make their whole authority area carbon free by 2030, because we have absolutely no control over much of what has to be done. This is why it is realistic to set a target for the council and its work itself, but totally unrealistic to set a general target of 2030 for the area the district covers. At this meeting we also adopted a new procurement strategy which is very much based on reducing carbon footprints, both our own and suppliers'.

Devon County Council has taken a good lead, with numerous other public bodies involved and close cooperation from the University of Exeter. They are at the moment looking through public contributions to set the agenda for a citizens' assembly. This

will be Devon-wide, and the actions which it determines or designs will also be for all people of Devon to execute. Whilst we can take a lead by example, I'm afraid the local district council has absolutely no jurisdiction to tell people how to live their lives in their own homes. It will also be far more effective and powerful, we believe, to work across Devon on a united front to reduce carbon footprints.

Just for your information, Somerset County Council has calculated that even if they spent every penny they receive from council tax, business rates and government grant on carbon neutral programmes, and did nothing else at all (no schools, social services, road mending....) it would cost them over £2.4 billion and take them 80 years. I'm afraid that realistically this is no easy task, especially for a small district council with very limited budgets, but we shall be doing whatever we can, however we can, but within the limits of still delivering statutory services to the public.

Kind regards

Cllr Judy Pearce

Member Salcombe and Thurlestone Ward

Leader South Hams District Council

T: 01548 561370