

THE FIGURES JUST DON'T ADD UP

Mid Devon District Council's private property development company, 3 Rivers Developments Ltd, is currently building the houses behind Tiverton Town Hall alongside the River Exe, where it is projected to make a huge loss.

On 10th February it obtained planning permission to build 9 executive houses in Bampton. The company was originally expected by MDDC to make a financial

contribution to affordable housing of £325k in lieu of providing much needed affordable housing on the site.

3RDL submitted a Viability Assessment to MDDC that reduced the affordable housing liability to zero because of the allegedly high costs of the development. The company also presented a business case to the Council seeking the investment of

£millions of taxpayer money to pay for the scheme. The development costs presented to the Planning Committee were much higher than those in the Business Case. 3RDL has confirmed the Business Case is correct, which begs the question -

Why were the figures presented to the Planning Committee inflated?

The Liberal Democrats have asked the Leader of the Council, Cllr Bob Deed, to investigate these serious concerns.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The recent loss of several trees during development at Post Hill has once again brought the need for a root-and-branch change to the way Mid Devon District Council conducts public engagement.

The trees were home to a Rookery, and included a beautiful sweet chestnut tree that was thought to have lived for almost 300 years. Despite the enormous public amenity value, the considerable environmental benefit they offered to the area, the presence of nesting birds, and Tree Preservation Orders, Planning Permission was granted to fell them.

The Planning process was used correctly to overturn the TPOs, but the sheer volume of local residents unaware that the trees would be felled raises an important question - how could so many residents not know this would happen?

It is the responsibility of the local ward Councillors to keep their residents informed of local issues, and represent their views and questions into the Planning process when raised. In this case one of the Lowman Councillors first claimed that they didn't know anything about the development, and then blamed the local residents for not complaining loudly enough!



That is unacceptable. Why do we elect these people if they shirk their responsibility to represent us?

We are very fortunate to have regular public engagement from the Liberal Democrats in Castle ward which has helped to prevent some similar issues here. As the existing Councillors for Lowman are not interested in engaging with their residents we have now expanded our regular Focus to include Lowman as well.

Matt Farrell is standing in Lowman to actually represent residents on Tiverton Town Council, and in Tiverton East on Devon County Council in a seat that is currently held by one of the disinterested Lowman councillors. **David Wulff** is standing to support your existing Councillors in Castle on the District Council. Both are highly active in the local community. **Your vote for Matt and David on May 6th will help to prevent these issues happening again.**

A BRIGHTER YEAR IS AHEAD OF US

Our NHS is doing an excellent job of getting the COVID vaccinations out. I've heard from a number of you who have already had your first jab and in some cases your second, which comes as a huge relief to all of us who have been sacrificing human contact for so long to protect our families, friends and communities.

It is so wonderful to finally feel the tide turning, but we must not forget those who are facing economic and mental difficulties. The next 12 months will be incredibly hard for some of us and it is important to remember that help and support is available and there is no shame in asking for it. I can help you if you are unsure where to turn.

I want to use this month's letter to thank all of the local charities, community groups, individuals and businesses who have been

working tirelessly to support people where the national government has failed.

I also want to thank the exceptional work of Mid Devon District Council officers who have ensured our district council is in the top 14 out of nearly 300 local councils for COVID relief rollout. Their effort will have saved many local businesses and their staff from additional hardship, and they are a real asset to our community.

A recent walk around Tiverton reveals the first signs of Spring are upon us. Daffodils make way for Magnolia trees bursting into flower, and the randy Wood Pigeons in my garden are building their new nests (they raised two broods last year!) If you are able to do so safely you can't beat a nice Spring walk to lift your mood. Best wishes,

David Wulff



David Wulff for Castle Ward
f wulff.castle



▶ Focus

CONSERVATIVES TAKE OVER MID DEVON'S CABINET

With the recent changes made to the Mid Devon Council Cabinet, the Conservative group led by the deputy leader Cllr Bob Evans and enabled by the Council Leader Cllr Bob Deed, have completed their takeover of the council. This began last year with the sacking

of every Liberal Democrat Cabinet member for voting alongside the Independent and Green members to kill off plans for unsustainable mass house building across the region.

Cllr Elizabeth Wainwright of the Green Party, has now been removed from her role as Cabinet Member for Climate Change, a role she had held for nearly two years with wide member and community support for her excellent work. Her role has been merged into the Environment portfolio held by the Conservative Party Whip, Cllr Colin Slade.

Further changes are expected over the coming months to cement their control. Despite being voted out of

control in 2019, the Conservatives and their enabling Leader now hold the balance of power again in Mid Devon.

We are rapidly returning to the same old stale system that was roundly rejected by residents at the last local elections.

You can change this by voting for our Liberal Democrat team on May 6th.



WE CAN CHANGE DEVON FOR THE BETTER

I am standing to represent my home area of Lowman on the Town Council and in the Tiverton East division on Devon County Council. Previously I served in Hertfordshire as a Councillor with a specialism in scrutinising and supporting the Council decision making. I am keen to bring that experience to our local councils.

One of the most important factors in Council decision making is to ensure that local residents and businesses are fairly represented, to enable all decisions to take their views and needs into account. This is something that has been lacking locally for some time now due to the ingrained, cliquy, stale, "We know best", out of touch governance of the Devon Conservatives.

It needn't be like that. The Liberal Democrats, both as majority groups

and as members of local progressive alliances, have been able to improve councils all over the country; including some others here in Devon. Better services for children; better care for adults; better recycling without punishing larger families; better use and replenishment of social housing; better road repair budgets and targets hit; better support for independent traders and local businesses.

The key difference between us and other parties promising you the best is that we *only* exist to provide equal representation to everyone, regardless of whether you vote for us. Liberal Democrats don't care if you are donors or party supporters, and I have never been whipped to vote along party lines. When you live in a community it is your basic right to have a voice and be represented in local decision making.

Good decision making requires openness and transparency. Residents should be fully informed of decisions that will affect them, and they should be actively encouraged to participate in the process.



Matt Farrell

f MattFarrellTiverton

MORE INFORMATION

Please get in touch if you have a query or an issue that you want us to consider, would like to become a registered Liberal Democrat supporter or member, help with local campaigning, or make a donation.

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You can find us on Facebook where we post regular updates on local issues affecting Castle and Lowman Wards. **f** CastleWard

~~X~~ PROTECT YOUR VOTE

Thousands of people have already applied for a postal vote. If you would like an application form let David know (details above), or print one here and return it to Mid Devon District Council:

🏠 <https://www.mytiverton.co.uk/vote>

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libdems.org.uk/get-involved

