District Councillor Allen Report – 4th March 2024

An interesting month on planning with changes about to come through on the National Planning Framework, which should mean that developers have to be more careful to support biodiversity and sustainability on any build.  This will of course, also have implications for builds in Totnes.  A planning application has come forward from Acorn to do with Baltic Wharf, which I can’t really comment on other than to say there have been over 500 objections on the planning portal, including one from TTC and one from the South Hams Soc.  This is the link if you are interested - <https://southhams.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display/3995/23/FUL>

* There have been some discussions around the most suitable time to send through S106 requests (suggestions from the town council as to what we would like to see happen with any monies that developers will be asked to provide to mitigate the impact of the developments) and after discussions with the Head and deputy of the Planning Dept at SHDC and also with the head of the South Hams Society, whose objection the planning committee has endorsed as part of its own, its clear that it is not a good idea to send S106 requests through to a developer before an application has been decided,  as they  can then be used to imply tacit approval to a scheme at appeal, even if there is also an objection from a committee.  It’s happened several times in this area, the most noticeable one of course, being Camomile Lawn.
* SHDC Officers have carried out a conservation appraisal of Totnes conservation area, which we will soon respond to.  Its going to be an interesting and useful document, highlighting and supporting some of the work we might want to do as a town council e.g. clean the gutters on the High St jointly so as to preserve building facades.  District Cllrs now have the draft doc. So we will be asking for feedback etc
* Licensing – licensing requests have come through from the old Eversfeld building, which looks set to become a Loungers (chain of pretty nice, family orientated international food type place) and there is also the refit of the old Ben’s Tapas bar to add to our night- time scene.
* Cllr Peters and myself are on the board of the Police Advocacy group and have raised issues over graffiti, anti-social behaviour etc.  There appears to be a lot more work needed on getting police action on some of our perennial issues and we are working on that.
* I am on the board of the National Landscapes group and although Totnes itself is not within the border, we can still be involved.  I’ll write a report as to how we can get involved in fundraising etc.
* Communication with DHT is improving and there appears to be several events forthcoming that Totnes might be able to be involved in conjunctly with DHT.  We will keep you all posted and involved.
* The South Devon Primary, which several of us have been involved in has begun and so far in my opinion has been a great success – there have been some very interesting discussions on local and national issues – its ongoing.
* Waste continues to be a contentious issue, but as SHDC has now taken it in house and Cllr Hodgson is the executive member for waste, there are hopes that it will soon improve.  One of the main ones reported recently has been the difficulty of getting business bins and of how unsightly & potentially hazardous they are in our main streets.
* These has been a certain amount of discussion about Totnes becoming a Marmot Town in our priority setting, so I have initiated a first contact with the Marmot group and hopefully that will begin to emerge. Cllr Chinnock will be first port of call for that.
* I have re-initiated contact with the Salfit group in town, who we are virtually twinned with.  Hopefully we will have a meeting this week or next with councillors and members of that group so that we can start to have more regular meet-ups with them.  I’ll keep you all in the loop.