

## **District Councillor's Report March/April 2025**

### **BRANSCOMBE**

- 1- I have, since the end of March, been advocating for and supporting a tenant in social housing in Branscombe who has suffered from longstanding damp and mould issues in her property. Due to my involvement and representation, she has had an immediate response from EDDC Housing and the surveyor did a thorough assessment of her property and has promised her that there will be a full repair and renovation to her property this summer. I visited the tenant yesterday and I am delighted there has been a positive response from EDDC. I will subsequently report on any updates as I intensely dislike seeing tenants under stress and duress due to ongoing issues of this nature.
- 2- I have stepped down from EDDC's Scrutiny Committee as the date and time conflicts with Branscombe Parish Council meetings and my overriding responsibility is to the parish council.
- 3- I have had a response from Devon County Council Highways ENQ251841562 on 19 March in relation to the landowner discharging water from Normans Grove to the Branoc Hall. Highways have written to the landowner advising they need to ensure water is not discharging onto the public highway. Highways have stated that they will send their team to carry out an assessment of the road surface and anticipate the assessment would be completed by 1 April. If no report has been received by 4 April then I will chase Highways for an update

### **WEST SEATON**

- 1- A resident conveyed concerns over the state of The Chine, I have reported this to EDDC Environmental Health who have worked well to satisfactorily resolve the matter and are interacting with the resident and other involved parties. The EH officer deserves full commendation for acting as an arbitrator.
- 2- I am communicating with Seaton Town Council over The Gateway. My question to STC is: The Gateway has been closed for several months now. There has been no further information provided by STC on its website or social media as to the progress being made as far as I can ascertain so that The Gateway can reoccupy Seaton Town Hall. Can STC provide confirmation that all essential upgrades and repairs have been carried out to enable insurance cover to be reinstated? If everything is done, then when will the insurance be reinstated? Is there something outstanding, what is it and how long will it take to complete? Is there anything other than the insurance cover reinstatement which would prevent The Gateway from reoccupying the building?

## BEER

- 1- The state of the Peazen Flats: There are damp and mould issues as well as structural problems to some of the flats. I have requested a full surveyor's assessment and structural survey. I am advising, supporting, and advocating for tenants who have raised formal complaints against EDDC. These issues have been ongoing for many months and now need to be satisfactorily resolved, and I have written to senior housing officers in EDDC and have received what is to date, a positive response. There appear to be legacy issues in some, if not most, social housing stock in East Devon due to poor build quality when they were erected in the sixties and seventies and until recently a backlog in repairs and renovations.
- 2- I have been approached by the warden at Barnards Farm retirement homes regarding the removal of double yellow lines in the complex which impacts on visitors' parking. IU received a response from DCC Highways on 5 March anticipating that an assessment would be completed by 26 March. I have chased DCC Highways for an update on their assessment.

## GENERAL ISSUE AFFECTING THE WARD

The withdrawal of The Chime Hearing Loss Not-For-Profit service in Honiton and Seaton Hospital by NHS Devon is an unbelievably poor decision. They are moving the service to Exeter for all users i.e., those 55 and over and for those under 54 to Exeter. I have written a letter of complaint to [d-icb.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:d-icb.patientexperience@nhs.net). A local resident who uses the service summed it up very well:

*"As a newish resident of Beer (I have been here about 14-months now) I am writing to say how much I agree with your sentiments concerning the withdrawal of the Chime services in Seaton. I saw your comments on Facebook.*

*I have only been recently diagnosed with hearing loss and have been wearing hearing aids for just 3-weeks. The service I received at Seaton hospital was excellent and so easy for me to get to. If these services are transferred to Exeter, I have no idea how I will get there since I feel too nervous to drive into Exeter and have no family to help me. There is only one bus into Exeter and one out per day so when I do require my aids to be serviced or have other needs related to my hearing aids, I just don't know how I will manage.*

*I followed your advice, though, and have sent an email to Complaints email address you provided in your FB (Facebook) post. It is so unfair on the residents of East Devon that we should have to deal with this when the existing service worked so well.*

*I have written to the Patient Experience team this morning to ask for a response and this will be shared through Facebook."*

I had a response from Patient Experience yesterday and wrote a further letter to them as follows:

Dear S,

Thank you for your response. Most of it is the same as a letter my wife received from The Chime Services on Saturday. The added information is from *patient records will be transferred*” onwards.

I note you state *“There are also further sites under consideration by the two providers stated above and this includes a location in Seaton. A position on this will hopefully be confirmed shortly.”*

However, how long is piece of string? A vague identification of a position on making available local services does not resolve users’ anxieties. There are residents who by virtue of their age and /or disability will find getting to Exeter a considerable challenge as there are limited bus services and some do not drive.

I have picked up that timescales were not being met by The Chime; however, most users have stated that they have mostly found the service to be excellent so did you conduct research to ascertain users’ experience before making your decision which came out of the blue. This is not clarified in your response. Because The Chime was so popular than it appears this impacted upon the service’s ability to meet timescales. Expecting service users to travel to Exeter is neither a good use of their time, is not ecologically sound, and will cause the service users added stress when locally the situation could have been appropriately resolved by negotiating with The Chime or other providers and consulting with service users. This is another example of what appears to be a unilaterally made decision without taking into consideration the needs of service users.

Using evidence-based research from residents’ feedback is an action that should also be front and centre of your role as the authority responsible for providing health services to Devon.

I would like a response to my observations please and I and the service users will want to know what you come up with to address the problem of the reduction in local health services, this being another example. This should not take any longer than by the end of the month and if it is going to take longer than please confirm this.

Kind regards,

**District Councillor John Heath**

**Independent - Beer, Branscomeb & West Seaton**

**Excerpt from a letter I received from Patient Experience**

**From:** PATIENTEXPERIENCE (NHS DEVON ICB - 15N) <[d-icb.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:icb.patientexperience@nhs.net)>

**Sent:** 03 April 2025 15:44

**Subject:** RE: Removal of The Chime Service from Seaton Hospital - 23059

Dear Mr Heath

Thank you for your emails and I apologise for a delay in responding to you. I am sorry you have found the need to raise concerns on behalf of yourself and your constituents regarding the closure of Chime.

As you are aware, the contract held by CHIME Social Enterprise for Routine and Specialist Audiology in the Eastern locality of Devon ended on 31st March 2025. The contract held by CHIME since June 2019 was a test-for-change pilot as a sole provider of both services to all Eastern Devon. This pilot did not see the results that the ICB has intended to achieve, and a significant wait list grew.

Patient records will be transferred to RDUH as part of this service change.

For both providers above, some sites will continue to open throughout April so may not be fully operational from day one, however sites will include:

- Regus House, Exeter City Centre
- St Leonards Practice, Exeter
- Exmouth Community Hospital
- Exmouth Medical Centre
- Culm Valley Practice
- Budleigh Salterton Medical Centre
- Sid Valley Medical Centre

There are also further sites under consideration by the two providers stated above and this includes a location in Seaton. A position on this will hopefully be confirmed shortly.

Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused you. NHS Devon is aware that the change in service provision is likely to cause some disruption but believe the offer of a choice of provider and shorter waiting times will result in longer-term benefits.

**Best wishes**

**Senior Officer - Patient Experience**

Nursing and Quality Directorate

NHS Devon ICB - EX2 5AZ