

## **Member Champion for Sports and Exercise - Report for Annual EDDC Council 2022**

The NHS have been strong advocates for Sport and exercise for a number of years as not only does it aid in physical health but also mental health and well-being. In fact they state that 'research shows that physical activity can also help boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing your risk of stress, clinical depression, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.' The last couple of years have been extremely difficult for many people and I believe that Sports & Exercise have become an even more intricate part of people's general well-being.

As we are all painfully aware Government funding has been reduced in many areas and the slack has been left to be picked up by district councils with little or no help. With this in mind there have been various projects which EDDC have been intricate in assisting with and my thanks go out to the various offices at EDDC who have assisted. These include the new Winters Lane play facilities at Ottery St Mary which have recently been updated using s106 money and the Town Councils assistance. Sulina Tallack has been especially helpful as has Cllr Stuart of OSM town council who ensured that all guidelines were followed including asking the local children what they would like in their new play park. Not an easy task during the pandemic when the usual ways of popping into the schools to ask was not possible.

I do think that the recent pandemic has shown just how much our residents need and rely on the ability to be able to easily access sport and play provision across our area. I feel that our officers at EDDC do a fantastic job with very limited resources and an ever increasing workload. As we are all aware for children to be able to access outside play provision is an important part of their education, social skills and learning how to interact with others. This requires continuous maintenance and general upgrading of equipment, as and when necessary. It takes a great deal of time and effort to access any resources due to cut backs and I feel this has a detrimental effect on not only our residents but also our staff who have such a large workload.

We are all aware of the growing private sport provision growing within East Devon but again with the recent pandemic lots of groups/clubs have struggled as they haven't been able to access their usual member fees. It's difficult to ask for fees when you can't be open, again EDDC staff have gone above and beyond and ensured that all acceptable groups/clubs have been able to access the COVID relief grant money which has kept many groups/clubs afloat at these difficult times.

As a council we have also been instrumental in keeping the LED afloat during these difficult times and I know there has been much discussion with regards to this. The council have been subsidising the LED as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and I am aware that we should be receiving some money back from the Government but as of yet that is not clear if that is going to happen.

I believe that the Member Champion's job is to keep an eye on what is happening

across East Devon and to ensure that various groups are aware of fund raising opportunities or grants that are available for them to access. As highlighted above Sport and Exercise is an important part of the Councils function to ensure that our residents have access to anything that may help them physically and mentally to live their best lives in our beautiful area. It is concerning that although the NHS have advised that exercise is a must to ensure that people stay fit and active thus possibly reducing their requirements on the NHS resources funding is being stripped back more and more and yet the need has increased. I am not sure what can be done about this and it does concern me greatly.

**Cllr Vicky Johns**  
**Member Champion for Sport and Exercise**