

TDC report Dec 2017.

Sports and Community Awards

Formerly the Teignbridge Sports Personality of the Year this awards ceremony now recognises athletes, volunteers, sports teams, committee members, coaches and community champions who all go the extra mile to help keep Teignbridge active all year round.

At the presentation evening held on 1st December The Overall Teignbridge Community Champion of the Year 2017 was awarded to Richard's Wish, a local charity that donates wishes to children, teenagers and young adults who are battling cancer. Richard Cridge was an enthusiastic rugby player and scout member who was diagnosed with Ewing Sarcoma at the age of 15 and sadly lost his battle in September 2007. His family were determined to remember all of Richard's fantastic work and in doing so, created Richard's Wish. Responsible for donating thousands of wishes to young people throughout our district, the charity was recognised as the Overall Community Champion.

The Overall Teignbridge Sporting Champion of the Year 2017 was awarded to Buckland Athletic Ladies FC who also took the team of the year award.

There was double celebration for retired teacher and volunteer Richard Parker as he was crowned People's Champion of the Year 2017 along with receiving the Lifetime Achievement award. A former Teign School teacher has dedicated more than 40 years' service in education, integrating his love for the outdoors in the school curriculum. Dick was also the recipient of the Army's Platinum Award for this work on the Ten Tors.

There was also double joy for young Ethan Kirby as he picked up the title of Junior Sportsperson of the Year to sit proudly alongside his Personal Achievement award received earlier in the evening. The Newton Abbot Athletic Club runner achieved a bronze medal at the world junior para athletics tournament this year and has aspirations to compete in the Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo 2020.

New Help to Heat scheme for Teignbridge residents

Teignbridge District Council is helping residents improve the warmth and comfort of their homes with a new Help to Heat scheme.

Funded through the Government's Energy Company Obligation scheme by energy suppliers, the scheme sees Teignbridge working in partnership with a number of companies to help private homeowners, tenants and landlords living in the district.

Grants are available for replacement boilers, including mains gas boilers, and non-gas boilers, such as LPG and oil, as well as replacement electric storage heaters, and insulation, including cavity wall and loft insulation, and possibly solid wall insulation.

Anybody who privately rents, homeowners, along with park home owners, can apply for a grant regardless of their circumstances, but the property they live in must have a D*, E, F or G Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating. Additionally, anyone who has a health condition which is made worse by the cold and who is on a low income can apply through the scheme.

To find out more or to register for a free no obligation survey, residents and landlords can email housing@teignbridge.gov.uk or call Teignbridge's Housing team on 01626 215202.

For further information and to check if you are eligible, visit www.teignbridge.gov.uk/helptoheat

Council tax reduction scheme (CTR) update

A number of changes were made to Teignbridge's local CTR scheme for 2017-18. Only one of the changes - the introduction of the minimum income floor for self-employed claimants - reduced the amount of support currently being received. Because of the direct impact of this change we have monitored the situation throughout the year to ensure that anyone experiencing difficulty in paying their council tax was given appropriate support.

Initially we wrote to all of our self-employed claimants to tell them about the change and how it would affect them. We also invited them to claim under our Exceptional Hardship Scheme. Anyone who failed to contact us but went on to

accrue council tax arrears was contacted by telephone to discuss their situation and was offered support as appropriate.

This approach has proven highly effective and we have been able to offer tailored support including the setting up of special payment arrangements, helping claimants to prioritise debts, signposting where necessary, and assisting with Exceptional Hardship applications.

We have actively encouraged claims for Exceptional Hardship and have received 78 claims in total. Each of these claims was considered on its merits with a full appraisal of the claimant circumstances resulting in 26 claimants being awarded a reduction in the amount of council tax they had to pay.

By the end of Q1 we had awarded £10,156 in Exceptional Hardship and £2,295 by the end of Q2 – a total of £12,451. This cost is shared across all major preceptors and represents a cost to Teignbridge of just over £1,000.

At the end of Q2, the vast majority of the original 393 claimants affected were up to date with their council tax payments. Only 13 cases were subject to liability orders and 2 were with enforcement agents. These 15 cases have been closely monitored and we know that none of them has any disability or caring responsibilities. Most have a previous history of non-payment and/or are not gainfully employed but could reasonably take steps to become so.

Despite scheme costs now outstripping the Revenue Support Grant we continue to pay up to 100% support to our most vulnerable claimants and are one of only a small number nationally to do so. We intend to continue support at the same level next year. This will provide some certainty for claimants and, with Universal Credit rolling out in Teignbridge next year, we need to understand the impact on both our residents and the administration of the scheme before we consider any further changes. Once we have a better understanding we will review the situation, together with our Devon counterparts, and members will be presented any future recommendations as appropriate.

Universal Credit

Following the recent report and presentation delivered to members at Overview and Scrutiny on 20th November the council have received notification that the rollout of Universal Credit Full Service has been slowed down. Teignbridge was originally due to go-live on 31st May 2018 but we have now been informed that this has been delayed until September 2018.

Teignbridge is currently a Universal Credit Live Service area and it was expected that claims would continue to be made under this service until it was replaced by the Full Service in September. However, we have now been advised this is not the case. From the end of December this year, there will be no new Live Service claimants. Whilst this will not affect any of our existing claimants already on UC it will mean that any new claims will, until September 2018, be made to legacy benefits e.g. job seekers allowance, housing benefit etc.

Cllr Dennis Smith
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