

West Devon Annual Report

2018 - 2019



West Devon
Borough
Council

www.westdevon.gov.uk

Introduction

The financial year 2018/19 has been the year the Government reduced our core funding to zero. This has provided a significant challenge for the Council to continue to deliver our full range of services and meet the needs of our communities, reliant only on any income we can generate and a small percentage of Council tax (12%) and 14% of Business rates raised in the area. We have continued our relentless pursuit of trying to find more efficient ways of providing services whilst, at the same time, making it easier for people to do business with us.

We continue to work closely with South Hams District Council and share a single workforce. This arrangement generates an ongoing annual saving of £2.2m for West Devon.

As the Local Planning Authority we have a key role to play in setting the local strategy for development in our area. A major success for us this year has been the adoption of the Joint Local Plan which sets out a comprehensive 20 year plan for West Devon, the South Hams and Plymouth.

A key project this year has been the successful renewal of our multi million pound contract for recycling, waste collection and street cleansing services. Our partnership with FCC continues with a new contract from April 2019 and will save us around £2 million during the lifetime of the contract.

In November 2018 the Local Government Association led a Peer Review of the Council and our joint arrangements with South Hams District Council. The team comprising of Councillors and senior officers from other Councils reviewed our financial plans, governance, leadership and capacity to deliver services. Their report was very positive about our plans and progress to date and provided a number of recommendations for the Council to implement.

£2.2m
annual workforce
saving

**20 year
Joint Local Plan
adopted**

£2m
saved on waste
contract

The Council has been actively pursuing our commercial strategy to develop our assets or acquire new assets with the dual aims of providing economic benefit as well as a revenue return to the Council. Our acquisitions over the past year are now generating a new income stream for the Council of over £275,000 every year.

We continue to play a significant role in our region, working with other local authorities and partners through the Heart of the South West Joint Committee, with the Local Enterprise Partnership and agencies such as Homes England to improve infrastructure, facilitate economic growth and support the building of affordable housing in our area.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Sanders'.

Cllr Philip Sanders
Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sophie Hosking'.

Sophie Hosking
Chief Executive

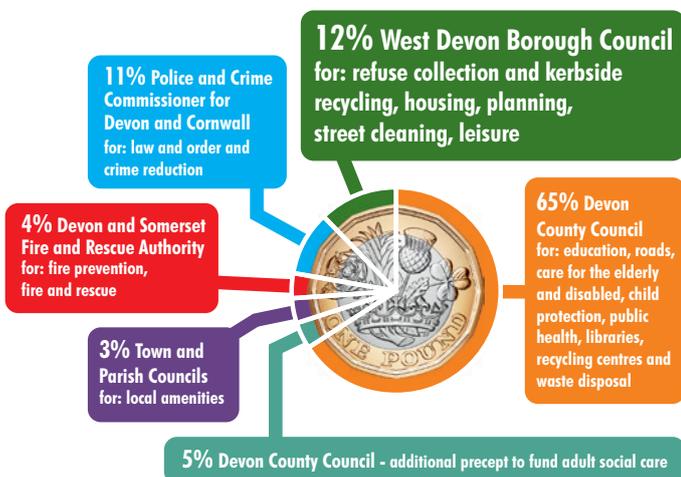
Finance

The Council has set a balanced net budget of £7.1 million for 2019/20. This is the second year running that the Council has received no Government Grant funding (Revenue Support Grant) and the Council will need to be self-financing. The Council has progressed options of how it can generate its own income through Invest to Earn initiatives.

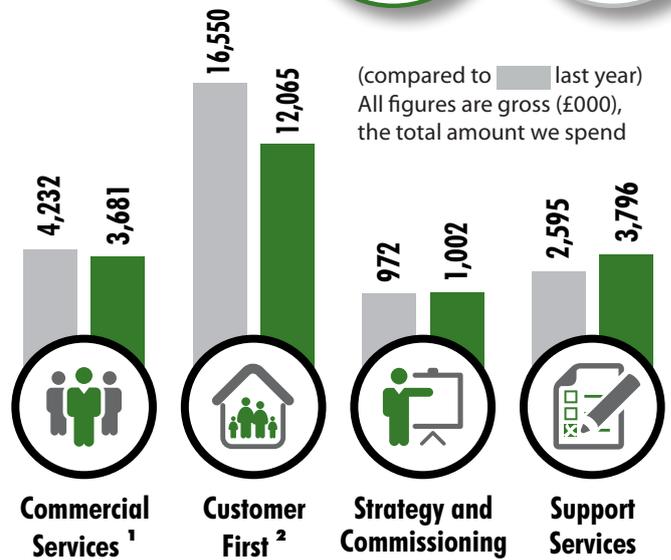
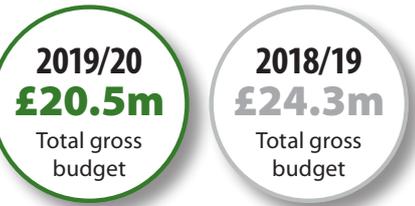
West Devon Borough Council plans to spend £20.5 million (gross) on providing services for 2019/20. A total of £15.8 million of this amount comes from the income we receive from grants, fees and charges. Therefore the amount of council tax we need to collect is £4.7 million.

To secure the future of Council services to the public, the Council has increased council tax by £6.72 from £224.91 in 2018/19. This means that the cost of West Devon Borough Council's services for an average band D property will be £231.63 for 2019/20. The Council has committed to protecting front line services where possible.

How your Council Tax is spent



The Council's spending plans for 2018/19 and 2019/20



¹ Includes Recycling and Waste Resource, Public Conveniences, Car Parks and Transport
² Includes Housing, Planning, Environmental Health, Leisure Centres and the administration of Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits

Financial performance for the year to 31st March 2019

The 2018/19 net budget for West Devon was £7.31 million, but the actual spend for the year is forecast to be 0.9% lower, providing a saving of £65,000 which will go into the Council's Unearmarked Reserves which will stand at £1.26 million. The Council's financial strategy recognises the need to maintain these reserves to provide stability for both medium and longer term financial planning and to provide a contingency against unforeseen events. Maintaining a level of reserves also protects against the volatility of some income and expenditure budgets which can be dependent on economic conditions, the weather and tourism.

The Council continues to share staff with South Hams District Council. West Devon Borough Council is generating ongoing annual savings of £2.2 million from a joint Transformation Programme (T18) and sharing services with South Hams District Council. The Councils' shared workforce has been reduced by 30% through the T18 Programme and processes have been redesigned around the customer. The radical programme has changed how the Councils' work, to deliver more efficiencies and to retain the Councils' frontline services.

What your Council Tax money goes towards and who is responsible

- West Devon Borough Council
- Town and Parish Council
- Devon County Council (DCC)
- Police and Crime Commissioner

West Devon Borough Council

Below is a street scene showing the key services provided by West Devon Borough Council.

www.westdevon.gov.uk

Devon County Council

Here are some of the Devon County Council services which are often mistaken with the services provided by West Devon.

www.devon.gov.uk

Town and Parish Council

To find out services from your Town and Parish Council, contact your local clerk ...

www.westdevon.gov.uk/contactyourparishcouncil

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue

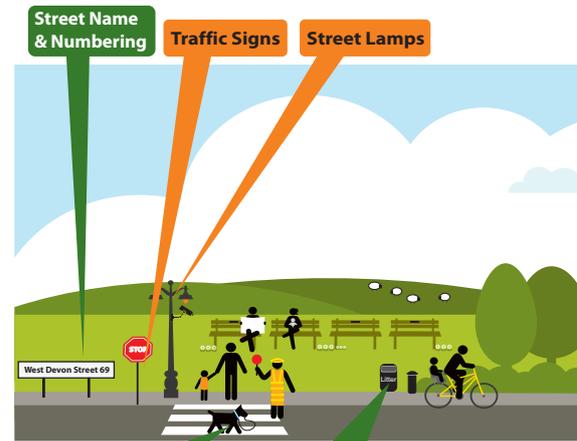
Services provided by DSFR can be found at...

www.dsfr.gov.uk

Police and Crime Commissioner

For services provided by the Police use the Ask Ned function...

www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/askned



Stray Dogs

In the case of lost cats and aggressive dogs contact **Police 101**

Street Litter Bins

Some may be owned by Town or Parish Councils

Bottle Banks



Tree Preservation

Abandoned Vehicles on Public Roads and Council Owned Land

Leisure Centres

If you have any issues go direct to the relevant Leisure Centre.

Trip Hazards

Building Maintenance Service

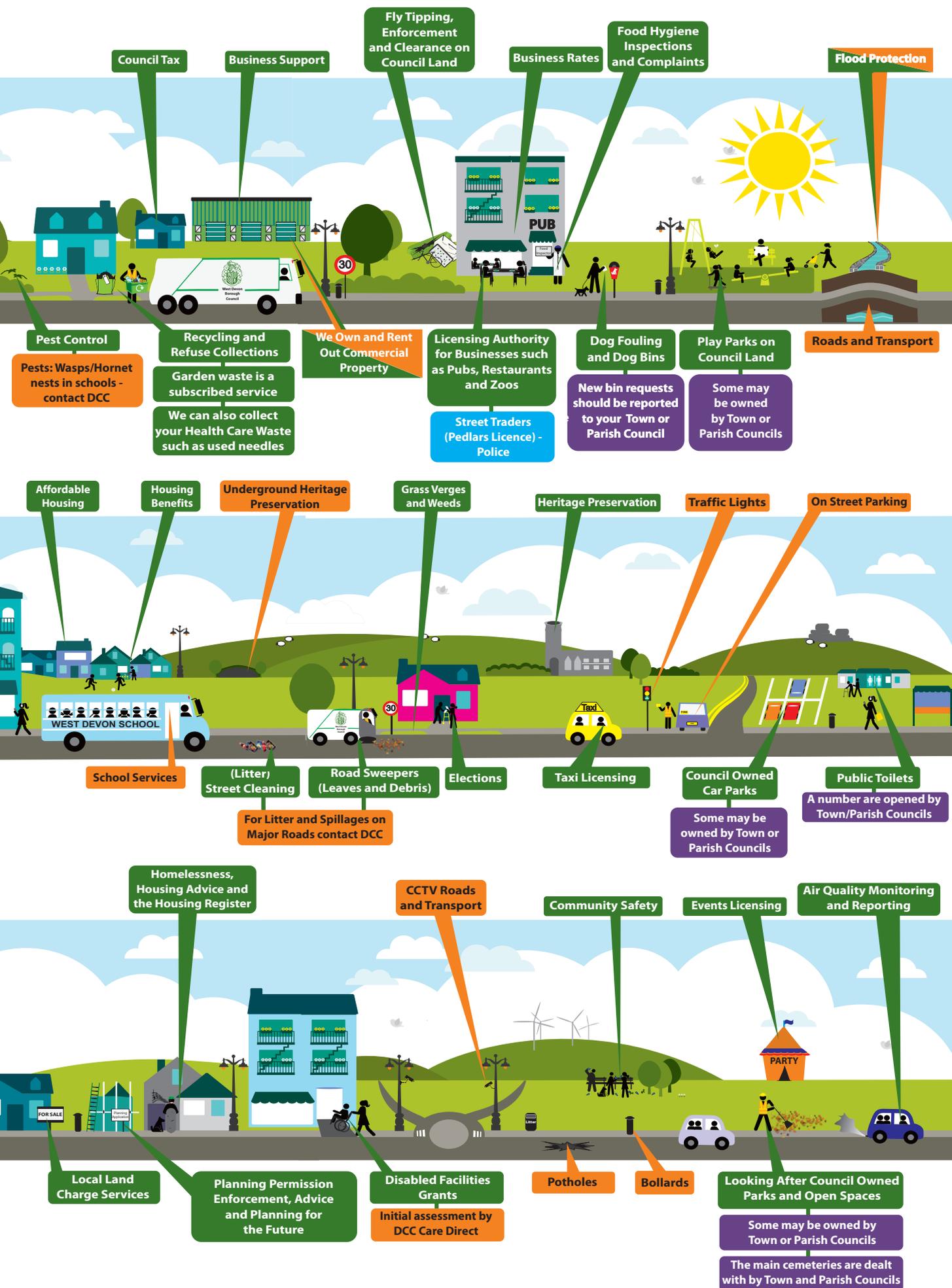


Council Owned Land and Property

Blocked Drains

Cleaning leaves and odour - contact DCC

For overflowing drains contact South West Water



Organisational Effectiveness

In addition to the Local Government Association Peer Review, this year saw the Council commission the Institute of Customer Service to undertake a customer satisfaction survey. The results compared us against public and private sector organisations giving valuable information about what our customer think about how we deliver our services and more importantly, how we can improve them. All staff attended a workshop looking at how everyone can make 'a positive impact' in delivering our services to the communities we serve. The use of social media is becoming an increasingly important method of informing customers of service changes, which, along with continued investment in simple to use IT systems, has enabled us to continue to reduce timescales for the delivery of almost all our services. As we deliver more services to our customers' expectations, we have continued to see a significant reduction in call volumes, since the end of March 2017.

Our Workforce

West Devon Borough Council and South Hams District Council directly employ 444 full time equivalent staff to deliver shared services. The current workforce will significantly reduce following the TUPE transfer of employees on 1 April 2019 as a consequence of awarding the new Waste contract. Staff throughout the Councils continue to perform well with sickness levels below the national average. HR policies allow a fair relationship between employer and employee and regular staff briefings and an online staff appraisal system ensures staff are up to speed with Council priorities; and able to evidence their achievements and identify any training needs. Both Councils are committed to providing opportunities to young people and currently have 5 apprentices.

Audit Assurance

The Council has a number of measures in place to assess its performance. An Audit Committee meets five times a year and its role is to provide an oversight of the financial reporting and audit processes plus the system of internal controls and compliance with laws and regulations. The Council also has two internal audit staff managed by the

Devon Audit Partnership who provide an opinion on the internal control environment and governance processes.

External audit was provided by KPMG who in 2018 reported that they were satisfied that in all significant respects the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources.

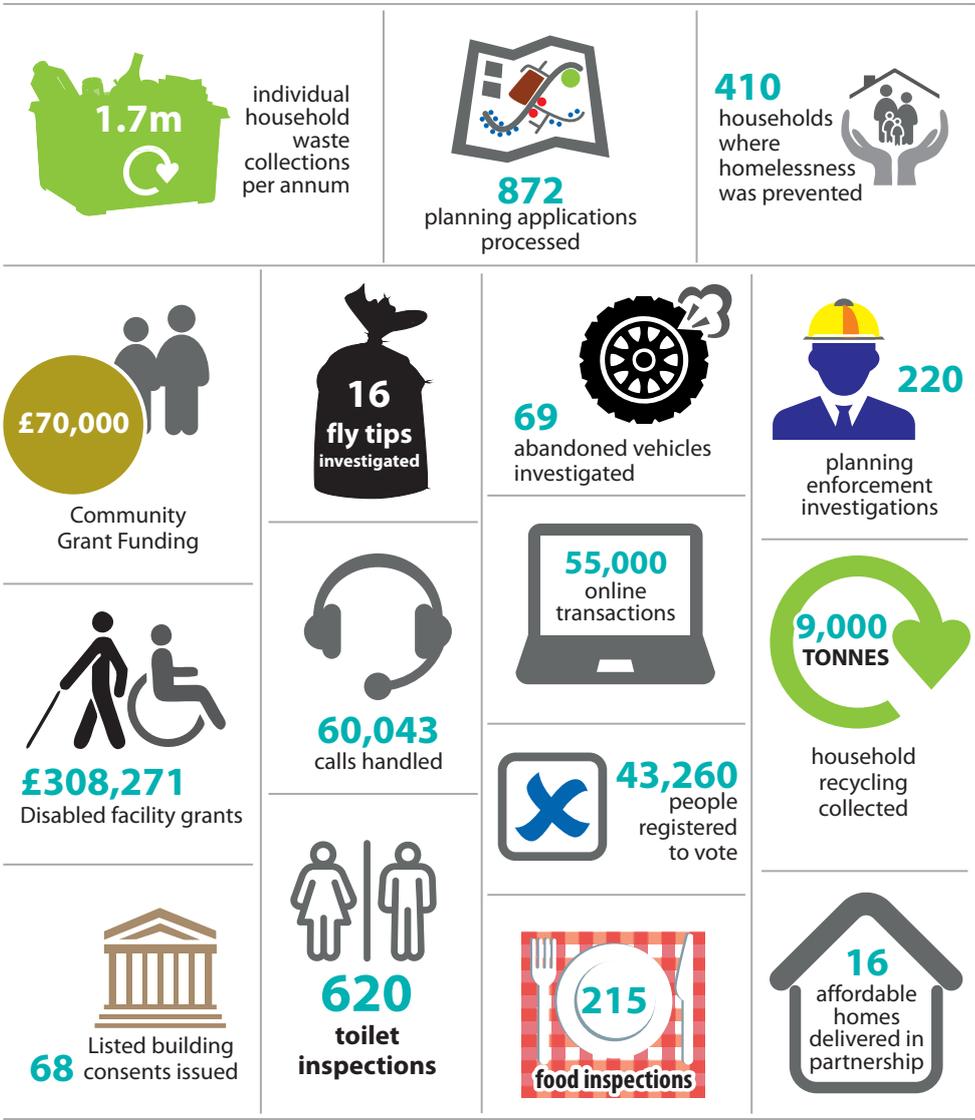
Risk Management

There is a culture of risk ownership and management throughout the Council throughout 2018/19 particular focus has been given to health and safety and information security. Risks are logged centrally and are updated regularly. For each risk, the uncertainties are identified, along with the consequences, likelihood of occurrence and strategic impacts that would result. The Council's Senior Leadership Team review the corporate risk log monthly and updates are reported to Elected Members via the Audit Committee on a biannual basis. Elected Members also have the opportunity to raise concerns with the mitigating actions being taken by officers and can suggest new risks for consideration.

Governance

The Council has a Governance Framework which comprises the systems, processes, culture and values under which they operate. This is in place to ensure transparent decision making and proper use of public funds and is reported on annually through the Annual Governance Statement. In addition to the controls and procedures mentioned above, the Council's primary governance documents are set out in the Constitution (for example, Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Procedure Rules and Codes of Governance). The Constitution is reviewed annually and adopted at the Annual Meeting for the forthcoming year. The Council has a Report Monitoring process in which all reports are checked against the principles of clarity, fairness, legality, and financial regularity and soundness. The Statutory Officers' Panel (comprising the Councils' key governance officers) carries out a rolling review of the Council's governance and regulatory frameworks to ensure that they are kept updated, relevant and effective.

Performance 2018/19



To track the Council's progress throughout the year visit www.westdevon.gov.uk
Search for Councillors and Committees, Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

For a list of council services visit www.westdevon.gov.uk
Click on the **View all our services** link on the home page.



Housing benefit claims processing times 8.5 days faster than the national target



Online transactions increased by 10,000 to 55,000 transactions



Missed waste collections equate to 108 in every 100,000



Non major planning determinations delivered on time 83%



Call volume decreased by over 3,000 calls

Strategies & Plans

The Council has a number of strategic documents and plans that guide its approach to achieving its vision to serve local communities and ensure that it remains financially sustainable.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Corporate Strategy is guided by six strategic themes which are shown in the image alongside this text.

Achievements against these themes can be found on pages 9-11 of this report.

Joint Local Plan

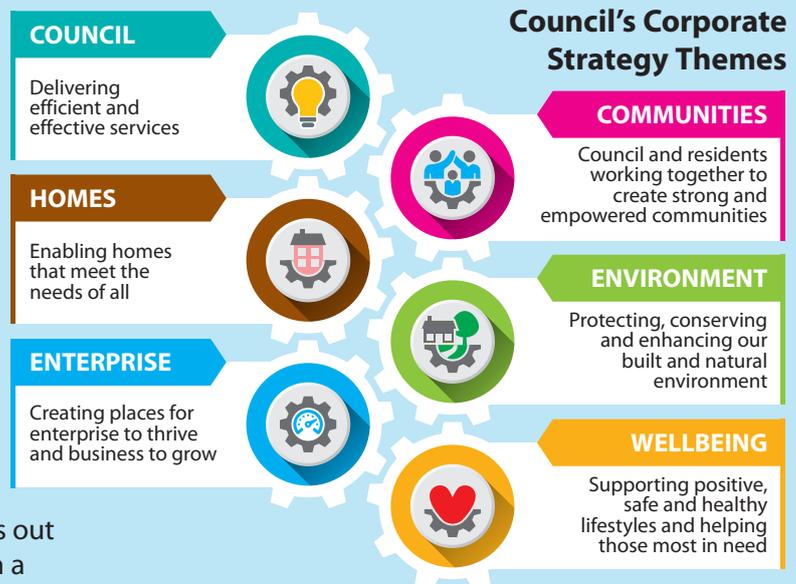
A key responsibility of the Council is to maintain an up to date development plan. The Joint Local Plan, prepared in conjunction with South Hams and Plymouth Councils sets out a strategy and detailed policies that establish a framework to steer housing and employment development to the most sustainable locations and to guide decisions on planning applications.

On 26 March 2019 the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan was formally adopted. The Plan had been subject to examination by two independent Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State. The adopted Plan which sets out a comprehensive 20 year strategy, meeting needs for homes, jobs, shopping and leisure needs in full. The Plan also guides development to locations in accordance with a sustainable development framework, based on a sound understanding of the precious natural resources of the Thriving Towns and Villages, including a full set of site allocation policies and also incorporating a full set of development management policies.

The next stage is to deliver against the plans aspirations through the new governance framework and associated joint working arrangements between the delivery partners.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

In September 2018, Council approved the Medium Term Financial Strategy which looks at financial planning and management over a five year



strategy. It sets out the strategic intention for all of the different strands of funding available to the Council. The Council can now rely on this to inform future decisions. This also helps us to develop a sustainable budget over the medium term and will be reviewed annually. It incorporates key factors such as changes in Government funding, our spending plans, and the levels of savings we need to make to achieve a balanced budget.

The Asset Management Plan

Sets out the strategic direction for the Council both as a land owner and with respect to its asset portfolio. It is essential to have a long term plan, to facilitate day to day operational decisions. The key points of the plan are to:

- commence a limited programme of residential development
- grow the existing commercial portfolio of small starter units
- facilitate community use of assets if appropriate
- dispose of underperforming and nonstrategic assets for re-investment

Achievements 2018/19



COUNCIL

Delivering efficient and effective services

Action	18/19 Progress
Customer Service	Joined the renowned Institute of Customer Service to benchmark Council service against market leaders. Stopped accepting cash and cheque payments, enabling more staff to be deployed on phone answering, which in turn has helped significantly reduce call-waiting times for customers. We have continued to focus on 'getting it right first time' and proactively keeping customers informed, both of which have helped to reduce call volumes. We have piloted web chat and will be looking at how we can expand this in 2019/20.
Value for Money	Deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. Approved a net budget for 2019/20 which includes proposals for savings and additional income of £690,000, including significant annual savings from April 2019 from the procurement of the Council's waste collection, recycling and cleansing services. As part of the budget setting process for 2019/20, the Council has agreed to reduce funding or seek efficiencies to ensure statutory delivery outcomes are prioritised.
Lobbying	Participated in a number of consultations during the year, including business rate retention reform, the Fair Funding Review, the 2019/20 Local Government Finance Settlement and the Local Authority Financial Resilience Index. The Council was accepted as one of only 10 new business rate retention pilots in England for 2018/19. The Council has also been working with Rural Services Network to lobby central government on the higher cost of delivering rural services and has formally signed up to the RSN Rural Strategy which is gaining support in central Government.
Investment	The Council has taken a commercial approach and has been pro-active in addressing economic regeneration in times of financial austerity. A commercial property acquisition strategy has been approved by the Council, which blends in-area development and investment, with those outside of the area, all capped within the Council's borrowing limit of £50 million.



60,043
calls handled



55,000
online transactions



43,260
people registered to vote



£2.2 million
annual saving by working with South Hams District Council



COMMUNITIES

Council and residents working together to create strong empowered communities

Action	18/19 Progress
Community Project Grants	£16,868 allocated to 4 projects ranging from renovations to a village hall, replacing play equipment, an arts project and wildlife equipment.
Communities Together Funding	£28,100 awarded to 7 community projects including play equipment, bus shelter, defibrillator, memory cafe and village hall improvements.
Seamoor Community Lotto	Agreement secured to proceed with a Council led lottery in partnership with South Hams District Council and Gatherwell Ltd. Over 90 local, good causes signed up to receive funds.
Community Support	Provided core funding support to a range of local organisation providing services to local communities including the Citizens Advice, CVS (Community Volunteer Service), Ring and Rides, Okehampton Community and Recreation Association and Young Devon.
Community Asset Transfers	A number of transfers have completed this year, with two areas of open space and one public toilet transferring to Okehampton Town Council. Other public toilet transfers include Chagford and Lydford, with more planned for 2019.
Neighbourhood Plans	Launched a dedicated website www.neighbourhoodplanning.swdevon.gov.uk providing detailed information on plans that are already in progress and guidance for community groups thinking of starting a plan. 1 plan made in 2018/19.



HOMES

Enabling homes that meet the needs of all

Action	18/19 Progress
Affordable housing	16 homes completed in Horrabridge and South Tawton. Construction is also underway to provide 28 affordable homes within Chagford, the first units will be completed and ready for occupation in July 2019 in partnership with the Community Land Trust and Aster Housing Association. Work has commenced on three sites in Tavistock including Butcher Park which is set to provide 38 affordable homes, Callington Road providing 41 homes and new Launceston Road 37 homes. In Okehampton permission has been granted for 12 homes and two other applications, outside of the main towns will provide a further 34 dwellings in the Borough.
Disabled facility grants	Awarded over £308,000 to 61 projects to facilitate independent living through adaptation of homes including level shower access, stair lifts and ramps.
Community Housing Initiative	£250,000 Community Housing Fund targeting high quality homes for those with local connection where the cost of market housing beyond their reach. First two schemes (17 and 12 homes respectively) in early stage of design. It is proposed these will be constructed during 2020. Further opportunities are under review.
SeaMoor Lettings	Launch of Council run housing letting agency, managing 6 homes for private landlords to local people at affordable rents.

ENVIRONMENT

Protecting, conserving and enhancing our built and natural environment



Action	18/19 Progress
Joint Local Plan	On 26 March 2019 the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan was formally adopted. The Plan had been subject to examination by two independent Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State. The Joint Local Plan is only the third joint plan in the country to include strategic and local policies, the first to include a major English city and its neighbouring Councils, and has been prepared in the shortest time of any joint plan in the country.
Waste and Recycling	Successfully awarded a new high performing waste, recycling and street cleaning contract. Achieving savings of around £2 million during the lifetime of the contract. The Council listened to what residents wanted i.e. more items being recycled from the kerbside and a continued focus on keeping the beautiful Borough clean - this will be delivered through the new arrangement at a more favourable price.
Tavistock Town Heritage Initiative	Contributed to this partnership initiative securing monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund, restoring 4 listed buildings in 2018/19 including Kingdon House and improving surfacing around the Pannier Market.
Garden Waste Club	Realigned the Council's garden waste service to better fit with the growing season, by making annual subscriptions from April to March. To date over 5,000 residents have signed up to this fortnightly service.



26 March 2019
Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan was adopted



Awarded a new high performing waste, recycling and street cleaning contract



savings during lifetime of contract



5000+ residents have signed up to the Garden Waste Club





ENTERPRISE

Creating places for enterprise to thrive and business to grow

Action	18/19 Progress
Greater Dartmoor LEAF (Local Enterprise Action Fund)	£249,748 funding awarded in the past 12 months to 12 projects which are expected to generate 14.4 FTE jobs. Projects include community buildings, premises refurbishments, equipment investment and farm modernisation. To date, 24.6 FTE jobs have been created in West Devon through this fund, employing local people. In recognition of the good management of this fund and the volume of high quality projects in the Greater Dartmoor LEAF area, additional funding of £264,000 was awarded by Defra to extend the programme during 2018/19.
Business Support	Funded a business support package which has delivered advice to 99 businesses, hosted 34 workshops and assisted businesses to recruit 102 employees.
Teenage Market	Continued to build on this successful initiative by working in partnership with the Town Council to host a market in the newly restored Butchers Hall. Providing young people the opportunity to hone their business skills and show their entrepreneurial flair.
Council owned premises	Achieved an average of 85% occupancy rate for all Council owned employment premises.

12



funded a business support package

99 local businesses given advice



34 workshops hosted

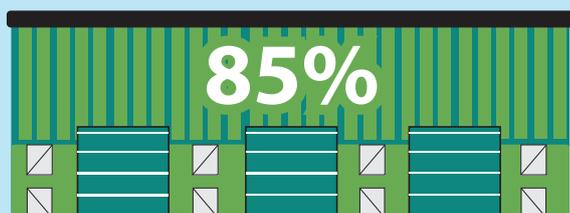


102 employees recruited by businesses



£249,748

awarded to 12 projects in the past 12 months



Occupancy rate

for all Council owned employment premises



WELLBEING

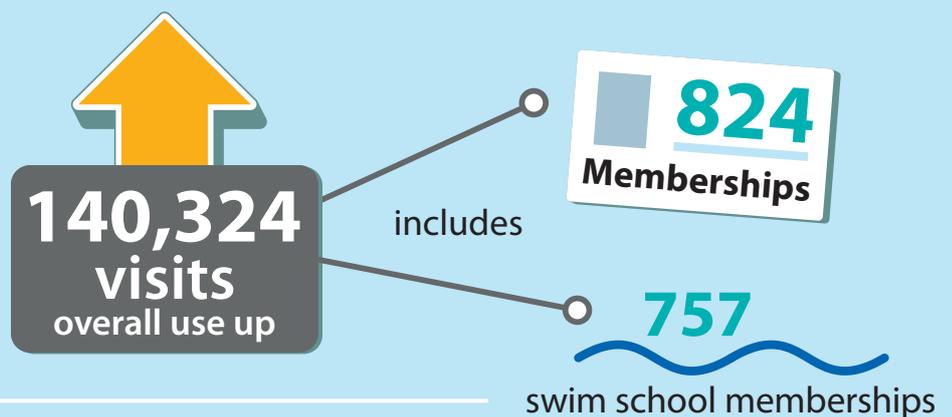
Supporting positive, safe and healthy lifestyles and helping those most in need

Action	18/19 Progress
Community Safety Partnership	Facilitated training on safeguarding to 95% taxi drivers. Continued to work with all secondary schools in the Borough through workshops and theatre performances to address and raise awareness of community safety including drugs, Prevent and missing episodes linked to exploitation. Enabled Tavistock and Okehampton Matters meetings with local councillors to discuss anti-social behaviour with the police and other safety specialists. Commissioned "Moorwatch" banners to significantly reduce the amount of thefts from vehicles on the moor. Worked with the local fire service to deliver the Phoenix Project to teach fire and rescue skills.
Junior Life Skills	Worked with 9 partners including the Police, RNLI, Fire Service, Dog Trust and Tavistock Rotary to present workshops to 600 children, to enable them to live safely and provide them with the skills to assess and respond appropriately to potentially dangerous situations.
Refugees	Member approval to welcome additional Syrian families beyond our original pledge, where properties are offered. Fifth family to arrive in early summer 2019 for resettlement.
Leisure Centres	All capital developments at Okehampton and Tavistock have been successfully completed, to a value of nearly £2 million. Despite all the building works and associated disruption, overall usage increased to 140,324 visits, including 824 memberships, plus 757 swim school memberships.
Pocket Park Scheme	Working with the local community, secured £25,000 of Pocket Park Scheme funding, to support a disabled play space in the Hatherleigh area.

Leisure Centres

Capital developments completed at Okehampton & Tavistock to the value of nearly

£2m



Junior Life Skills



worked with **9 partners** to present workshops to



to enable them to live safely and provide them with the skills to assess and respond appropriately to potentially dangerous situations

Next Steps 2019-20

The Council has a proud tradition of innovation, we will continue to strive to achieve this whilst implementing the peer review recommendations, the customer satisfaction improvement plan and of course working with local communities to deliver against the Council's key corporate themes.

Newly elected Council

Following the local elections in May 2019, the Council will embark on a thorough induction programme for newly elected Councillors. Induction will cover in detail the services offered by the Council, the Corporate Strategy and the financial and legislative challenges to be faced in 2019/20 and beyond. A key task for Councillors will be to align services to the Council's corporate themes and more importantly explain and consult with our residents and communities. This will be key in enabling the Council to deliver on its aspiration to 'make a positive impact on the lives of local people by providing valued and easy to use services'.

Acting on the Peer Review

As a result of the Peer Review report, we will be reviewing the Council's Senior Management structure to ensure that there is strategic capacity and direction to enable the Council to effectively plan for and deliver its aspirations into the medium term whilst at the same time generating longer-term savings. Staff will be working with newly elected Councillors to strengthen the Council's political governance arrangements and build on the success of the joint procurement for waste services to continue joint working with South Hams District Council.

We will continue to ensure there is an organisational focus on achieving financial sustainability and develop new income streams to support the Council's budget. We will continue to develop our existing partnerships and create new ones, to improve our support to individuals and communities, ensuring that we offer joined up, cost effective services so that, our customers and communities have a clear understanding of where they can get guidance and support.

Customer Satisfaction

There will be a relentless focus on improving customer satisfaction ahead of a follow-up satisfaction survey in 2019. We have set clear targets and aim to improve the Council's score in 3 key measures;

- The overall benchmarking score.
- Getting it 'right first time'.
- And 'keeping customers informed'.

We will do this by implementing service standards across the majority of our services. When customers contact us they will be advised of what they can expect to receive and by when. We will capture customers feedback and use this to drive service improvements. For major services we will look to provide on our website, how we are doing in meeting these standards, alongside feedback from



our customers. When we look at service changes or new services, we will involve customers to ensure that we understand the 'customer experience' from their first contact with us through to delivery.

As technology continues to develop, we will evaluate automation and artificial intelligence type solutions to see if they can improve our delivery or customer experience. We will continue to proactively market our online service offerings so that we reduce demand for services over the telephone and face to face. We will then use this extra staff capacity to provide support to those customers with no or limited access to digital channels and to manage complex enquiries or problems.

Working with communities

We will continue our work with Town and Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Planning Groups to prepare Town Centre Strategies. These will identify priorities and provide the basis for co-ordinated action to ensure the role town centres play in meeting the needs of communities and their hinterland are maintained and enhanced.

Our financial future

The Council continues to face considerable financial challenges as a result of uncertainty in the wider economy and constraints on public sector spending. The Council is still facing a forecast budget gap of £533,000 for 2020 onwards. The Council has had a 38% reduction in Government funding over the last four years, with no main Government Grant now being received (Revenue Support Grant has been reduced to Nil). This means that the Council needs to generate additional income to be able to carry on delivering our current range of services. In terms of sparsity, West Devon Borough Council is third at the top of the table of Councils who are covering the largest area with the smallest population.

The Council will continue to implement proposals to meet this financial challenge; these will include progressing investment opportunities and income generating services as well as identifying further efficiencies to reduce costs for the benefit of our community, finding smarter ways of doing things and making our assets work better for us in order to balance the budget next year.



West Devon Borough Council

**If you would like this publication
in another format please contact:
Communications Team on
communications@swdevon.gov.uk**

or 01803 861368