

Hatherleigh & Chagford Division

Annual Report 2020

Devon County Council – Budget for 2020/21

The County Council is to invest over £43 million of additional funding into front line public services in Devon in 2020/21.

The budget will rise to £541 million for 2020/2021, an increase of 8.7 per cent on the current year.

There will be additional investment in social care and health, children's services, roads and drainage.

The proposals will mean an extra £23.7 million for adult care and health, £11.5 million more for children's services and £2.7 million for highways including £1 million to help deal with drainage issues on the County's 8,000-mile road network.

In total the County Council's spending will rise by £43.1 million from £498 million in the current 2019/20 financial year.

The budget proposals are a response to increasing demand on front-line services driven by a range of external factors including demographic and climate change impacts.

Context

The Government's reaffirmed commitment to a fair funding review of local government is welcome. The continuing wide disparity in funding between counties and metropolitan areas requires tackling.

Current Government funding per head of population is £258 for Devon compared to an average £421 for metropolitan councils and £556 for inner London boroughs.

There has been a 72% real terms reduction in Government funding for Devon between 2010 and 2019/20. During that period of austerity, the County Council has reduced its spending by nearly £300 million and staff numbers by nearly 3,000.

Through a combination of efficiencies, innovation and collaboration with other councils, Devon has managed to protect many important public services during this time. All of Devon's 50 libraries remain open, some with longer opening hours. The County has maintained a universal youth service and provided targeted support for the most vulnerable youngsters, and working ever more closely with health partners, the County has maintained services for the elderly and vulnerable adults.

However, the demand-led pressures on all Devon's front-line services continue to rise exacerbated by demographic and climate change.

Our Services

The County Council has a total budget of £1.1 billion and provides a wide range of public services – some directly and some commissioned from other organisations. The County Council's main service groups are:

Adult care and health including services for older people and adults with physical or learning disabilities.

- care at home for 10,000 people a year
- 13,000 people with dementia

Children's services including education and learning; services for vulnerable children and families; safeguarding; looked after children and care leavers.

- supporting 16,500 children with special needs or disabilities
- over 200 children adopted or fostered a year
- 97,000 pupils
- 365 schools

Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity including planning, transportation and environment; economy, enterprise and skills; trading standards; libraries; community safety and emergency planning.

- 50 libraries and four mobile libraries
- free school transport for 14,500 pupils a day
- funding for 185 bus services, 60 voluntary car schemes and 16 community ring and ride schemes
- nine new primary schools built or due to be completed in 2020

Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste including road and bridge maintenance; waste disposal and recycling; and the County Council's capital programme.

- 8,000 miles of road (England's largest local network)
- 62,000 potholes filled a year
- managing 357,000 tonnes of domestic waste a year
- 19 recycling centres
- £114 million invested every year on major infrastructure projects.

Legal, Human Resources and Communications including democratic support and scrutiny; Crown services; registration of births, marriages and deaths, and the Coroner services.

County Treasurer including Revenue and Capital budgets; Investment and Treasury management; Devon Audit Partnership and the Devon Pension Fund.

Digital Transformation and Business Support including ICT; procurement; property management; customer service and information governance.

Climate Change

Devon is one of UK's leading county councils in the national response to climate change.

In February 2019, the County Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to work with other organisations so that the Devon should be carbon neutral by 2030.

The declaration built on the Council's Energy and Carbon Strategy and as a result Chief Executive Phil Norrey established and chairs a Devon Climate Emergency Response Group bringing together key partners from across Devon.

The County Council has already reduced its carbon footprint by 40% since 2012/13 including a 75% reduction in carbon emissions from street-lighting (15,000 tonnes a year).

In August 2019 and on the recommendation of the above group the County Council and University of Exeter established a Net-Zero Task Force with key public, private and voluntary sector partners with the following funding – County Council - £250,000, University of Exeter £130,000 and £70,000 from other partners. This is paying for the work of the Net-Zero Task Force to develop a cross-Devon plan supported by staff from the County Council and University of Exeter

The Task Force is chaired by Professor Devine-Wright who is the lead author on the UN Climate Change report, the findings of which have been accepted by the County Council as the basis for the Council's future policy response.

The Task Force has held a series of themed public hearings to call for evidence on ways in which Devon can achieve the pledge by the rapid shift in behaviour. Hearings were held between October and December on the following themes: food, land and sea (including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and land use), mobility and transport, the built environment, energy and waste.

A new draft Carbon Plan for Devon is being developed through a review of the evidence by an expert panel and the proposal of policy options. These options will be put forward to a newly created 'citizens panel' that will start meeting this month (January 2020) run by Prof Devine-Wright who has expertise in this area. The outcome of all this will be a draft Carbon Plan for wider public consultation this summer.

A key challenge that the Carbon Plan will seek to address is how Devon can prosper in a carbon-neutral economy. The County Council is a leading partner in the Great South West campaign which seeks to establish the region as the UK's key provider of renewable energy and deliver a £45 billion boost to the regional economy.

Through the Heart of the South West Joint Committee, Devon County Council and partners are also working with Somerset local authorities to align their carbon plans.

Get involved at the below link:

www.devonclimateemergency.org.uk/devon-climate-declaration/endorse/

Locally in Hatherleigh & Chagford Division

The weather has been interesting through 2019/20. A very dry period last summer to the extreme of a very wet and windy winter. Potholes are a big issue and the best and quickest way to report them is at this link:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

We are putting more money into highway drainage and we have about 34 teams filling potholes, across the County.

The Locality Budget is to continue and will be available from May 2020. Seed corn money that can help make things happen. I have supported many projects over the years and it's great to get the wheels moving on a community project.

I remain Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services & Schools. A challenging role which is very busy. There have been many improvements in Children's Services, but we still need to make improvements in our services for Care Leavers. We have a responsibility for Care leavers, up to 25 years of age. School Funding is improving by £29.1 million in Devon in the next financial year, which is welcome.

I'm nominated by DCC to be a Member of Dartmoor National Park and am Vic Chair of Development Management. The new Local Plan will go through inspection this year and the DNPA Management Plan is now out for consultation. Please comment and get involved. Moor Otters is building up and 80 painted statues of Otter & Cub will be incorporated into 4 trails across Dartmoor this summer. Link below:

<https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/moor-otters>

Always here to help if I can.

James

James McInnes

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