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June 2025

At the first full council meeting since the elections last month, councillors decided who will be Devon County Council's new Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members.

We've put together a special edition of our 'Connect Me' newsletter to let you know more about the roles, who's who and what they're doing.



Top row from left: Cllr Brazil, Cllr Arnott, Cllr Thomas, Cllr Cottle-Hunkin, Councillor Clist. Bottom row from left: Cllr Buczkowski, Cllr Keeling, Cllr Jefferies, Cllr Bickley, Cllr Hodgson

What is the Cabinet?

The Cabinet is the part of the council responsible for political decision making.

It is made up of a Leader and no more than nine other members (Cabinet Members), all appointed by the council from amongst its membership.

Councillor Julian Brazil Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Education)



Councillor Julian Brazil is the Leader of the council, which is the political head of the authority. He is responsible for shaping the council's overall vision for the future.

He is also the Cabinet Member for education and learning. That means he's in charge of everything from schools and learning services to school transport, school planning and early years support.

[Find out more about Councillor Brazil](#)

Councillor Paul Arnott Cabinet Member for Local Government Reorganisation and Water Quality



Councillor Paul Arnott is the council's Deputy Leader and is also in charge of planning for the future of local government in Devon. He works closely with partners to explore how things could be better organised.

Paul is also the council's main link with South West Water. He raises concerns about water quality, builds partnerships, and makes sure the company is held to account when it comes to environmental standards and regulations.

[Find out more about Councillor Arnott](#)

Councillor Richard Keeling

Cabinet Member for Adult's Services



Councillor Richard Keeling looks after the council's responsibilities when it comes to adult social care. That means he helps make sure the right care and support services are in place for eligible adults, working closely with the NHS and other key partners.

He also takes the lead on keeping people safe and protected, especially those in vulnerable situations. His role includes supporting adults with complex needs, helping adult carers, and making sure older people have the support they need to live well as they age. He's also in charge of services that aim to keep people healthy and independent for as long as possible.

[Find out more about Councillor Keeling](#)

Councillor Simon Clist

Cabinet Member for Assets and Resources



Councillor Simon Clist looks after everything to do with the 'One Devon Estate'. That includes the council's land, buildings, including schools and education properties, our Farms Estate and how the council's assets are used.

He's also in charge of things like trading standards, emergency planning and making sure the Armed Forces Covenant is upheld. On top of that, Simon plays a big role in the council's work to help boost the local economy, create job opportunities and support efforts to tackle homelessness.

He's also responsible for the council's workforce strategy and key services including legal, democratic processes, information governance, customer engagement, and digital transformation.

[Find out more about Councillor Clist](#)

Councillor Denise Bickley
Cabinet Member for Children's Services
(SEND)



Councillor Denise Bickley looks after services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). That means she's involved in making sure the right support is in place, from assessments to providing and commissioning the services families rely on.

She's also responsible for helping young people move on after school, making sure there are good options for education, training, and skills that lead to jobs.

[Find out more about Councillor Bickley](#)

Councillor Richard Jefferies
Cabinet Member for Children's Services
(Social Services)



Councillor Richard Jefferies is in charge of children's social care at the council. That includes making sure the right support is in place for children and young

people, such as child protection, services to reduce harm and help for children in care and young carers. He also oversees how services for children and families are planned and brought together.

[Find out more about Councillor Jefferies](#)

Councillor Jacqi Hodgson
Cabinet Member for
Climate Change and Biodiversity



Councillor Jacqi Hodgson leads the council's work on tackling climate change and pushing forward green initiatives. She champions the Devon Climate Declaration, working with others to cut carbon emissions and build a more sustainable future.

She's also responsible for looking after our coastlines and making sure we protect our countryside, heritage, biodiversity, and conservation efforts. On top of that, Jacqi oversees services that help keep communities safe, including flood prevention, as well as waste and recycling, public transport (like buses and trains), and making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

[Find out more about Councillor Hodgson](#)

Councillor James Buczkowski
Cabinet Member for Finance



Councillor James Buczkowski looks after the council's finances, including everything from setting the annual budget to planning for the future, keeping an eye on spending, and making sure the books are balanced at the end of the year.

He also manages the council's investments and borrowing through Treasury Management.

James also oversees how the council buys goods and services, making sure we get good value through smart procurement. He keeps track of how contracts are performing and works to keep things running smoothly by improving performance and managing risks across the board.

[Find out more about Councillor Buczkowski](#)

Councillor Dan Thomas

Cabinet Member for Highways



Councillor Dan Thomas is in charge of all things public highways for the council. That means he looks after road safety, keeps an eye on the condition of our roads and pavements, and helps plan and deliver highway improvement projects.

He's also responsible for planning and delivering big infrastructure schemes (except public transport), making sure the right projects are in place to support Devon's growth and development.

[Find out more about Councillor Thomas](#)

Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin

Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs and Broadband



Councillor Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin looks after rural affairs, including improving broadband and digital connections in Devon's countryside. She also supports

services that help build stronger communities, such as adult learning, libraries, youth services and working with local voluntary groups.

Cheryl is also responsible for public health, promoting wellbeing, and making sure the council meets its duties around equality, diversity and inclusion, including policies for gypsy and traveller communities.

[Find out more about Councillor Cottle-Hunkin](#)

Get involved and stay informed

Our councillors meet regularly to discuss important issues, from local services to planning and budgets. These meetings are open to the public and offer a transparent look at how decisions are shaped.

Visit our website where you can find meeting dates and agendas, watch live streams or recorded meetings and access minutes and reports, as well as find out more about your local councillor.

The Cabinet's next meeting will be later this month, on Wednesday 25 June at 10.30am in the Committee Suite at County Hall in Exeter. If you would like to know what they'll be discussing, the agenda for the meeting will be [published on our website](#) the week before.

[Visit the Democracy in Devon website](#)



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