

Axminster Division County Report 2th March 2020

As we draw towards the end of another financial year at County Hall I thought it would be useful to give you a 'high level' overview of what DCC actually does on behalf of all tax payers, in what is a very big business in terms of its budget and the numbers of people employed to deliver services to you all.

Devon County Council – roles and responsibilities

Devon County Council is one of 26 County Councils in England. The authority, which has 60 elected County Councillors, represents 795,000 residents and administers an area spanning 2,534 square miles, the third largest in England.

The Council is led by a Cabinet of nine senior councillors, chaired by the Leader of the Council, John Hart.

The County Council works in partnership with eight District Councils, over 300 Town and Parish Councils, the Great South West region's Local Enterprise Partnerships and neighbouring County and Unitary councils.

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
- 398 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.

Background Context

The Government's reaffirmed commitment to a fair funding review of local government is very welcome and much needed. 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.

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 will be 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 spring.

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.

The attached slide deck presentation shows this work in a more visual way, highlighting above and more!

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