

County & District Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date: 7th February 2024
Devon County Councillor for Totnes & Dartington
(incl. Harberton, Harbertonford, Staverton, Landscope & part of Berry Pomeroy)
South Hams District Councillor for Dartington & Staverton
SHDC Executive Portfolio Councillor for Waste and Composting

Devon County Council: key issues

FUNDING: The Council continues to have challenges and concerns regarding its forthcoming budget that requires substantial savings. Many of the rising costs have been attributed to rising National living wage by 9.8% increasing costs in particular around commissioned services. Savings are also being met by not filling vacancies. The problems of making a resilient budget are the annual provisions from central government that doesn't allow for 3 year advance planning as was given in the past.

Austerity cuts that reduced core funding by National government to zero between 2011-2018 led to reductions in DCC staff from 6,500 down to 3,800. Since then occasional funds for specific proposes has been received from central government, this has helped and staff has risen back to around 5,200. But very little of this is announced well in time (if at all) for budgets.

This is the provisional settlement and budget that will go before Cabinet this coming Friday in preparation for next week's Full Council meeting:

The targets set for each service area have been subject to different pressures and influences. The table below shows the 2024/25 Budget Targets by service area.

	2023/24 Adjusted Budget *	Inflation and National Living Wage	Other Growth and Pressures	Savings, alternative funding and additional income	2024/25 Target Budget	Net change 2023/24 to 2024/25	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Integrated Adult Social Care	340,245	29,887	20,025	(29,411)	360,746	20,501	6.0%
Children and Young People's Futures	206,278	9,795	20,862	(9,150)	227,785	21,507	10.4%
Public Health, Communities & Prosperity	21,678	533	289	(1,577)	20,923	(755)	-3.5%
Corporate Services	49,755	2,160	1,361	(4,831)	48,445	(1,310)	-2.6%
Climate Change, Environment & Transport	81,619	6,144	2,348	(4,629)	85,482	3,863	4.7%
	699,575	48,519	44,886	(49,598)	743,382	43,807	6.3%

*Adjusted for permanent virements (budget transfers).

The County Council tax precept is likely to be agreed at 4.99% again, allowing 2% for Adult Social Care and 2.99% as the maximum allowed for the principle local authority increase without a referendum.

Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal proposals:

Further to the Levelling up White paper produced in February 2022, Devon CC has been in discussion with Central Government regarding a new devolution arrangement within the County. This involves Devon County Council and Torbay. Apparently, Plymouth City Council was also initially involved but decided not to proceed. This is the link to the Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal on DCC's website:

<https://www.devontorbaydeal.org.uk>

This is the Executive Summary of the report brought to a special Cabinet meeting on 2nd February'24. The proposed Devon and Torbay devolution deal was announced by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities on 25 January 2024. The proposed devolution deal includes:

- *The formation of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), including the creation of a leadership group led by a nominated chair, to provide overall vision and leadership, seek the best value for taxpayer's money, and be accountable to local residents.*
- *New powers to better shape local skills provisions to ensure these meet the needs of the local economy. This will include devolution of Adult Education functions and the core Adult Education Budget, and the opportunity to provide input into Local Skills Improvement Plans.*
- *£16 million of new capital funding in this Spending Review period to support the delivery of local housing priorities, drive Net Zero ambitions, support green skills and accelerate wider low carbon business transition across the Devon and Torbay area. This investment is subject to agreement of the relevant business cases.*
- *Greater collaboration between the Devon and Torbay CCA and Homes England to reduce the barriers to affordable housing delivery, regeneration and housing growth – with a particular focus on rural and coastal communities. By combining skills and capacity, Devon and Torbay CCA and Homes England will develop a shared development pipeline, underpinned by a clear action plan, and explore ways to support the delivery of that pipeline via current and future national housing programmes. Devon and Torbay CCA have also secured agreement from government to discuss the recommendations of the Devon Housing Commission.*
- *New powers to improve and better integrate local transport, including the ability to introduce bus franchising subject to approval from the Secretary of State for transport, and control of appropriate local transport functions e.g. responsibility for an area-wide local transport plan.*
- *Subject to funding, policy and delivery considerations at the next Spending Review, UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) planning and delivery at a strategic level from 2025/26.*
- *The integration of the functions of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership held by Devon County Council and Torbay Council into the Devon and Torbay CCA, alongside the provision of a strong and independent local business voice which informs local decision making and strategic economic planning.*
- *A commitment to developing, in partnership with the Government, an arrangement which ensures close cooperation with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).*
- *A clear role for Devon and Torbay in local resilience and civil contingency planning, preparation*

The rest of this report and the papers (including an Impact Assessment) brought to that cabinet meeting are at this link: <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?Id=34279&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI35132>

Further to this discussion the following decision was taken:

RESOLVED

(a) that the proposed Devon & Torbay devolution deal be supported; and

(b) that a public consultation be carried out in conjunction with Torbay Council from 12 February 2024 to 24 March 2024 to invite views on the draft proposal to establish the Devon & Torbay Combined County Authority.

Timetable (from DCC website)

Now that the proposed Devon and Torbay devolution deal has been published, the next step will be to carry out a public consultation on the draft proposal to establish the Combined County Authority.

Views will be invited from residents, MPs, businesses, partner organisations, town and parish councils, and community and voluntary groups. The councils will each consider all of the responses to the consultation and determine whether to submit a final proposal to the Secretary of State.

The legal framework is provided by the government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. The Act enables the Secretary of State to create a 'Combined County Authority' for an area by introducing an Order in Parliament for that purpose with the consent of the area's councils.

The aim is for the Devon and Torbay CCA to be created during 2024.

I will circulate the link to the public consultation when it has been published.

Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Scrutiny (CIRS) Committee – meeting 25.01.24. Issues discussed:

DCC Budget- The committee discussed the Joint report of the Director of Finance and Public Value, the Chief Executive, Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity and Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport.

The rest of this scrutinising of the budget is appended at the end of this report as its rather long and detailed – but in my view worth reading.

20mph Speed Limit Programme 'Expression of Interest' 24/25

As reported last month, a further £150,000 has been secured in DCC's Road Safety Capital Allocation for the 24/25 tranche. It is anticipated that 4-6 further communities (depending upon the size of the schemes) could benefit from new 20mph limits with this additional funding.

As your elected Member, I have raised this with all the Parish Council's in this division and reported back to DCC Highways Team that all the 20mph applications previously submitted are to be reconsidered in this year's tranche. The decisions will be made after the March 1st 2024 deadline for applications.

Despite my best endeavours, including the petition submitted in September to Full Council and motions to support the 20's Plenty Campaign for a more progressive policy for wider and clearer adoption of 20mph speed limits, the assessment criteria remains based on a scoring system that includes fatalities.

For next week's Full Council meeting of DCC, I will be submitting a question regarding the comparison of costs of applying a changed blanket policy as per 20's Plenty, compared to the continued scoring matrix and road individual assessments.

There is rising pressure in Torbay where 14 areas in Paignton and Brixham are seeking new 20mph speeds.

(FYI There is a map (continuously expanding) of the parishes in Devon that have supported 20's Plenty and written to DCC requesting they change their default policy from 30mph to 20mph. There are likely to be more as they are being added all the time:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/edit?mid=1yyGDauH8ekqP1zMRdF3fiNDt2swB4WU&usp=sharing>)

Totnes to Littlehempston Cycling and Pedestrian route. The community group that has recently raised its local profile has been very active. South Devon Steam railway are expressing support for shared use of the river bridge and meetings have been held to discuss the proposed route with South West Water (SWW) whose land would be traversed. Further to the application for various fields in proximity of the proposed route, to be used for a solar array by SWW, more complex discussions are ongoing. The group have met with Dartington Hall trust CEO Robert Fedder this week as DHT could potentially benefit from the visitor access via this new route (linking with the NC2 from Totnes to Dartington) and their own plans for additional cycle

routes on the Core estate. The prospect of the Totnes to Littlehempston route being added to the LCWIP list emerging as a potential Active Travel Route as the South Hams District Council scoping project has indicated for its draft report, will improve the chances of this long-awaited route coming into fruition. Discussions are already being put back to DCC for them to consider how. This route could link up with new DCC approved routes coming from Newton Abbott to Ogham further to funding from the new housing developments nearby.

Education / Local Schools: KEVICC site sales – No update on sales, but there does seem to be a current issue regarding this year's admissions which is considerably lower than previously (902) and much lower than Devon County Council's recommended intake for the school.

CASTLE STREET incident and damage: my response to DCC Highways Team further to the discussions at Totnes TC and committees:

"Concern has been raised that the street has been reopened to vehicles without any additional safety measures further to the serious incident and the various safety and heritage concerns raised.

Totnes Town Council has had a number of discussions at its various meetings and committees regarding the options to improve safety and reduce risk of this happening again in Castle Street in light of the recent incident. The issues that have been at the forefront of discussions have been both public safety including the safety of residents in the overhanging buildings (you might be aware that a 2 year old child was in the room when the incident that took out the bay window and part of external wall took place), and the need to protect the Town Centre's important built heritage from this kind of incident happening again.

It is appreciated that you have proposed some additional signage in additional locations: This is the response that was agreed at Totnes TC planning committee on 22.01.24: "It was AGREED that the new signage is appropriate, but that it is needed lower down Castle Street before/on the junction with North Street which would give any oversize vehicles the facility to turn around in the car park. However, it was felt that this won't solve the ongoing problem of drivers ignoring signs."

Please could you comment on the above Town Council decision.

There was also discussion and concern raised around the response to my request for an additional bollard to prevent wide vehicles attempting to mount the pavement as happened to see this accident and has happened on a number of previous occasions causing less dramatic damage to walls, but none the less dangerous to pedestrians and adversely impacting old heritage buildings in the Town's important Conservation Area. On that basis I reiterate my request for an additional bollard and for the one in situ to be straightened up to be more effective. Would the DCC view on this be different if outside (e.g. Town Council or potentially conservation) funds could be found to pay for the additional bollard?"

I will notify the Town Council and Traffic & Transport Forum of the reply.

Proposed new Zebra Crossings at St John's School, Bridgetown, Totnes

2 weeks ago I met with one of the parents/resident and our SHDC Ward Members for Totnes to consider the proposal for Zebra crossings to make the school access safer for children coming to and from the school. We met at 8.30am on site so that we could witness children and their parents arriving on foot and others dropping off children by car. It was clear that additional road safety measures are needed to aid crossing the road and also to restrict cars from stopping and parking too near the school entrance. The option of a school patrol (lollipop person) was also proposed for consideration. I have put in a request to the DCC Highways Neighbourhood team for a site meeting to invite their views on what might be possible at this location this proposal and hopefully take it forward with DCC.

Fading, disappearing and missing white lines and other roadmarkings. There have been many complaints, especially where they relate to markings in the middle of the road, such as right turns and on zebra crossings, such as the crossing on Will Road between the footpath from Morrisons to Leatside Heath centre. I have reported some of these directly when they have been reported to me by the public. However, they can also be reported in using the REPORT IT DCC website links below.

Please continue to use the Report it webpages on Devon County Councils website to report in any potholes, broken street lamps, overgrown hedges obstruction pavements, simply 'Google' Devon County Council Report It or use this link: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/>

Dairy Crest Site / ATMOS project: Public Inquiry to consider the Planning Appeal by Fastglobe's planning applications. I attended some of the hearing which was held before and after Christmas, finishing just last Thursday. SHDC had withdrawn its objection to the 2nd planning application on the basis that the applicant had at the last minute before the appeal, finally produced the ecology and noise reports until then not produced for that application (and the main reason for refusal); however this would be on condition that Fastglobe withdrew its appeal on its first application and provided affordable housing in line with SHDC policy, i.e. 30%. However, the ATMOS project Community team did not withdraw their objection and as a Rule 6 (3rd) party made submissions and were fully legally represented with input at the appeal.

One of the interesting elements of the debate was the examination of the viability assessment of the Outline application, which Fastglobe had not produced. The argument put forward by the ATMOS team (and substantiated by a witness / representative of SAVILLS) was that Fastglobe's Outline Application proposals were not financially viable and that as such no affordable housing could therefore be provided as required, and therefore could not be compliant with SHDC's policies. They also made the point that even the proposals with 100% market housing were not financially viable either. Thus as this was for Outline only, with all other matters reserved, were the application to be approved, the Fastglobe applicants could come back with their All Reserved Matters (ARM) planning application seeking further non-policy requirements as their viability would not be able to afford them. As such the site could be simply land banked and left derelict for a further extended period. The ATMOS Community Right to Build Order and its viability assessment was used for comparison on how the site could be delivered, but under very different financial arrangements and as such would be able to deliver SHDC policy compliant levels of affordable housing, plus other community benefits. The Planning Inspector's decision is expected in the next few weeks.

This is the link to the documents: <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/planning/dairy-crest-planning-appeals/appeal-b-application-reference-127123opa>

Dartington Hall Trust. Meetings with Robert Fedder, acting CEO. My recent meetings with Robert Fedder have been with Totnes Town Councillors and just today with Totnes to Littlehempston Cycle and foot path group. I find him increasingly well informed of local issues and continually pragmatic, enthusiastic and practical in his approach to putting the Trust onto a secure and sustainable future. He has agreed to meet with other community groups in the near future.

South Hams District Council Matters:

New Council Plan 2024-28:

The final version of this plan (which was consulted on late last year, was approved at SHDC Executive last week and will finally come before Full Council next Week. It is certainly quite an ambitious plan for many changes in the Council's direction and how it will work with the community; the annual delivery plan for the forthcoming year 2024/25 sets out a good level of detail of how the proposals will be rolled out. These documents are at these links:

South Hams District Council Plan 2024-28:

<http://democracy.swdevon.gov.uk/documents/s31380/Appendix%20A%20The%20Council%20Plan.pdf>

Delivery Plan 2024-25:

<http://democracy.swdevon.gov.uk/documents/s31381/Appendix%20B%20Annual%20Delivery%20Plan%2024-25.pdf>

There have been a number of briefings held at SHDC to bring all members up to speed on the plans. In particular my portfolio area of Waste and Composting (yes, the title does keep changing), has been particularly active and there have been a number of informatives to prepare members and in turn the residents we represent the potential pitfalls of changing all the rounds and a third of the delivery services right before Christmas. Despite a lot of worry, the officers have done a brilliant job and made all the changes with a much lower than potentially anticipated rumbings. There has been a lot to be said and learnt about reverting services to in-house, all of which in my view has been favourable (and provides me with a good example to press for other services e.g. social housing at SHDC, roadworks at DCC) to also follow this route and be brought back in house for better service delivery and better value.

Changes to waste services: The new routes and final delivery of the full recycling collection services to all residents across South Hams is complete, but still bedding in. All collections days/dates are on-line at SHDC at this link: <https://waste.southhams.gov.uk/mycollections>

Anyone missing a collection can notify SHDC after 24 hours, but not later than 48 hours after the missed collection (unless its Friday). Please use this link: <https://waste.southhams.gov.uk/missedcollection>

Any problems contact by email: waste@swdevon.gov.uk

There have been a number of issues around waste collections in highstreets. I'm hoping that we can look at commercial collections and resolve some of the storage issues and rows of bags, bins and boxes that are gathering in all sorts of public places.

Community Composting – workshop for interested groups and parish Councils:

As part of their commissioned Community Composting project with SHDC, Sustainable South Hams are hosting a weekend workshop 27-28th April on all matters about composting and setting up a project. More information will be posted at these links: <https://www.southhams.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/step-by-step/community-composting> <https://www.sussh.org/projects/the-marsh-compost-project>

Planning Training for Town & Parish Councillors. This is a link to a recording of the training session.

 [Planning Training for Town & Parish Councils-20240124_160544-Meeting Recording.mp4](#)

There are 4 different sets of slides which were presented that can also be provided.

South Devon Rural Housing Association (SDRHA) sale of stock I have been advised by some affected residents and other concerned parties that South Devon Rural Housing Association (which originally took over the Dartington Hall Estate owned social housing) is in discussions about a possible merger with Places for People. This comes in the wake of their closure of Forder Lane House, where all the remaining residents finally moved out before Christmas. SDRHA announced a six week merger on January 9th that runs until February 7th '24 (6 weeks?). this is the posting:

“MERGER PROPOSAL CONSULTATION

We want to hear your thoughts on our proposed merger with Places for People. So we've launched a six-week consultation period that runs until the first week of February.

You may have comments on what you've read in the Merger Special edition of your SDR newsletter. You can find answers to a lot of your likely questions [HERE](#) Or you may have other questions about the proposal that you'd like us to answer.

It's important to us that we consider your views, so please reply by 07 February 2024. It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete the online form, which you can access [HERE](#)"

I have brought this matter to SHDC Executive, requesting that they consider purchasing this housing stock and bringing it back in house as Council owned Social Housing. Unfortunately the separate SHDC company that was set up a few years ago to do just this has since been folded. I will raise this issue further, but the likelihood is that it is too sudden and will be too late for this opportunity.

SHDC Planning Matters:

3650/23/FUL land at Symons Drive, Dartington. An additional house at Broom Park new development. I have referred this to DM Committee (next Weds 14.02.24) as it will be outside the JLP policy of 80 houses for this site and I'm concerned will set a precedent.

2929/23/FUL Land at Littlehempston Water Treatment works, Hampstead Farm Lane, Littlehempston. Installation of photovoltaic solar arrays (etc). This application is likely to impact on Dartington Hall Trust Core Estate (and Grade 1 listed status) as the site is very visible from Lower Drive. Consultation closes 11.02.24

Other matters:

Totnes Climate & Ecological Emergency Working Group. The Group held its first meeting at the Totnes Climate Hub at the Mansion House, Totnes. A number of potential local projects were proposed and will be considered further for moving forward. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 20th February at 6.30pm. Future meetings will take place on the third Tuesday of the month at 6.30pm. All welcome.

Totnes & District Traffic and Transport Forum (T&DTTF) : The group held its AGM on 31st January 2024. The Chair Graham Bennet was reappointed, and the two Deputy Chairs are T.Cllr Luisa Auetta (reappointed) and D.Cllr Anna Presswell. A key message from the Forum was the interest in including representation from adjacent parishes at these meetings as much of the work and shared interest going across shared boundaries. It was therefore agreed to invite adjacent parishes to send a representative to Forum meetings and to circulate the minutes of these meetings to the clerks of those Parish Councils to engender interest and collaboration.

Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement (TRAYE) Project – Participating Parish Councils are being asked to get back to TRAYE to confirm whether they will accept the provisions of the less formal Memorandum of Understanding proposed as a funding arrangement for the participating Town and Parish Councils to provide 50% of support funding for TRAYE project in their parish. Parish Councils are being asked to consider this for their current precept and budget deliberations for the 2024/25 financial year and confirm by the end of February 2024. **The Annual General Meeting of TRAYE project will be held on Friday March 22nd at 3.30pm.** (Venue to be confirmed)

Appended report from ...Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Scrutiny (CIRS) Committee – meeting

25.01.24. Issues discussed:

DCC Budget- Extracts and Key Points raised:

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25

- *The key issue of single year government funding agreements together with the persistently late annual government settlement (still awaited at the date of this meeting), makes budgeting very difficult for all concerned.*

- *The ongoing impact of cost-of-living effects of high inflation and interest rates, the lasting impact of the pandemic on supplier markets and demand for public services has created huge financial pressures nationally.*
- *Significant and sustainable savings are being delivered with further savings required in 2024/25 and subsequent years.*
- *The government has increased DCCs Core Spending Power by 6.5%, this includes a presumption that DCC will increase its Council Tax precept by the maximum possible (without a referendum) to 4.99%.*
- *The government's Revenue Support grant for 2024/25 will be £713.381M*
- *Adult Social Care Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund: Last years' allocation was £13.811M, this has been increased by 13% to £15.643M*
- *Adult Social Care fund. This has been increased Nationally from £300M in 2023/24 to £500M in 2024/25. The provisional allocation of £6.806M to DCC for 2024/25 represents a welcome increase of 67% from 2023/24.*

Public Health, Communities and Prosperity

- *Public Health, Communities and Prosperity Services have reduced budgets overall by £755,000 for 2024/25*
- *All services within Public Health, Communities and Prosperity have reviewed existing income generation opportunities. Increases to fees and charges for 2024/25 are based on inflationary rises.*
- *Key savings strategies are about redesigning services to better match capacity to demand and workloads, alongside removing vacant roles and ensuring full cost recovery on externally funded work. This equates to a reduction in budgets of £817,000.*
- *Contracts are being reviewed resulting in a reduction in the Library contract by £300,000*
- *Locality budgets have been increased by £180,000 which equates to £3,000 per member, taking them from £5,000 per annum to £8,000 per annum to support local projects in line with the Authority's priorities. Application process and consideration is streamlined and aligned to other grant funding including the Growing Communities Fund, which in turn has been reduced by £210,000. I.e an overall loss to this Fund of £40,000)*
- *Economy services budget includes £70,000 towards delivering the Connecting Devon and Somerset broadband project, to deliver faster broadband across rural areas*

Climate Change, Environment and Transport.

- *The Highways and Infrastructure Development service area faces cost pressures totalling £3.7 million, £2.3 million of which relates to Highways contract inflation and street lighting energy price increases. (NB More Parish Councils can submit suggestions for additional light dimming to assist with further reductions in this cost)*
- *Savings, alternative funding sources and income opportunities totalling £4.1 million have been identified within this service area, £1.8 million of which is anticipated to be achieved through funding permanent pothole patch repairs greater than 0.5m² from capital budgets. The current policy allows for*
- *pothole patches of 1m² and above to be funded from capital, on the basis that patches of this size constitute permanent repair. The policy will be extended to include patches of 0.5m² and above as evidence shows that patches of this size also meet the criteria for capital expenditure.*
- *Additional income, from a combination of Highways fee income and full cost recovery of staff time recharges for capital programme design work and external arrangements, is expected to contribute a further £2.1 million.*
- *Energy savings of £250,000 are anticipated from further dimming of street lights.*
- *The service understands the need to increase investment in Highways drainage activities. However, this is not currently affordable within the available target budget. If further funds become available, the position will be reviewed.*
- *The On Street Parking (OSP) income and expenditure are held within a ringfenced account which are wholly self-funded.*
- *The Transport Operations, Environment and Waste service area faces increased expenditure arising from pay and contract inflation totalling £3.2 million.*
- *Further pressures of £1.5 million are expected within the Waste service, which includes impact of new legislation such as the management of Persistent Organic Pollutants and the changes to DIY waste charges that occurred at the end of 2023.*

- *The Transport Operations, Environment and Waste budget includes savings, alternative funding, and additional income assumptions totalling £250,000, which include additional Waste contract income and operational savings.*

Legal & Democratic Services:

This is very challenging and saving have been made by developing a more skilled in-house team. (The potential problems that year on further savings might cause were described as a ‘perfect storm’)

Capital works programme includes;

Plymouth & South Devon Freeport

- cycle & pedestrian bridge 2024/25 (£3.669M), 2025/26 £2.958M
- Spine Road extension 2024/25 (£4M), 2025/26 £7.25M
- Sandy/Holland Road roundabout 2024/25 £0, 2025/26 £1.75M, 2026/27 (£5M)

Funding for Totnes Division schools

River Dart Academy:

Dartington School (site development) 2024/25 (£100,000), 2025/26 £507,000 (Send programme)

Bidwell Brook School: 2024/25 (£80,000) Expansion, £76,000 Fire Compartmentation works

n.b. Active Devon and The Refugee resettlement programmes are wholly self-funded and do not impact on Council Tax.

Points I have raised and replies:

- Generally the comparative cost of in-house services are being considered when any of the current contracts for commissioned services are due for review/renewal.
- The lack of an increase in drainage budget to enable a better response to the anticipated increase chaotic weather and storms was discussed, but the budget was not increased. In fact the Flood Risk and Surface Water Management budget was only increased by 140,000
- The option for local Parish Councils to plan and commission their own local highways works: I asked whether my previous suggestion that the Highways Team would work closely with PC’s such that they would advise and provide professional services on design and oversee the works, on the basis that most PCs do not have highways expertise, but might be willing and able to raise the finance for the works, e.g. through their precept. I gave the example that many local PCs struggle to ensure proper lengthsman works are carried out and value for money etc. With drainage works oversubscribed and under budgeted, local Lengthsman works could perhaps also benefit from DCC Highways team advice.
- The (£200,000) reduction in cost of supporting Skypark – this information will be provided
- Can we still afford our investment in the Freeport?
- Active Travel Fund: Just £509,000 remains in the pot for 2024/25, zero for subsequent years: what is the point of all the investment in scoping if none of the routes are developed out and this would save on highways repairs.
- Carbon reduction plan; just £147,000 remains for 2024/25, zero for subsequent years: inadequate investment.

Recommendations by the CIRS Committee agreed at this meeting:

Concerns:

1. *The ongoing concerns of achieving the savings outlined across the budget and above all else understanding the impact/s on people we support, communities and practice, particularly the Integrated Adults Social Care in-year savings set at £29.4 million, how the service proposes to achieve this.*
2. *The ongoing concerns relating to Budget pressures across the Council, including:*
 - (a) *the continued overspend in the High Needs Block Budget for SEND considering the cumulative deficit, and the plans in place to reduce the overspend;*
 - (b) *the potential impact of the proposed use of Capital receipts to fund the SEND Safety Valve Programme for the High Needs Block Overspend and the potential impact on Capital budgets in coming years;*
 - (c) *the continued reliance on agency workers in Children’s Services over successive years;*

- (d) *the cost differential between in house fostering and independent fostering agencies to support children in care and the resultant budgetary impact;*
 - (e) *the number of people receiving high levels of interventions through statutory care and the need to re-shape the offer to include an alternative strengths-based offer; and*
 - (f) *the ongoing deterioration of Devon's highways and reduced expenditure on prevention activities.*
3. *Concern over individual budget lines:*
 - (a) *The net reduction to libraries budget of £175,000.*
 - (b) *The one-year funding commitment for Carbon Reduction Programme and uncertainty for future years.*
 4. *That bus patronage is still 38.4% below pre-pandemic levels with Devon's residents being impacted by the reliability of services.*
 5. *Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee's concern that Members are not able to adequately review and scrutinise the interdependencies within the NHS Devon budget.*
 6. *Cabinet is asked to:*
 7. *Continue to support Scrutiny in their critical friend challenge of the in- year financial position and progress on achieving transformation and savings, including milestones and metrics -*
 - (a) *For Children's Scrutiny, this should include social worker agency rates, additional in house foster carers, and in house residential provisions.*
 8. *Lobby Government to highlight the difficulty of setting budgets, operating and improving services against the reality of:*
 - (a) *The unknown grant settlement for Public Health;*
 - (b) *The one-year financial settlement for Adult Social Care;*
 - (c) *The delivery of services within a large, rural County; and*
 - (d) *Investment in highways to arrest the ongoing decline in the state of the highway, specifically highways drainage.*
 9. *For the Cabinet Member for Integrated Adult Social Care to write to The Rt Hon Mel Stride MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions:*
 - (a) *to ensure the support people of working age with disabilities receive incentivises them to be employed without being adversely affected economically.*
 - (b) *the potential impact of new immigration rules on the delivery of Adult Social Care services.*
 10. *Consider investment in:*
 - (a) *School attendance programmes and exploring national, Department for Education programmes, and pilots, to increase attendance of children in school.*
 - (b) *The ongoing concern and need to invest in highways drainage activities to prevent deterioration in highways.*
 11. *To further support Highways improvements, consider:*
 - (a) *expanding Highways Self Help Schemes to work with Parishes to identify and pay for works, carried out by the Council, from their own Budgets and precepts and benefit from the expertise of Council officers to deliver projects, albeit recognising the pressures and capacity of staff within the service.*
 - (b) *as part of the planning process, whether developer contributions can improve the highways in the local area.*
 12. *The Council and NHS partners work collaboratively and commit to promoting independence for people of all ages and disabilities, and achieve this, work alongside the Voluntary Community Sector Enterprises (VCSE) Assembly, District, City, Town, and Parish councils, making use of existing partnerships.*
 13. *Recognising the financial pressures on both statutory and voluntary sector organisations, support the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee to arrange an all Member masterclass on Local Care Partnership (LCPs) before April 2024, so Councillors can be more informed and consider the use of their locality budgets to strengthen partnership working and support communities to grow capacity to provide an alternative offer that people can access that promotes their independence and helps communities to be safe and connected.*
 14. *To add to the future Risk Assessment for all relevant services the ongoing concern of partnership working including with partner agencies and the voluntary and community sector regarding the interdependencies in achieving the required improvements.*
 15. *Continue to promote the Council's website and newsletters that help community groups find and apply for community grants.*