

Clerk

From: Councillor Ray Radford <ray.radford@devon.gov.uk>
Sent: 09 January 2025 15:22
To: Clerk
Cc: Barry Warren
Subject: Jan Report

Dear Debbie & Councillors.

Since the Xmas period, things have got quite hectic, so I may not make your meeting, could I give my apologies please. If you want me to do anything which comes from your meeting, please let me know.

This just a flavour of what is happening at County Hall.

Local Government Reorganisation

The English Devolution White Paper was published on just before Christmas.

Extract from the ministers letter probably gives some explanation as to where we are heading as residents in a two tier area, we are certainly in for some big changes;

Local government reorganisation. My intention is to formally invite unitary proposals in January 2025 from all councils in two-tier areas, and small neighbouring unitary councils. In this invitation, I will set out further detail on the criteria I will consider when taking decisions on the proposals that are submitted to Government. I intend to ask for interim plans by March 2025. As set out in the White Paper, new unitary councils must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. For most areas, this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more. However, there may be exceptions to ensure new structures make sense for an area, including on devolution. Final decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. We will ask you to work with other councils in your area to develop unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area, rather than developing competing proposals.

Following publication of the Governments Devolution White paper it is clear that considerable change is going to happen in Local Government in Devon.

We have two options;

- 1. Do nothing and the government will impose changes**
- 2. Engage with government to get the best result for the residents of Devon.**

I believe that engagement with the government is the best option.

While we may not agree with all the government's proposals, we need to do everything we can to ensure that the changes will make local government sustainable for the long term and able to withstand shocks like the pandemic and the world financial crisis. At the heart of all this must be a stronger voice to inform the government of

the issues my residents in Willand & Uffculme Division and the residents in the wider area of Devon face. As the month of January progresses, I will get more detail of how all this will pan out

There will be more money to provide care for Devon's vulnerable adults and children in the county council's target budget for 2025/26.

New figures show a proposed 8.2 per cent increase in the revenue budget for adult services with a 5.5 per cent rise in children's services and 3.4 per cent extra for climate change, environment and transport.

Reductions in other departmental spending means an overall rise of 5.9 per cent in the budget for next year with a total spend of over £784.1 million.

Our Cabinet will discuss the details this month (January) with our full council set to debate the budget in February.

We've welcomed a record £83.6 million "early Christmas present" from the Government for road repairs.

The funding of £83,640,000 for Devon is the largest share of a record £1.6 billion investment announced by the Government to fill potholes and repair roads.

An extensive repair programme using this latest funding will be compiled over the next couple of months to help tackle the highway maintenance backlog on Devon's 8,000 mile road network, which is currently in excess of £200 million. The funding will be used to prioritise extensive surfacing, patching and other preventative maintenance, as well as drainage improvements.

I have just come back from a DCC Full Council meeting which considered an amendment from the County Labour Group, which is;

"The Council will work at pace to develop full proposals for re-organisation in line with Government guidance which will be issued in January 2025, working with and alongside partners to develop plans for sustainable unitary structures which meets the needs and aspirations of the varied locations within the Devon Area, including those of Plymouth, Exeter, and Torbay as well as the coastal and market towns and rural areas." This was excepted by DCC Council and will be put before the Minister for consideration and we expect a reply by the end of this month.

Barry, I am meeting with Ed Polding on Tuesday 21 Jan at the usual place at 11.30, would you be available to attend.

Regards,

Ray

Ray Radford

Devon County Councillor

Willand & Uffculme Division

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