

County Councillor's Monthly Report Cllr. Jacqi Hodgson - Date of Report: 2nd October 2019
County Councillor for Totnes & Dartington
(incl. Harberton, Harbertonford, Staverton, Landscope & part of Berry Pomeroy)
District Councillor for Dartington & Staverton

Key Issues Devon County Council: At Cabinet meeting on 11th September, Cabinet considered the Report of the County Treasurer. This Report outlined the monitoring of the financial position and forecast for the Authority at Month 4 (to the end of July) of the financial year and updated Members on the Chancellor's Spending Round 2019.

"The total projected overspend at Month 4 was £4.3 millions. However, this assumed the projected Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding shortfall of £15.8 millions was not dealt with in the current financial year and thus had no impact on the outturn position. It also assumed that planned contributions to reserves of £8 millions were not made this financial year. Without these two adjustments the projected overspending would be £28.1 millions.

Adult Care and Health Services were forecast to overspend by £6.7 millions, which included £982,000 of management actions yet to be delivered but which were still considered achievable.

Children's Services were forecasting an overspend of £4.8 millions. However, this figure took no account of a projected funding shortfall of £15.8 millions on SEND which was explained in sections 3.8 and 3.9 of the Report.

Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste were forecasting an underspend of £540,000 at Month 4, Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity (COPHEP) a small underspend of £6,000 and Corporate Services an overspend of £2.8 millions.

The approved capital programme for the Council was £147.2 millions which incorporated amounts brought forward from 2018/19 of £29.5 millions, and in year additions of £6.8 millions. The year-end forecast was £131.7 millions, producing forecast slippage of £15.5 millions, mainly attributable to variations and programme delays in Planning and Transportation (£9.8 millions net slippage) reflecting the complexity of the major schemes within this Service.

In relation to the Spending Round 2019 on 4th September 2019 (the devil being in the detail), the key headlines for the Council were £1.5 billion extra for social care, but it was clear that £0.5 billion of this included the discretionary power to raise up to 2% from Council Tax as a Social Care Precept. Depending on the formula, the Authority's portion could be £22-23 millions of which approximately £8 millions would come from a 2% increase in Council tax.

In relation to Schools Funding, there was £7.1 billion extra by 2022/23. Every secondary school would be allocated a minimum of £5,000 per pupil next year, and every primary school at least £3,750 per pupil increasing to £4,000 per pupil the following year. This was approximately £20 millions of additional funding for Devon's schools over the 2 years with £11.7 millions in 2020/21 and a further £9.5 millions in 2021/22.

There was also additional money for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities with the Council's share of approximately £8.6 millions. For Core Funding, there was no information other than the usual inflationary increase in Business Rates funding and a headline that no Government Department's funding would be cut next year. The Provisional Local Government Settlement was expected in December, as normal.

This report demonstrated that Education and Social Care Services for both Adults and Children were operating under huge financial strain. The need for those services was growing both in terms of cost and complexity against a background of unprecedented political uncertainty. The Council expressed it would need to show resolve and ingenuity to ensure it maintained the balance between funding services sufficiently and retaining its financial sustainability."

Devon Investment & Pension Fund Committee Meeting 13th September. I attended and spoke at this meeting further to my original motion in December 2017 and subsequent attendance at this Committee meeting in February 2018, where **I had requested that DCC Pension Fund divests its investments from Fossil Fuels.** In February 2018, "the Investment and Pension Fund discussed its role as a responsible shareholder and set out a number of positive changes to strengthen its policy. These included improved reporting on voting and engagement activities across a range of issues, including climate change, becoming members of the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change and committing to working with the Brunel Pension Partnership to develop reporting on the carbon footprint of the Fund's investments."

"Within the next couple of years, over 95% of the Fund's assets will be managed by Brunel. In relation to the issue of climate change, this means that the approach taken by Brunel, working in partnership with its client funds including Devon, will be of growing importance. Brunel believes that climate change poses risks to global financial stability, and has issued a climate

change position statement that sets out that all of Brunel's portfolios, across all asset classes, will be carbon and climate aware. The Brunel approach addresses climate change by focusing on the issue across all their investments, not just on fossil fuel extraction companies. Brunel are committed to being transparent about the carbon exposure of their investments by undertaking carbon footprints and fossil fuel exposure analysis for each listed equity portfolio. They believe that the Fund is able to exercise more significant influence on climate change policies by remaining a shareholder and engaging with the companies concerned via LAPFF, the Brunel Pension Partnership and external fund managers. However, the Fund also expects the carbon footprint of its investments to reduce over time as a result of the investment approach undertaken by Brunel."

On 12th Sept.'19 The Committee considered the Report of the County Treasurer on an update on the current position and direction of travel with the transitioning of the Fund's assets from existing external fund managers to the Brunel Pension Partnership. The Report outlined Brunel's approach (detailed in their Position statement, attached separately) on how it was addressing climate change. However, pending the full transition, the Devon fund currently had no data on the carbon footprint of its investments and a proposed analysis as at 31 March 2019 would provide a useful benchmark. **The Pension Fund Committee resolved that (a) that the Climate Change Position Statement issued by the Brunel Pension Partnership be noted; and (b) that the undertaking of an analysis of the Fund's carbon footprint as at 31 March 2019 be approved and additional fee approval be authorised by the County Treasurer in consultation with the Chair, and the outcome (including methodology and detailed assessments) be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.**

I was very disappointed with this outcome as they agreed to carry out this Carbon Footprint assessment over 18 months ago. Also, that they are not seeking a more proactive and urgent approach to divesting from fossil fuels and reinvesting in renewable energy in line with the more recent DCC Declaration of a Climate Emergency

Public consultation on the Devon & Somerset Fire Service "Safer Together". The proposals included reducing the number of fire engines ('pumps') at Totnes Fire Station down from two to one. I made a detailed submission based on concerns raised with me across the DCC division that I represent based on the following key points:

- The proposed options are clearly just a cost cutting exercise in line with the austerity cuts that have been experienced across all public services in the last few years. All the Town and parish Councils and residents I have spoken to are against proposals to cuts in these vital services.
- There is likely to be a substantial impact on the residents of Totnes and the surrounding parishes.
- The reduction in services as proposed would substantially increase the risk in the event of a fire incident.
- The longer it takes a Fire services vehicle to reach a fire, particularly in rural areas, the higher the risk to life and property.
- There is a rising increase in the number of older people living in South Devon and there exists a number of residences for older persons, including specialist homes for persons suffering from dementia and Alzheimers. These residents would be particularly at risk of fire and where there was any delay in the arrival of a Fire services, time would be a matter of life or death or severe injury from smoke inhalation.
- Such risk creates anxiety.
- The lack of new Fire Officers coming forward and being trained for service, is due in part to changes and the reduction in the number of businesses that can afford to manage and stay open when a major local fire requires their staff who are Fire Officers to respond to emergency calls. An increase in the allowance being paid to part-time Fire Officers would enable those who are perhaps self-employed or share parenting to apply to join your force.
- Another option would be to employ more full-time staff at the Fire Stations but perhaps share the services and location with other emergency services such as Ambulance and Police response teams.
- Devon County Council and all the District Councils in Devon, plus a number of town and parish councils have declared a Climate Emergency. The risk of increasing temperatures as demonstrated in the past five years being the warmest on record has in turn increased risk of fire due to water drought which creates fire risk from both dryer herbage and buildings as well as less water being available to tackle fires.
- The changes to climate also pose an increased risk of flooding, If the services need to travel longer distances, they may not be able to reach their destination due to flooding and this put lives at risk.
- While risk to biodiversity may not be the direct work of the Fire services, the loss of biodiversity puts us all at risk due to food supplies, air quality etc etc. Wild fires when they spread are extremely dangerous and need Fire Fighters within easy access and at sufficient staffing levels to provide emergency response.
- As a County Councillor I was extremely disconcerted to learn that Fire and Emergency Services refused to attend a DCC Scrutiny meeting in September where questions regarding these cuts could have been asked directly and perhaps alternative proposals and options could have been discussed and considered.
- I sincerely hope that you will reconsider your proposed options, and instead of cuts seek further government funding to ensure that a comprehensive and safe Emergency Fire and Rescue services across Devon and Somerset can continue to provide the vital services needed.

South Hams District Council – Key issues:

SHDC Full Council 26.09.19: I Proposed the following motions:

1. that SHDC lobbies National Government to create a structure of fines that Local Authorities can impose for planning breaches. These would include illegal felling or damage to trees, illegal removal of Devon Bank and all mature hedgebanks. These fines could be imposed further to formal investigation by Enforcement officers (rather than the additional costs and time taken going through formal court proceedings). (Seconded Cllr. Joseph Rose). **Regrettably the approved version of this motion was substantially amended such that Govt. lobbying would be to increase court fines rather than seek local authority powers to impose fines – very disappointing.**
2. In support of its commitment to the Climate and Biodiversity crisis, this Council will form and support a Forum of Town and parish Councils across the District that have Declared a Climate Emergency and assist them in creating Action Plans to address and mitigate this challenge. (Seconded: Cllr Jo Sweett). **This was supported and passed with the slight amendment to simply form a network, support with a website and host a meeting.**

I also asked questions regarding the new waste services and sought support for PV panels to be installed on the pavilions at Totnes. These were referred for further information and responses.

LOCAL MATTERS:

Illegal Traveller Camps and Residential Vehicles: There has been a recent increase in the number of these illegal camps in this area (which has one of the highest number in South Hams). Despite my requests to both SHDC and DCC over the past few years, in particular last year when the Joint Local Plan was being finalised and I called for these residents to be accommodated in the plan, no properly designated and serviced sites to meet this need have been proposed or developed.

In response to the new arrivals in this area, I requested and met with a DCC officer who works with the Public Health team. She informed me that DCC has been having meetings with SHDC officers to try and find possible sites for both temporary, transit and permanent sites for these residents. There are two key issues outstanding in resolving this issue, lack of suitable sites and a mis-match between the assessments of the number of pitches needed: i.e. SHDC estimates 3 pitches required, DCC estimates 85 pitches are required. This difference is based on the different recognition where SHDC uses the Government definition, which excludes those not considered to be persons from this recognised ethnic minority (<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07005>). Those not considered to be Gypsies and Travellers are considered to be rough sleepers, and housing accommodation is sought for those who it defines on that basis. DCC recognises all those persons who set up illegal camp or roadside residence in a vehicle and is concerned about their wellbeing and needs for an appropriate site according to their preference for a transit or permanent site. It is my view that the Government's definition and SHDC view and failure to respond expediently to this growing need, is based on unfair discrimination and is leading to a failure to properly address the real-life situation we find in this area.

Last year, further to my requests and questions to both SHDC and DCC meetings and officers, I was assured that SHDC would follow Teignbridge's model and establish a District wide Traveller Forum. (This Forum has led to the highly successful Traveller site at Haldon and a very helpful system for discussions and options about this issue). However to date this has not been taken forward at SHDC and is very clearly needed to assist the current concerns and rising need for suitable sites. Without this local friction and anxiety develops between the illegal campers and settled residents living nearby, a situation exacerbated by DCC's policy of Move To rather than Move From, i.e they will only move illegal campers if they have somewhere to move them to as to do otherwise simply leads to a lot of expenditure of public monies on legal orders and evictions which can simply lead to the illegal camp being moved just meters up the same road side and the process starting all over again. Without a proper place to move illegal camps to, legal processes can be simply a waste of public money.

I am deeply concerned about this failure of SHDC and DCC to develop sites to resolve this problem. Last week at my meeting with the DCC officer, I suggested we visit 3 local sites in Totnes that could potentially be used as temporary sites for these illegal roadside campers. These sites are now being investigated and I will continue to pursue this issue for more permanent resolution to meet this clear residential accommodation need.

Climate Emergency Plan meeting & Community Action event – Totnes Sat 22nd September: Version 6 of the Climate Action Plan had been distributed in advance of the meeting which included the outcomes from the public event held in Totnes on August 10th. The meeting discussed these outcomes and the proposed **week-long public exhibition and events from 3rd – 9th November** which will be held in Totnes Guildhall. It is the intention that the activities and discussion sessions held during that week will produce a first draft of a comprehensive Climate & Ecological Emergency Action Plan for the Town that will have support, involvement and commitment from all sectors of the Town. This draft plan would then be presented to Totnes TC at its December meeting for approval and implementation. The meeting was followed by a **Totnes Wombles Litter Pick around the town**

Totnes & District Traffic & Transport Forum (25.09.19) In line with the work of both the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging Climate Emergency Action Plan for Totnes, the meeting considered the priorities for the town and visions for 2030 and actions that would lead to them to realise these objectives. A lot of the discussion focussed on the Town Centre and next steps for the Shared Space provisions that had met a consensus of local approval. The role of the Green Travel Coordinator that would be funded by Baltic Wharf development (106 monies) was seen as a critical opportunity to support

these measures.

Totnes Travel Partnership mtg. (01.10.19) This was the first meeting of this group held since the May elections. It meets to discuss and monitor new development (106) monies that can be allocated to highways projects in Totnes and environs. The 106 monies from the redevelopment at Baltic Wharf which is now almost at 90% occupancy and due to trigger these monies for projects was discussed. The outcomes of a survey of the new residents on their travel modes and preferences was discussed along with further sustainable transportation proposals including the Green Travel Coordination for this development and the new residents as well as a Green Travel Coordinator for the town that formed part of the 106 agreement was discussed.

Attendance at meetings etc. as elected public representative:

- Weds 4th Sept. Meeting with Totnes Community Development Society - Trustees of Totnes Mansion
Staverton PC meeting
- Thurs 5th Sept. Meeting with Transition Town Totnes & Totnes Extinction Rebellion group to discuss the Totnes Climate Emergency Action Plan
DCC Climate Emergency Action Plan Scrutiny Working Group meeting (I'm now part of this)
- Friday 6th Sept. Meeting with Totnes resident & T.Cllr to discuss 5G health studies
- Sat. 7th Sept. Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement (TRAYE) project Steering Group meeting
Totnes Pride Festival - the largest attendance yet!
- Mon 9th Sept. Attendance at DCC School Transport panel to support local parent
South Devon Refugee Support Network meeting
- Tues 10th Sept. Caring Town Totnes – Network meeting: outcomes of residents' survey – very enlightening - see attached report
Harberton PC meeting
- Weds 11th Sept. SHDC DM (Planning) Committee
Dartington PC meeting
- Thurs 12th Sept. Water Resilience Summit – as part of week-long Bio-regional Conference & Journey: excellent
Talk on understanding & care of wildlife habitats on highways' verges by MoorMeadows
- Fri. 13th Sept. DCC Investment & Pension Fund Committee meeting – see detailed report above
Soundart Studios: Every Child has a Voice Exhibition launch: highly recommended
- Sat. 14th Sept. Meadowbrook Extravaganza: wonderful community event
- Mon. 16th Sept. Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) County Committee mtg. Discussed DALC becoming a CIC
Climate Emergency meeting Wembury: 5 local parishes meeting to consider creating a joint Action Plan
Staverton Parish Council – Climate Emergency Action Plan inaugural mtg.
- Tues 17th Sept. Meeting with Totnes Against Trash (TAT) to discuss Wombles Litter pick Action on Sat 21.9.19
- Weds 18th Sept. SHDC Members workshop to discuss Climate Emergency Action plan
- Thurs 19th Sept. Celebratory event at Steiner School Dartington to mark 100 years of Steiner Schools: very inspiring.
Bridgetown Alive! Meeting
Totnes Community Development Society AGM
- Fri. 20th Sept. School Strike and Extinction Rebellion protest; Exeter city centre to County Hall. Over 4,000 attended.
- Sat. 21st Sept. Totnes TC Climate Emergency Plan meeting & Totnes Wombles Litter Pick – see report above
- Mon 23rd Sept. SHDC Members Workshop to discuss Joint Local Plan (JLP) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
Meeting with representative from TRESSOC (Totnes Renewable Energy Society) to consider PV options for Pavilions in Totnes.
- Weds 25th Sept. Meeting with DCC Officer regarding illegal camps and residential vehicles in the area.
KEVICCs Foundation Governors meeting
Totnes & District Traffic & Transport Forum – see report above
- Thurs 26th Sept. Informal meeting with SHDC CEO, Leader and TRESSOC rep regarding PV on Totnes Pavillions
SHDC Political Structures Working group
SHDC Full Council: see report above
Cross-party meeting in Exeter regarding Green New Deal: brilliantly addressed by 2 teenagers

- Fri 27th Sept. Totnes Citizens Advice Group – 80th birthday celebration
Dartington Hall Trust – Party in the Town
- Sunday 29th Sept. Littlehempston Beating the Bounds – I met them as a neighbouring parish at Hampstead.
- Mon. 30th Sept. Meeting with TRAYE (Totnes Rural Area Youth Engagement) project youth workers
- Tues 1st October Totnes Travel Partnership meeting – see report above
Informal meeting with residents of Rattery and South Brent to discuss Climate Action plans

Diary Dates

- Weds 9th Oct. 10.30am DCC Cabinet Meeting at County Hall
10.am SHDC DM (Planning) Committee meeting (Meadowbrook application will be on this agenda)
- Sat 12th Oct. 9.30am Dartington Village Hall. TRAYE project Steering Group meeting
- Weds 30th Oct 6.30pm – 8pm Totnes & District Traffic & Transport Forum mtg (Dartmouth Inn, upstairs)
- Thurs 31st Oct. 10am. SHDC Executive meeting

Local Wildlife Workshops: Circulated on behalf of John Green, Energy Officer, Plymouth City Council

Garden Connectivity: Living boundaries replacing garden fences, Village Hall, Noss Mayo, 9:30am-12:30pm Saturday 5th October
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/garden-connectivity-living-boundaries-replacing-garden-fences-tickets-65086047119?aff=ebdssbdestsearch> **Fiona van Es, Ecologist** **Activities:** Meet at 9:30am for talk by Fiona on connectivity between gardens and the adjoining landscape. After tea/coffee, begin planting a hedge.

Hedgehog Friendly Villages, Newton Ferrers Primary School, Wednesday 16th October: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hedgehog-friendly-villages-tickets-65352977515?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Wildlife Community of the Year Launch, Surfing Cow, Holbeton, Sunday 20th October: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wildlife-community-of-the-year-launch-tickets-65297800479?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Planting Native Trees, Wembury Village Hall, Sunday 27th October: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/planting-native-trees-tickets-65352680627?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Everyone is welcome and there is no need to book.