

COUNCIL

5 December 2024

Present:-

Chair: J Hart

Vice-Chair: P Maskell

Councillors T Adams, M Asvachin, Y Atkinson, S Aves, J Bailey, J Berry, F Biederman, J Bradford, J Brazil, J Brook, P Bullivant, R Chesterton, I Chubb, A Connett, D Cox, R Croad, A Davis, A Dewhirst, H Gent, R Gilbert, I Hall, R Hannaford, J Hawkins, L Hellyer, J Hodgson, S Hughes, S Randall Johnson, S Khan, A Leadbetter, C Leaver, D McGeough, J McInnes, J Morrish, R Peart, P Prowse, R Radford, L Samuel, P Sanders, A Saywell, R Scott, D Sellis, C Slade, M Squires, J Trail BEM, P Twiss, C Whitton, J Wilton-Love, M Wrigley and J Yabsley

Apologies:-

Councillors D Barnes, C Channon, G Gribble, M Hartnell, P Henderson, F Letch MBE, I Roome and D Thomas

316 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members they should declare any interests they may have in any item to be considered, prior to any discussion taking place on that item. The details of District and or Town and Parish Twin Hatters was on the attached list - [County councillors who are also district, borough, city, parish or town councillors](#).

Councillor Wilton-Love declared he worked in social care.

317 **Minutes**

The Chair of the Council **MOVED** and it was duly **SECONDED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2024, previously circulated, be signed as a correct record.

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

318 **Announcements**

The Chair of the Council congratulated the Council's Finance and Public Value Team and their collaboration with the Devon Assurance Partnership (DAP), Liberata and the District Councils to review the Council Tax Single Person Discount (SPD) for the County. The team had reached the finals of the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) Awards for Excellence in

Partnership Working (Financial Sustainability). The work to date had resulted in an increase in collectible revenue of £1.4 million.

The Council had also celebrated success at the National Transport Awards ceremony in London, where it was a finalist in the 'Best Collaboration' category, with colleagues from Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR). The Council's entry included the opening of Marsh Barton Railway Station and the many projects around the county to improve bus and rail integration.

The Chair further congratulated Carlyne Hague in her championing and leadership of Occupational Therapy and Occupational Therapists, and Allied Health Professionals and her receipt of a Chief Allied Health Professions Officer Gold Award for Excellence, which only twenty two people nationally received.

Another award had been won by the Council's waste team. The Lottery funded 'Food Rescue project' had won the Food Waste Initiative category at the MRW National Recycling Awards in London on the 26th November. The Council congratulated Emma Croft on her outstanding performance as the project manager, which ensured the success of the project and its legacy.

The Council sent good wishes to the Customer Relations Team (CRT) who were finalists in the [Institute of Customer Relations' Annual UK Customer Satisfaction Awards 2025](#). The winners would be announced at a ceremony in London on 4 March 2025. The Team (CRT) had been shortlisted in the Employee Engagement Strategy category, open to organisations whose strategy had led to an improvement in performance and customer satisfaction. In order to reach the finals, the CRT demonstrated a cohesive employee engagement strategy, a comprehensive communication policy and a positive relationship between management and staff. The awards ceremony was in March 2025.

The Chair then reported on the sad news that the Council's former County Treasurer, Mary Davis, who had worked for the Council for many years, had recently passed away after a short illness. The Chair had sent condolences on behalf of the Council.

319 Important Announcements from the Leader and Cabinet Members

In line with the Cabinet Procedure Rules, the Council could receive any important updates or announcements from the Leader and/or Cabinet Members that could not reasonably wait.

The Leader provided an update for the Council on the Council's budget position in terms of the implications of the provisional settlement information relating to the rural support grant, which was anticipated to be 'repurposed' into a new settlement targeted to councils with the highest deprivation.

Members asked short and pertinent questions on the issue, and expressed concern over the lack of clarity of the financial implications of some of the proposals for the provisional settlement, especially the additional resources required to support rural communities, for example school transport.

The Leader said he would welcome a cross party letter, including Team Devon, be sent to Government which outlined the concern over the potential impact on local government funding and services for local people and communities.

Members also recommended that all parties come together to contact Devon MPs both individually and collectively to seek clarification on the implications and what this means for Devon.

320 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There was no item raised as a matter of urgency.

321 Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) - Appointments

The Council considered the Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (LDS/24/49) which outlined the appointment processes of Members to the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DT CCA).

The Report outlined that on the 29 April 2024, the Council had approved the final proposal for the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DT CCA) for submission to the then Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This had been submitted jointly by both Devon County Council and Torbay Council on 1 May 2024.

It was noted that the DT CCA would be a “body corporate” that would be brought in to being through the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority Regulations 2024.

The draft regulations were outlined in the Report including the requirement to appoint to the Combined County Authority, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee and the caveats on these appointments relating to political proportionality and minimum requirements.

The proposed appointments were outlined below.

Devon and Torbay CCA - Councillor J McInnes (Lead Member), Councillor A Davis and Councillor R Gilbert); Substitute members are Councillor P Twiss, Councillor S Hughes and Councillor L Samuel).

Scrutiny Committee - Councillor P Sanders, R Chesterton, I Chubb (Substitute Member R Peart), J Brazil (Substitute Member A Dewhirst), and Y Atkinson (Substitute C Whitton),

Audit Committee – Councillors R Scott, C Slade, D Sellis, (Substitute Member J Trail), A Dewhirst (Substitute J Brazil) and S Aves (Substitute M Asvachin)

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Hughes and **SECONDED** by Councillor Leaver;

(a) that the Members, as outlined above, be appointed to the Combined County Authority, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Combined County Authority and the Audit Committee of the Combined County Authority to hold office until the date of the quadrennial Elections in May 2025; and

(b) that the Chief Executive be authorised to approve such changes to memberships of the Combined County Authority and Committees, as outlined in the Report, as may be notified from time to time by the relevant political group to which those seats have been allocated by the Council.

The motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

322 Public Participation: Petitions, Questions and Representations

The Leader was presented, by Ms Jane King, with a petition relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme concerning divestment from companies selling weapons to Israel. This was a paper petition supporting an online petition that had in the region of 1,500 signatures.

The Leader indicated that the relevant Cabinet Member or Director would be asked to respond direct to the petitioner on the issues raised, within 15 days.

In accordance with the Council's Public Participation Rules, the Leader and relevant Cabinet Members responded to five questions from members of the public on the following matters.

1. Collapse of Warfleet DCC public road, the long diversion and targeted date for reopening the road;
2. Whether the Council had undertaken a review of relevant policies in light of the Cass Report 2024;
3. Definition of Safeguarding and outcomes for children regarding gender reassignment and additional protected characteristics;
4. Awareness of Investment and Pension Fund Committee on investments in companies arming Israel; and
5. The Rifford Road proposal introducing Floating Bus Stops, and support of the RNIB?

The Cabinet Members and Chairs of Committee's responded orally to any supplementary questions asked at the meeting arising from the above.

Question responses had been sent direct to questioners prior to the meeting.

(NB: A copy of the questions and answers are available on the webpages of the meeting and any supplementary questions and answers may be observed through the [webcast of this meeting](#))

323 Petitions from Members of the Council

There was no Petition received from a Member of the Council.

324 Questions from Members of the Council

In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules, the relevant Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs provided written responses to ten questions submitted by Members of the Council relating to the following matters

1. Closure of Warfleet road due to wall collapse and timescales;
2. Broadband rollout through the Connecting Devon and Somerset contract, and impacts for communities within the Exminster & Haldon County division;
3. Retaining wall collapse on the A379 Torquay Road at Shaldon and timescale of resolution;
4. The number of school streets in Devon;
5. Role of Police and Crime Panel, and reassurance in of the suspension of two Chief Constables;
6. Terracycle and the recycling industry enabling local communities to operate small scale recycling schemes;
7. The number of schools in Devon that have 20mph zones outside their schools and the numbers that do not;
8. Whitestone Parish Council and Lower Hare Farm judgement;
9. Alternative Provision (AP) providers, pressure on Council finances and reassurance the Council's finances were resilient; and
10. Planning Application DCC/4293/2022 and s73 variation at Lower Hare Farm). The role of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (Article 3 Paragraph 10 and 11) and awareness of the Council and any rectification required.

The relevant Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs also responded orally, as appropriate, to any supplementary questions arising therefrom.

(A copy of the questions and answers are available on the webpages of the meeting and any supplementary questions and answers may be observed through the [webcast of this meeting](#))

325 Terms of Reference for Team Devon Joint Committee

The Council considered the Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services & Director of Performance and Partnerships (LDS/24/50) regarding the appointment of a Team Devon Joint Committee.

The Report outlined the history of the Team Devon (Leaders and Chief Executives) partnership that brought the County Council, District Councils, National Park Authorities and Devon Association of Local Councils together to enable a joint approach to common issues and shared challenges.

Team Devon (Leaders and Chief Executives) had agreed in principle that the establishment of a Team Devon Joint Committee to formalise the existing partnership would: improve partnership governance; enable transparent decision-making; create opportunities to take Team Devon's work on shared priorities further forward; and enable it to inform the work of any future Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.

The proposed constitution for Team Devon Joint Committee was attached as Appendix 1, outlining governance purpose, membership, functions and meetings.

The Joint Committee would meet in public at least quarterly and, following a Team Devon meeting on the 4 December, it was suggested that the first meeting is held in March 2025 (not 8 January 2025 as per the Report). Devon County Council would be the Administering Authority for the Joint Committee and would provide secretarial, legal, financial and communications support to the Committee.

The Leader of the Council **MOVED** and Councillor Davis **SECONDED**

(a) that the Council's membership of and participation in the Team Devon Joint Committee on the basis of the constitution, set out in Appendix 1, be approved, and delegated authority also be given to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make minor amendments thereto;

(b) that the Leader of the Council be appointed as the Council's representative on the Team Devon Joint Committee;

(c) that the Deputy Leader of the Council be appointed as the substitute for the Leader on the Team Devon Joint Committee; and

(d) that the initial focus of the Team Devon Joint Committee's work on the preparation of a Devon-wide housing strategy and also, in the context of devolution to Devon and Torbay, economic growth, employment and skills be endorsed.

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

326 Cabinet Member Reports

(Councillor Hall declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of being joint Chair of the One Eastern Devon Partnership Forum (OEDPF))

The Council received reports from the relevant Cabinet Members on matters of interest or service developments relating to their remits which had occurred since the previous meeting or were likely to have an impact in the future, as set out below:

a) Economic Recovery and Skills – the Report gave service updates relating to the Heart of the South West Trading Standards Service, Partnerships, Economic infrastructure, Learn Devon and Training and Skills.

The Cabinet Member responded to questions on St Modwen's, the wider roll out of training and skills programmes, food justice and the 'Good Food Strategy', the Prosper programme, Growth Hub, CDS and the Freeport.

b) Children's SEND Improvement Services – this update focused upon National Audit Report on Children and Young People With Special Education Needs, the autumn budget and impacts on SEND, ongoing pressures around the High Needs Block / Discretionary Schools Grant, launch of the SEND strategy, the Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision Toolkit, Capital Investment in Further Education, SEND Customer Service Provision, Financial Management Action and Multi Agency activity. The Report also outlined performance relating to EHCP timeliness and annual reviews and the work being undertaken to transform the Service.

The Cabinet Member responded to further questions on service pressures, timeliness of EHCP's, achievement of savings, spend regarding placements, approaches to partnerships, support from the Scrutiny Committee's, assurances regarding communications with families, requests for further data (section 5.1), role of the Devon Assurance Partnership and their work with the service, ICT improvements and managing demand.

c) Integrated Adult Social Care & Health – the update highlighted progress within the improvement journey which focused upon improvement, co-production and sustainability. It gave a CQC inspection update and matters surrounding performance and partnerships such as the Section 75 agreement between DCC and DPT for the provision mental health services, Better Crae Fund and the Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Adults Partnership. It also reflected on the impact of the Autumn budget on a number of adult social care specific announcements.

The Cabinet Member responded to questions on waiting lists under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), preparation for CQC, the important role of informal partnerships and legislative changes that present risk (capacity) in the personal care market.

327 **Councillor Complaints Process**

The Chair of the Council **MOVED** and Councillor Connett **SECONDED** that the proposed new process for dealing with Councillor Complaints, as outlined in the Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (LDS/24/27), and as endorsed by the Standards Committee (14 October 2024) (Minute 59 refers) be approved.

The Motion was put to the vote a declared **CARRIED**.

328 **Minutes**

In accordance with Standing Order 13(2), the Chair of the Council **MOVED** and it was duly **SECONDED** that the Minutes of the undermentioned meetings of Committees be endorsed.

Appeals Committee	-	2 September, 7 October, 24 October and 26 November 2024
Investment & Pension Fund Committee	-	13 September & 2 December 2024
Procedures Committee	-	19 September & 18 November 2024

(including approval of Minute 79 relating to the adoption of a protocol (attached) to support site visits for the Land and Property Committee, and the associated update to the Constitution)

Audit Committee	-	30 September 2024
Standards Committee	-	14 October 2024 <i>(including approval of Minute 59 relating to the adoption of a revised Councillor Complaints process for uploading to the website – dealt with earlier on the agenda)</i>
Development Management Committee	-	23 October 2024
Appointments, Remuneration and Chief Office Conduct Committee	-	7 November 2024
Public Rights of Way Committee	-	14 November 2024
Children’s Scrutiny	-	16 September & 11 November 2024
Health & Adult Care Scrutiny	-	23 September & 21 November 2024
Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny	-	25 September & 28 November 2024.

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

329 Divestment from Pension Scheme (Minute 313 of 5 September 2024)

Pursuant to County Council Minute 313 of 5 September 2024 relating to the Notice of Motion set out below as previously submitted and formally moved and seconded by Councillor Hodgson that:

Further to withdrawing over £2 million in investments from companies selling arms to Israel. Devon County Council now commits to investigating withdrawing the £84 million that remains invested through its investments and pension funds in such companies, including Rolls Royce (£1,951,241), Barclays Bank (£12,889,533), BAE Systems (£4,969,449), and Babcock (£360,850).

Devon County Council seeks immediate withdrawal of these investments, particularly in light of the tragic loss of over 20,000 children in Gaza. Our pension fund should not support activities contributing to such atrocities.

Devon County Council seeks to fully divest from these companies and to uphold values of peace, justice, and ethical responsibility.

and having had regard to the advice of the Investment and Pension Fund Committee as set out in Minute 38 of 2 December 2024:

Councillor Morrish **MOVED** and Councillor Trail **SECONDED** that the Investment and Pension Fund Committees advice be accepted and that the Notice of Motion be amended to read that Council;

- (a) Expresses solidarity with the innocent people directly affected by the ongoing situation in Israel and Gaza;
- (b) Supports the engagement activity undertaken on behalf of the Devon Pension Fund by the Brunel Pension Partnership with companies operating in high risk areas including Gaza and the West Bank to use their influence to promote positive human rights outcomes;
- (c) Supports the exclusion from investment portfolios of companies manufacturing controversial weapons (cluster bombs, biological and chemical weapons, antipersonnel landmines);
- (d) Affirms the inclusion in the Pension Fund investment strategy of the allocation to the Global Developed Paris Aligned Equity Fund, as part of the commitment to work towards net zero investment portfolios; and
- (e) Has officers and members engage in conversations with Brunel representatives and other pool members on ensuring that the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as set out in

paragraph 3.10 of the report to the Investment and Pension Fund Committee, are fully reflected in investment policies.

The amendment in the name of Councillor Morrish was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**, therefore becoming the substantive motion.

Councillor Hodgson then moved that the motion be amended as follows, with the additional wording in red.

- (a) Express solidarity with the innocent people directly affected by the ongoing situation in Israel and Gaza;
- (b) Support the **meaningful** engagement activity undertaken on behalf of the Devon Pension Fund by the Brunel Pension Partnership with companies operating in high risk areas including Gaza and the West Bank to use their influence to promote positive human rights outcomes;
- (c) Support the exclusion from investment portfolios of companies manufacturing controversial weapons (cluster bombs, biological and chemical weapons, antipersonnel landmines);
- (d) Support the exclusion from investment portfolios of companies producing armaments, that are specifically flagged by the United Nations as supplying a state suspected of carrying out serious Human Rights violations, war crimes and / or genocide.**
- (e) Affirm the inclusion in the Pension Fund investment strategy of the allocation to the Global Developed Paris Aligned Equity Fund, as part of the commitment to work towards net zero investment portfolios; and
- (f) Have officers and members engage in conversations with Brunel representatives and other pool members on ensuring that the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as set out in paragraph 3.10 of the report, are fully reflected in investment policies.

Councillor Hodgson **MOVED** and it was duly **SECONDED** that there be a recorded vote on the amendment.

The motion was put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

(In accordance with Standing Order 32(4) Councillors Adams, Asvachin, Aves, Bradford, Brazil, Connett, Cox, Dewhirst, Gent, Leaver, Whitton and Wrigley asked that their vote in favour of the motion be recorded)

The amendment in the name of Councillor Hodgson was then put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

(In accordance with Standing Order 32(4) Councillors Adams, Asvachin, Aves, Brazil, Connett, Cox, Dewhirst, Leaver, Whitton and Wrigley asked that their vote in favour of the amendment be recorded)

The motion in the name of Councillor Morrish was then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

330 Young Carers Covenant (Minute 314 of 5 September 2024)

Pursuant to County Council Minute 314 of 5 September 2024 relating to the Notice of Motion set out below as previously submitted and formally moved and seconded by Councillor Letch that:

To receive and consider the recommendations of the Cabinet (Minute 644) as an amendment to the following Notice of Motion submitted previously to the Council by Councillor Letch and referred thereto in accordance with Standing Order 8(2), namely

The Young Carers Covenant is a UK-wide commitment to young carers and young adult carers, setting out ten key outcomes that young carers from across the UK have said are key to improving their lives. It was drawn up by Carers Trust and members of the Young Carers Alliance and was launched on Young Carers Action Day 2024.

Any organisation or individual in a position to take action to help achieve these outcomes is urged to sign up to the Covenant.

The work to date by the Council on supporting the covenant is welcomed, but the Council and its Members are asked to continue this journey, sign the young carers covenant and undertake to implement its aims.

and having had regard to the advice of the Cabinet set out in Minute 644 of 13 November 2024:

Councillor McInnes **MOVED** and Councillor Davis **SECONDED** that the Cabinet's advice be accepted and that Council;

(a) support the proposed review of the existing contract so that the contract delivers a more dynamic approach to supporting our young carers and their families; so that young carers receive the right help from the right service at the right time;

(b) acknowledge the work of the Place Called Home Board in undertaking their best practice consultation;

(c) support progression of actions through the existing Steering Group reporting into the Place Called Home Board, so that the Council can evidence what it is delivering against the key changes identified by

young carers and submit the application for the Covenant once the new contract has been developed and awarded; and

(d) ask the Childrens Scrutiny Committee Members to monitor progress against the actions identified by the Young Carer's Steering Group and update Cabinet next year on the proposal for the new contract.

The amendment in the name of Councillor McInnes was then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED** and subsequently thereafter also **CARRIED** as the substantive motion.

331 Winning A Better Devolution Deal For Devon (Minute 315 of 5 September 2024)

Pursuant to County Council Minute 315 of 5 September 2024 relating to the Notice of Motion set out below as previously submitted and formally moved and seconded by Councillor Leaver that:

The commitment of the new Labour Government to Devolution is welcomed by Devon County Council.

Council now believes it is possible to negotiate a much better devolution deal for Devon than the spartan arrangements approved by the last Government which disregarded and marginalised the value and importance of the City, Borough and District Councils in the County.

Council seeks a genuine partnership with local councils across the county council area and partner councils in establishing a new devolution deal that will help deliver and secure jobs, skills and economic development, along with much needed socially affordable housing, and help develop our education and healthcare sectors among others.

This Council therefore calls for no further action to be taken on the old Devon/Torbay devolution deal and for the Council to open new discussions with the Government on a revised deal for Devon, including Torbay and Plymouth and to also invite other councils neighbouring Devon to participate.

and having had regard to the advice of the Cabinet set out in Minute 623 of 9 October 2024:

Councillor McInnes **MOVED** and Councillor Davis **SECONDED** that the Cabinet's advice be accepted and that Council;

(a) notes the new Labour Government's decision to finalise the regulations to establish the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority which will give effect to the agreed devolution deal;

(b) acknowledges that on 24 April 2024 full Council agreed the final proposal for a Devon and Torbay Council devolution deal to be submitted to the Secretary of State. The proposal has been fully consulted upon. The proposal was reviewed by two separate governments, and the Council is delighted that it is progressing;

(c) note that the deal represents the start of a positive and productive relationship with Government which can lead to wider and deeper opportunities. Complementing Torbay and its coastal position, Devon County Council and Torbay Council would encourage the Devon District Forum to consider nominating an urban and a rural District Council representative to sit on the CCA Board once established. Once the Devon and Torbay CCA is established, the Council welcome the prospects of widening the remit of the CCA, to take on additional devolved funding and powers from national government; and

(d) note that the opportunity for Plymouth to join the Devon and Torbay CCA remains open, should Plymouth wish to pursue this.

The amendment in the name of Councillor McInnes was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

Cllr Leaver then **MOVED** and Councillor Connett **SECONDED** that the motion be amended as follows, additional wording outlined in red text.

(a) notes the new Labour Government's decision to finalise the regulations to establish the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority which will give effect to the agreed devolution deal;

(b) acknowledge that on 24 April 2024 full Council agreed the final proposal for a Devon and Torbay Council devolution deal to be submitted to the Secretary of State. The proposal has been fully consulted upon. The proposal was reviewed by two separate governments, and the Council is delighted that it is progressing;

(c) note that the deal represents the start of a positive and productive relationship with Government which can lead to wider and deeper opportunities. Complementing Torbay and its coastal position, Devon County Council and Torbay Council would encourage the Devon District Forum to consider nominating an urban and a rural District Council representative to sit on the CCA Board once established. Once the Devon and Torbay CCA is established, the Council welcome the prospects of widening the remit of the CCA, to take on additional devolved funding and powers from national government; and

(d) note that the opportunity for Plymouth to join the Devon and Torbay CCA remains open, should Plymouth wish to pursue this **and that the Council keeps keep an open mind about possible opportunities for working with councils both to the east and west of Devon on future**

Combined Authority arrangements, to ensure the greatest benefits are achieved for the people of Devon, depending on the detail laid out in the English Devolution White Paper about what may be possible.

(e) note that publication later this month by the Government of the English Devolution White Paper will provide greater clarity about potential opportunities to deepen and widen devolution.

The amendment in the name of Councillor Leaver was then put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

The motion in the name of Councillor McInnes was then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

The Chair agreed to exercise his discretion and vary the order of business to take agenda items 19 and 20, prior to agenda item 18.

332 Control of Local Bus Services

Councillor Adams **MOVED** the motion in the name of Councillor Atkinson and Councillor Whitton **SECONDED**

That Devon County Council as the transport authority together with the new combined authority, gives serious consideration to take advantage of the package of measures announced by the Transport Secretary on 9th September 2024 to empower local leaders to take control of their bus services . The expectation is that these measures will be the first stop on the journey to better buses.

The Council undertakes to report into the feasibility of these proposals for Devon and how these powers may be used to improve bus services.

That the County Council consider bringing strategic partners such as District Councils into the discussion, as the provision of effective bus services is something that affects us all and does not recognise boundaries.

In accordance with Standing Order 6(6) the Notice of Motion was referred, without discussion, to the Cabinet for consideration.

333 **Children's Social Care Policy Statement.**

Councillor Aves **MOVED** and Councillor Adams **SECONDED**

This Council Notes:

On 18 November the Department for Education published a policy statement 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive', its new Children's Social Care policy statement, setting out the government's vision for reform and a legislative agenda to reset the children's social care system, both in terms of how national government collaborates with local government, but also in taking a whole system approach to reform.

The Secretary of State states she wants to break down barriers to opportunity. The document also outlines a commitment to support children to live in family settings where children cannot remain at home, including through kinship or foster care, rather than residential care.

The Devon County Labour Group supports this aim and believes Devon County Council must commit to further strengthen what it does to keep families together and children safe.

Alongside this, the statement sets out ambitions to fix the broken care market, invest in key enablers and ensure the system is working effectively for vulnerable children and families.

A Guardian article on children's homes on 18th November pointed out that three years ago the Competition and Markets Authority found Children's homeowners in England, Scotland and Wales were making excessive profits, while carrying too much debt - exposing children and councils to unacceptable risks and exploiting children for profit.

The needs of children rather than market forces should shape where children's homes are placed, and that children are placed in the most appropriate homes.

This Council resolves to:

1. work with the new government to reset and improve the children's social care system in Devon as set out in the new document 'Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive' from The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities .
2. welcome the new powers for Ofsted to investigate multiple homes being run by the same company, acting on the recommendations made in response to stop abuse from happening in children's homes.

3. improve the residential care opportunities in Devon to keep children in care near families, friends, and their school where appropriate.
4. increase the number of in-house residential care facilities and use not-for-profit providers, and, become involved in the setting up of Regional Care Co-operatives.
5. give a secure undertaking that they will not place children in homes that are unregistered or just for profit.
6. provide or use not-for-profit homes where children and care experienced young people have access to properly trained staff who are able to give them the support, skills, and connections to friends and relatives that will continue to support them throughout their life.

In accordance with Standing Order 6(6) the Notice of Motion was referred, without discussion, to the Cabinet for consideration.

334 **Protecting British Family Farms and Preserving Rural Communities**

The Chair had previously agreed to exercise his discretion and vary the order of business to take agenda items 19 and 20, prior to agenda item 18.

(The Director of Legal and Democratic Services reminded Members that the general dispensation relating to being a land, business, property owner or leasee in the administrative County of Devon covered them in the debate on this matter).

(Councillor Wrigley had publicly registered his vote on this matter in the House of Commons, thereby being predetermined and left the Chamber during the debate and vote)

Councillor Samuel **MOVED** and Councillor Gilbert **SECONDED** that in accordance with Standing Order 6(6), the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Samuel be considered at this meeting.

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

Councillor Samuel then **MOVED** and Councillor Gilbert **SECONDED**

This Council notes with concern the proposed changes to inheritance tax announced by the Labour Government in the recent Autumn budget, which would scrap Agricultural Property Relief (APR). APR has been instrumental in allowing British family farms to remain intact across generations, supporting food security, sustaining rural communities, and aiding environmental stewardship.

This tax is estimated to impact over 70,000(1) family farms, leaving the average farming family with a tax bill of at least £240,000(2), which will force many to sell portions of their land or close entirely, paving the way for corporate ownership over family ownership.

The Council believes that this tax will have severe impacts:

1. Food Security: Selling off land or closing farms will put our national food independence at risk, at a time when global stability is already fragile. British family farms are critical to ensuring a steady supply of homegrown food.
2. Rural Community Stability: Family farms are the foundation of rural Britain, contributing to local jobs, schools, and essential services. Labour's proposed tax risks destabilising communities, eroding the rural way of life, and causing a negative ripple effect across the countryside.
3. Environmental Stewardship: Farms cover 70% of the UK's land, with family farms playing a leading role in nature recovery, biodiversity, and sustainable land management. The sale and fragmentation of these lands would hinder conservation efforts and undermine environmental initiatives.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Oppose the Labour Government's changes to inheritance tax affecting family farms.
- Advocate for the exemption of family farms to preserve the UK's food security, rural communities, environmental initiatives

This Council urges all Councillors to stand with Britain's family farms, to support our rural communities, and to protect the environment by formally rejecting this proposed "family farm tax" and asks for a cross party letter from Group Leaders of this Council to write to the Chancellor expressing the concerns about the inheritance tax policy on farm land over £1m (which will come into effect in 2026), outlining the detrimental effect on the future of farming in Devon, food security, environmental stewardship and the need to sustain rural communities.

References

1. CLA 2024 October <https://www.cla.org.uk/news/help-the-cla-save-your-family-business/>
2. AHDB 2024 October <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/ahdb-response-to-budget-2024>

Councillor Connett **MOVED** and Councillor Brazil **SECONDED** that the motion be amended as follows, with additional text shown in red.

"This Council **understands the importance and value of farming to the national economy and especially the rural landscape of Devon. Council also** notes with concern the proposed changes to inheritance tax, announced by **the Government** in the **Autumn budget**, which would

scrap Agricultural Property Relief (APR). Agricultural Property Relief has been instrumental in allowing British family farms to remain intact across generations, and aiding environmental stewardship.

Devon County Council is proud that it has maintained a County Farms Estate of 3,873 hectares (9,570 acres) which currently comprises 65 fully equipped residential dairy and mixed livestock farms categorised into starter and progression units ranging from 37 to 301 acres. The Farms Estate aims to provide people with their first opportunity to farm but with a view that within a reasonable time frame, they secure an independent livelihood from agriculture.

The Government's proposed Inheritance Tax change is estimated to impact over 70,000 (1) family farms, leaving the average farming family with a tax bill of at least £24,000 (2), which will force many to sell portions of their land or close entirely, paving the way for corporate ownership over family ownership.

The Council believes that this tax will have severe impacts:

1. Food Security: Selling off land or closing farms will put our national food independence at risk, at a time when global stability is already fragile. British family farms are critical to ensuring a steady supply of homegrown food.
2. Rural Community Stability: Family farms are the foundation of rural Britain, contributing to local jobs, schools, and essential services. Labour's proposed tax risks destabilising communities, eroding the rural way of life, and causing a negative ripple effect across the countryside.
3. Environmental Stewardship: Farms cover 70% of the UK's land, with family farms playing a leading role in nature recovery, biodiversity, and sustainable land management. The sale and fragmentation of these lands would hinder conservation efforts and undermine environmental initiatives.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Oppose the Government's changes to inheritance tax affecting family farms
- Advocate for the exemption of family farms to preserve the UK's food security, rural communities, environmental initiatives.
- Commit to maintaining the County Council Farms Estate at the current acreage as a minimum.
- Where possible, Devon County Council will increase the acreage and number of County Farms, so offering more people a supported route into farming and agriculture.

This Council urges all Councillors to stand with Britain's family farms, to support our rural communities, and to protect the environment by formally rejecting this proposed "family farm tax" and asks for a cross party letter from Group Leaders of this council to write to the Chancellor expressing the concerns about the inheritance tax policy on farm land over £1m (which will come into effect in 2026), outlining the detrimental effect on the future of farming in Devon, food security, environmental stewardship and the need to sustain rural communities.

The Chair of the Council **MOVED** and it was duly **SECONDED** that in accordance with Standing Order 30, Standing Order 14(4) be suspended to permit the motion and amendment to be debated at the same time.

The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

Following the debate, Councillor Samuel agreed to accept the amendment and incorporate it into the motion.

The Motion (incorporating the amendment) was then put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

(In accordance with Standing Order 32(4) Councillors Brazil, Connett, Cox, and Dewhirst asked that their vote in favour of the motion, as amended, be recorded).

[NOTES:

The Minutes of this meeting and of any Committee referred to above are available on the County Council's Website.

Minutes should be read in association with any Reports or documents referred to therein, for a complete record.

A recording of the webcast of this meeting will also be available to view for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting, at <http://www.devoncc.public-tv/core/portal/home>

The Meeting started at 2.15 pm and finished at 6.46 pm