

## Report of the Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity

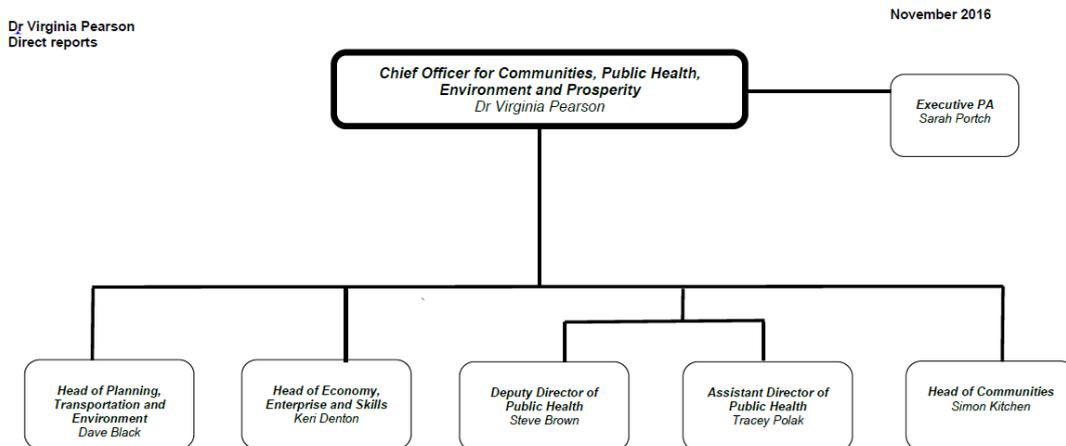
### 1. Organisation of service areas

#### 1.1 Introduction

In November 2016, following agreement on a new organisational structure, the County Council's management structure changed to create two new place-based divisions: one which largely covers delivery responsibilities (Highways Infrastructure and Waste), and the other covering the diverse range of strategic and planning aspects of "place" (Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity).

1.2 The CoPHEP (Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity) leadership team is set out in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: CoPHEP leadership team structure chart**



1.3 This mid-year report for Scrutiny covers the functions of Communities, Environment and Prosperity, i.e. the service areas of Communities (Head of Service: Simon Kitchen), Planning, Transportation and Environment (Head of Service: Dave Black) and Economy, Enterprise and Skills (Head of Service: Keri Denton).

1.4 Public health services are considered separately by the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee.

## **2. Communities**

**Head of service: Simon Kitchen**

### **2.1 How the Council's strategic objectives are being delivered**

The Communities team in its current form was established in November 2016 to deliver four key areas of the Council's duties:-

- commissioning of library and heritage services, Devon's youth services and support around domestic and sexual violence;
- community safety and the co-ordination of work preventing extremism and radicalisation;
- community development across the county; and
- work to support a range of vulnerable communities including the resettlement of Syrian families, gypsies and travellers and suicide prevention.

The team has made significant progress across each of these four areas. This report includes some examples of this development. The organisations set up as independent public service mutuals to deliver libraries (Libraries Unlimited) and youth services (DYS Space) continue to flourish and develop their offer and impact across Devon. The Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse strategy (DSVA) and five year action plan to end DSVA in Devon has been published and the team is working on first year priorities around workforce development, communications and healthy relationships in schools.

The Safer Devon Partnership, Prevent Partnership and Channel Panel have each seen significant redevelopment, refocus and changes to membership and terms of reference in order to tackle growing challenges in Devon around serious crime, exploitation and radicalisation.

A new Community needs assessment and strategy has been developed with the collaboration and engagement of a wide range of statutory and voluntary and community sector partners. The team will deliver a comprehensive action plan drawing on the strategy's guiding principles, in collaboration with local partners. This will help to develop much needed capacity, learning and co-ordination around crowdfunding, community exchanges of skills and capacity and the development of volunteers and organisations to support this work.

### **2.2 Mid-year budget position**

The core functions of the service are forecast to remain in budget for the current financial year. An overspend of £333,000 is forecast pending an organisation wide review of resources and services relating to data and intelligence.

### **2.3 Future strategic issues for this service area**

The ongoing financial pressures continue to require the service area to challenge the current delivery of work to meet the Council's statutory duties and to meet the needs of people and communities across Devon, including those most vulnerable and hard to reach.

Proposed changes to Home Office funding and delivery of the Government's Counter Terrorism response and strategy is anticipated to increase burdens and expectations

on Local Authorities and it is likely that the Council will need to increase resources to support this work in the future. Alongside this as the crime profile continues to evolve the community safety focus will need to shift to people and communities at greatest risk of serious crime and exploitation.

As organisations continue to shrink and raise thresholds in assessing need, the Council should evolve and expand support to communities and organisations that help people in need, and develop local infrastructure and connections. Strong collaboration, good leadership and shared endeavour across communities and partners as outlined within the Council's Community Strategy, will be required.

National changes to welfare and benefits will continue to impact the most vulnerable and the impacts to local people in relation to housing, homelessness and levels of debt are still being understood. Homelessness continues to impact people and communities across Devon.

There remains an ongoing shortage of sites to meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller population in the County often resulting in unlawful encampments and tensions with the wider community. It is hoped that following recent good work and shared commitment new sites, both permanent and temporary will be found and developed.

### **3. Planning, Transportation and Environment**

**Head of service: Dave Black**

#### **3.1 How the Council's strategic objectives are being delivered**

The environment team have a number of initiatives focusing on **resilience**, these focus on improved flood protection and protecting and enhancing the value of the historic environment and nature in terms of biodiversity and landscape. Both these elements require working with a range of Local Communities, Partnerships and Stakeholders and National bodies. Examples of this are the flood protection works at Modbury and River Catchment Initiative in Northern Devon

Promoting sustainable travel and access to the countryside aims to improve opportunities for **healthy** lifestyles. The service subsidises a number of rural public transport routes and works with other partners such as Health to develop a Total Transport offer. Examples of a sustainable transport are the Healthy New Town initiative at Cranbrook and the development of the rural and urban cycle network.

There are a range of Community Transport groups supported by the Council that aim at providing improved transport fatalities for those people that have very few other transport options. These are generally related to **Health** either in access to facilities or to communities. This is recognised by the number of Communities Groups and the recent awards day.

The provision of sufficient and appropriate school places is key to future prosperity. In 2016/17 for primary children 96% first preferences met and nearly 99% any preference met, for Secondary intake: 96% first preferences met and 99% any preference met. Examples of this are the new school at Trinity and South Molton

The provision for additional housing and employment is key to the future prosperity of the Devon. The service aims to be a catalyst for this and help in providing key

infrastructure such as highway access and education. Several recent high profile schemes have been completed or are under construction such as access to the new Industrial Estate at Roundswell and the Tithebarn Lane link which will facilitate the continued expansion of the East of Exeter. For education we are planning new primary schools in Barnstaple and Okehampton.

The peripheral local of Devon means improved national **connectivity** is essential. Following an initiative by Devon and Somerset the improvements to the A303 are beginning to taken place with the DfT agreed schemes for the A303 at Sparkford and Stonehenge. Devon has submitted a proposal for improving the A30 through East Devon and is soon to submit a proposal for improving the North Devon Link. We are working with the Authorities in the South West Peninsula to promote a programme of further highway schemes. The Peninsula Rail Task Force as submitted a long term plan to government for future improvements to the rail network that serve the South West.

There are a series of initiatives focused on driver and cyclist use of the road network are aimed at improving road **safety**. Examples of this are the “Learn to Live” initiative where we work with partners to promote a greater recognition of the potential hazards of driving to younger drivers.

### **3.2 Mid-year budget position**

The current forecast is a break even for PTE. There is a potential underspend but there are also some unexpected pressures due to increase cost of provision of free bus passes for over 65 and other smaller pressures including provision of bikeability funding.

### **3.3 Future strategic issues for this service area**

The biggest area of work across the Service is to maintain the existing level of growth and the development of a new Strategic Plan for the Greater Exeter area. The east of Exeter development continues at pace with a new longer term master plan for Cranbrook emerging this will take the development up to 6,500 dwellings requiring new schools, transport connections and enhancements to the environmental. A bid has also been submitted to government for enabling funding for south west Exeter. The Greater Exeter Strategy covers a large proportion of Devon and the four districts of Exeter, Mid Devon, Teignbridge and East Devon. The current adopted plans have approximately 2,500 dwellings per year. It would not be unreasonable to suggest this trajectory will need to continue as population increases and this could result in the need for 50,000 houses over a 20 years period. The impact of this level of growth on the education, transport, health and social infrastructure required for Devon is substantial. In addition this will have an impact on our built and natural environment. A range of officers and disciplines are involved in this significant project. Consultation on concepts is likely to be later in 2018.

In Northern Devon the key issues is the future development of the North Devon Link Road. This is deemed a key issue in the future growth of the area where GDP is one of the lowest in the country. The bid to Government is due in December and a decision on funding is unlikely before summer 2018. The work undertaken to develop the bid is being managed mainly in house and crosses a full range of disciplines include flood risk, ecology, landscape, historic environment and traffic/economics.

In south west Devon the Local Plan is about to go to Public Examination, most of the growth is in Devon albeit close to the edge of Plymouth. Sherford is planned to have 5,500 dwelling and Woolwell 2,000 dwellings. We have been working hard to ensure the house building in Sherford gains momentum and this has had a recent boost with the commencement of construction of the new Primary School and funding secured for the High Street. The ongoing development of Sherford will continue to require significant resources in terms of flood risk, ecology, landscape, planning, transport and education. A member of staff has recently taken up the role of Plymouth Urban Fringe Team Manager.

#### **4. Economy, Enterprise and Skills**

**Head of service: Keri Denton**

##### **4.1 How the Council's strategic objectives are being delivered**

The Economy, Enterprise and Skills Service has brought together Trading Standards, Adult Community Learning, Post 16 Education, Economy and Enterprise. The Service has contributed and supported the Council's five strategic objectives in a number of ways and some examples are provided below.

The joint Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards Service continues to perform well. The work it is undertaking to raise awareness on scams and doorstep crime and in preventing the sale of age restricted products to under aged young people is making a real contribution to keeping people safe and protecting the most vulnerable in our communities. Working with businesses to remove regulatory barriers, helping create a level playing field by addressing unfair practices, its support for farming and other rural businesses and efforts to ensure consumer confidence all have a positive effect on the local economy. It has successfully prosecuted a number of rogue traders and works at a national level to promote a Buy with Confidence Scheme, which supports a range of businesses and consumers.

Learn Devon, our Adult Community Learning Service, provides a range of skills and training support to adults and young people across the County. This provision includes delivering apprenticeships, basic skills and employability skills and is successfully supporting some of most disadvantaged individuals into employment. The Service is currently supporting a Council wide initiative to provide internships for those with a disability and will be taking on two individuals to work within the Service as part of a pilot phase. Learn Devon is also actively exploring opportunities to work with District colleagues and the wider Devon business community on supporting local employment creation and assisting those furthest from the labour market to access related work, aligning with our priorities around knowledgeable people, thriving communities and resourceful business.

The Service continues to promote good careers advice and guidance within our schools and colleges to help support young people into work and a career path. We place a particular emphasis on vulnerable young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming NEET – not in education, employment or training. We are delivering a programme across the Heart of the South West to promote Enterprise in Schools under a national approach from the Careers and Enterprise Company, and currently have 23 enterprise advisors working with 23 schools in the county. The Service also supports a range of wider activity for those most at risk of economic exclusion, through its management of transition services and other activity with Careers South West. Joint work is currently underway between Education and EES colleagues to explore how this crucial area might be built upon over the next year.

Developing new workspace at the Exeter Science Park, Skypark and Okehampton is supporting new employment and growth opportunities for local people and businesses contributing to creating a prosperous economy. The Service has also successfully secured around £1,564,000 external ERDF funding and has launched three new programmes to support businesses. The first is a new business growth service aimed at Small Medium Enterprises worth a total of £1.6 m, the second is a programme to support and create new social enterprises worth around £1.8 m and the third is a new initiative to support innovation within the health and social care sector worth around £1.1 m.

The Connecting Devon and Somerset programme is supporting businesses and residents to become better connected through the deployment of new superfast broadband provision and looks set to have achieved the target for phase one of 278,000 premises and is working with new suppliers to mobilise a second phase which should see an additional 60,000 homes and businesses connected.

We operate two successful LEADER grant schemes worth a total of £3m aimed at supporting rural communities. These are within the Blackdown Hills and Mid Devon and a variety of grants have been made available to 50 organisations (18 of which are businesses) . These programmes are designed by local communities and are excellent examples of how we are working alongside communities and supporting their resilience. The Making it Local LAG is currently the leading Local Action Group in the country in terms of delivery.

#### **4.2 Mid-year budget position**

The Service is predicting out-turning to budget, although there are emerging budget pressures which are likely to require management action. These relate to some of the Service's income generation opportunities not being realised, despite success in securing external funding, and the time and capacity that this approach requires. The Service continues to deliver a range of contracts and services, including on behalf of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The joint Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards Service is currently on target with its 2017/18 budget and is starting to plan and implement reductions ready for meeting its 2018/19 saving targets...

The Service delivers a significant capital programme, including employment space, broadband and the industrial estate portfolio. There is a revenue budget allocated to support these schemes and to maintain the capital spend profile.

#### **4.3 Future strategic issues for this service area**

There are a number of strategic issues facing the Service. Close working with the Local Enterprise Partnership and effectively influencing alternative funding streams from Government remain the critical issues over the next 12 months or so. This includes supporting the establishment of the Joint Committee and implementing the Heart of the South West productivity strategy, once it has been agreed. This includes influencing the proposed national Shared Prosperity Fund and responding to the national Industrial Strategy, Sector Deal propositions and other policies and approaches such as Skills Advisory Panels, Careers Strategy and Business Rate Retention. Resourcing and having the capacity to undertake this and influence these significant agendas is a requirement going forward.

Maintaining a focus on income generation as part of the budget saving strategy for the Service is also a strategic issue, along with maintaining this activity as the base budget for the service has been reduced. Balancing the Council's priorities alongside activity which is externally funded will continue to require careful management. Part of the Service's remit is to support raising commercial awareness across the Authority and managing this corporate priority along with the main Service performance will also require careful management. Raising income from our assets and land holdings and the opportunities for this within our industrial estate portfolio are areas of focus for the Service over the next 12 months.

Potential expansion of joint working approaches for parts of the Service, including Trading Standards remain a strategic issue for the Service and will require effective resourcing.

Nationally, there are several regulatory issues which could impact on local authority delivery of trading standards. The Food Standards Agency continues to develop proposals which could see a shift in responsibilities and a reduction in grant funding for certain areas of work. There are also separate calls for a national body to oversee product safety regulation and for the regionalisation of trading standards.

Prioritisation of activities is likely to be required, and this will potentially have an impact on the Service's ability to target other external funding opportunities.

Dr Virginia Pearson  
Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity

**Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for Community, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity: Councillor Roger Croad

Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills: Councillor Stuart Barker

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools: Councillor James McInnes

Cabinet Member for Resources and Asset Management: Councillor John Clatworthy

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Services: Councillor Andrew Leadbetter

Cabinet Member for Highway Management: Councillor Stuart Hughes

Cabinet Member for Infrastructure Development & Waste: Councillor Andrea Davis

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