

**Report of the Cabinet Member for  
Community, Public Health, Transportation and Environmental  
Services**

**Introduction**

I have been asked to report to Council by Members as follows:

- 1. by Councillor Hannaford on Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, United Kingdom, scheme; and data on access to books for local children**

*"Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, United Kingdom*

*Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of the United Kingdom is a free book gifting organisation devoted to inspiring a love of reading in the hearts of children everywhere.*

*Each month, enrolled children receive a high quality, age appropriate book in the post, free of charge. Children receive books from birth to age five.*

*In December of 2007, Dolly Parton travelled to the UK to launch her charity project.*

*The Imagination Library's coverage in the UK includes England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.*

*Book selections in the UK include popular characters such as Peppa Pig and beloved authors and illustrators including Lynley Dodd.*

*Additionally, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) assists in the conversion of select titles to braille and audio books for children in the United Kingdom who are blind or partially sighted.*

*How It Works*

*Each month, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails a high quality, age appropriate book to all registered children, addressed to them, at no cost to the child's family. Countless parents have shared how excited their child is when their new book arrives each month. Many groups and individuals work hard behind the scenes to make that special moment possible for each child.*

*The Imagination Library provides the infrastructure of the core program including managing the secure central database for the Book Order System and coordinating book selections and wholesale purchasing. It also incurs the cost of the program's administrative expenses and coordinates the monthly mailings.*

## Local Champions

*The Imagination Library partners with Local Champions who help bring the program to cities, towns and communities around the world.*

*Local Champions can be businesses, school districts, small or large organizations, or simply individuals who share in the mission and purpose of the Imagination Library.*

*Local Champions are responsible for enrolling children who live within the geographical area they offered the program in.*

*They promote their local programs online and at events.*

*While the Imagination Library negotiates wholesale pricing for the books, Local Champions are responsible for securing funds to cover that cost.*

*Books are 100% free to enrolled children because their Local Champion has secured funds to cover the cost of the books and the shipping fees.*

*Can the Cabinet Member please report if we can work with Devon Libraries Unlimited, schools, and other key partners to assess if we can roll out this scheme, in some specific areas, or on a county wide basis to help support local children, especially those living in rural areas without direct access to libraries as these materials are posted out directly, or indeed areas of deprivation and need.*

*Could the report also include any data that we have regarding general access to books for local children , encompassing the estimated number of children being brought up in households where there are no books available at all.”*

## **2. by Councillor Gordon Hook on a response to a study by “Climate Central” as follows:**

*“A recently published study by "Climate Central" an independent organisation of scientists and others who research climate change and its impact on residents, states that large areas of Devon will be underwater by 2050, just 30 years away. We are having to prepare for and cope with the problems right now. The report suggests that large parts of Newton Abbot town centre will be adversely affected, as will Westward Ho; Braunton; Topsham; Exmouth and Exeter amongst many other areas. These listed are just a few of the places expected to be significantly impacted as climate change grows.*

*Will the Cabinet Member make a clear and full statement indicating what the administration is doing proactively in response to these studies findings which will give reassurance to those residents whose homes and places of work are predicted to be underwater?”*

**3. by Councillor Atkinson on cuts to Universal Credit and the impact on health and wellbeing, as follows:**

*Freedom of Information requests have revealed that more than a million households or 60% of people in receipt of Universal Credit in May had their benefits cut to repay debts and loans. The figures exclude deductions for fraud and sanctions. Almost a third of all people on UC are having more than a fifth of their payment cut. UC claimants who are having their benefits deducted to repay debts and loans owe an average of £903. Please advise of what the numbers are here in Devon the demographic and profile of those affected and whether this is likely to be having a serious impact on people's health and wellbeing, as well as their housing situation here and what measures can be taken to alleviate this.*

**4. by Councillor Atkinson on what current steps the Council takes to secure environmental audits and protect trees and hedges, as follows:**

*"As last week was National Tree Week and everyone is talking about trees please will the Cabinet member for the environment report on the measures the Council is taking to ensure that all of its transactions in relation to highways, rights of way, cycle paths, managing, leasing, occupying land and dealing with planning applications takes account of the crucial role trees and hedges play in tackling the climate emergency, by drawing down carbon and locking it up in their wood as well as capturing pollutants that are key contributors of air pollution that cause respiratory problems and deaths. Please report on what current steps the Council takes to secure environmental audits and protect trees and hedges in relation to the above and what the Council can do to better protect them."*

**5. by Councillor Shaw on Emergency Planning with DSFRS, as follows:**

*"I would like the Cabinet member responsible for Emergency Planning to report on any discussions the Council has had, or proposes to have, with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service about the implications of its proposed cuts in fire stations and engines on the ability to respond to flooding and other emergency"*

## **Reports**

Taking the requests for reports in order:

**1. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**

### **The Dolly Parton scheme**

The cost of the book per child per month is £2.05, an annual cost of £24.60 per year. Based on 2018 figures there are approximately 138,000 children in Devon aged 0-16. The funding required for the Dolly Parton book scheme assuming a 60% (avg. registrations in the scheme) take up would be £2.036m. Funding is arranged via local champions and would vary area to area around the county.

There are currently a range of offers to children in Devon supported through our contract with Libraries Unlimited working in partnership with other organisations and schools.

- **Bookstart** – Libraries Unlimited, working in partnership with BookTrust and Devon Registrars, gifts a free book and a library membership card to all new babies registered in Devon. A further free book is gifted to all 3-year-olds in the county via early years settings in partnership with DCC’s Early Years & Childcare Team. The Bookstart Outreach Coordinator works closely with Children’s Centres to facilitate Bookstart Corner sessions to build confidence and skills in parents that are struggling to help their children develop early literacy skills, with a focus on geographical areas of deprivation.
- **BookTrack** – this is the year-round reading challenge for children aged 6-12. Children are challenged to read 100 books, collecting rewards along their reading journey. More recently there has been a successful bid for some extra funding to update this scheme and therefore, during 2020, children, families, teachers and library staff will be consulted to develop a new scheme to encourage reading for pleasure for this age group.
- **Summer Reading Challenge** – this national scheme is run in all of libraries through the school summer holidays. In Summer 2019 more than 12700 children across Devon took part, reading up to 6 books during the holidays and therefore maintaining their reading levels for the start of the autumn term.
- **Children in Care** – working in partnership with the Virtual Schools Team, we send a library membership card and a £5 book token to all children new into care in Devon

More detailed information regarding the Summer Reading Challenge and data on the number of children book issues for each library is attached in Appendix 1. This new data will provide the local intelligence needed to strengthen the libraries offer to children and young people across the county and our commissioners will work with Libraries Unlimited to continue building on the good relationships with schools in particular to support access to books and e-resources.

Whilst the Dolly Parton Imagination Library scheme and others like it have a place there is no substitute for young people and families being engaged with their local library and gaining access to good quality and free resources. A discussion with members would be welcomed to develop ideas for further funding of resources that further increase the reach and impact of Devon’s Libraries.

## 2. Response to a study by “Climate Central”

A new online mapping tool published by Climate Central [at <https://coastal.climatecentral.org/> - viewable only using Chrome, Firefox or Safari web browsers] shows the theoretical risk of flooding in coastal areas associated with projected future sea level rise. This mapping is based on ground elevation data, but

does not take account of existing flood defences. In this way, it is very similar to the Environment Agency's own published flood risk maps, which show many low lying areas around Devon as having the potential for inundation by flood water (e.g. the areas of Marsh Barton and St. Thomas in Exeter). So, whilst having clear value in illustrating those areas theoretically at risk from rising sea level, it doesn't enable the people of Devon to realistically predict the actual likelihood of future flooding in these low lying areas. This will be dependent upon the maintenance of existing flood defences or their extension and upgrading to provide the necessary standard of protection to deal with this future risk.

The body with the specific responsibility for such coastal (and associated main river) flooding is the Environment Agency. On this basis, it is their role to anticipate and plan for such risk, rather than it being the responsibility of Devon County Council. Having said that, we often work closely in partnership with the Environment Agency in addressing such risks, an example of this being the DCC investment of £3 million in the Exeter Flood Defence Scheme. Also, in our role as Lead Local Flood Authority, we will be revising and updating the Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy next year. This will take account of the latest climate change projection and accord with the new national flood risk management strategy. DCC representation on the South West Flood and Coastal Committee will ensure our involvement in decisions taken about funding allocated through the Local Levy to local flood and coastal protection schemes.

This Authority also has an important role in working with others through the Devon Climate Emergency to highlight the huge risks presented by climate change, to mitigate these impacts and support adaptation to identified risks, including sea level rise. This will be done through our close engagement with processes being coordinated through the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group.

### **3. Cuts to Universal Credit and the impact on health and wellbeing**

At August 2019, 17,335 households in Devon were in receipt of Universal Credit, representing around 25% of those in receipt of means tested benefits. This number is increasing as new claims are made and by "natural migration", where a change in circumstances triggers transfer of an existing claim to Universal Credit.

Data sourced under the Freedom of Information Act and published in The Guardian on 23/11/19 indicated that nationally in May 2019, 1,048,000 Universal Credit claimants had a deduction of their benefit payment out of 1,759,000 claimants who received any universal credit payment that month.

The Government's aim for Universal Credit is that it mirrors the world of work, with payments being made in arrears rather than in advance. In response to reports of hardship, changes were introduced by the Department of Work and Pensions to make advance payments more readily available. New claimants can now opt to have their first payment paid in advance, repaid via deduction from ongoing payments over a period of up to 12 months. The latest available data indicates that nationally around 48% of new claimants opt for an advance, with the most frequently paid value of advance between £150.01 and £200.00. The Government has also

introduced another measure to mitigate the impact of the initial five-week wait for a Universal Credit payment. Additional payments of two weeks of Housing Benefit, known as a “run-on”, are already available to claimants who migrate naturally.

Deductions from Universal Credit are also made to recover overpayments of other benefits. The largest deductions are due to overpaid tax credits, incurred when claimants earned more than expected under the tax credit system resulting in overpaid benefit.

This information yields useful insight into the operation of the benefit system but does not necessarily support the conclusion that only 40% of universal credit claimants get their full entitlement, as deductions are a means to balance out the delivery of correct entitlement over time.

Application of sanctions does result in actual reduction of Universal Credit entitlement. At May 2019, 64% of Universal Claimants were subject to conditionality. Conditionality requirements depend on individual circumstances and may include work focused interviews, work preparation, or full availability for work. 2.4% of this group were subject to a sanction in May 2019, with most sanctions being applied due to failure to attend work interview without good reason. Around half of these sanctions were applied for a period of four weeks or less. Nationally the group most frequently subject to sanction is the 20 – 24 age group.

Detailed demographic information for Devon will be researched and data can be made available to members should they wish to see it. Enquires will also be made with Devon’s district councils to establish if any of these findings are related to uptake of the discretionary assistance funds that they hold or are reflected in other areas such as Food Bank referrals or rent/Council Tax arrears.

#### **4. Current steps the Council takes to secure environmental audits and protect trees and hedges**

There are many ways in which this Council is supporting the protection and planting of trees.

The key way in which consideration is given to the protection of trees and hedges linked to new development is through the planning process. For this authority, this planning process addresses ‘county matter’ applications – those relating to minerals and waste – as well as for the County Council’s own developments. Such applications can be large and complex (e.g. a new quarry or road) and may have potential implications for large numbers of trees. Decisions are made in accordance with tree and hedge protection policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and development plan documents. In advance of it becoming a mandatory requirement, DCC is already seeking to achieve ‘biodiversity net gain’ through its planning role, including the creation of new woodland areas and hedges, rather than just minimising and mitigating unavoidable impacts upon these.

Beyond the formal requirements of town and country planning, DCC has also put in place an environmental review process to ensure that appropriate consideration is

given to the full environmental implications of any DCC developments. This process is based around a series of environmental checklists and guidance notes, one element of which focusses specifically on tree issues. A streamlined version of this checklist is also used to assess highway maintenance activities through our Term Maintenance Contractor.

Another important role for this authority is the maintenance of the trees for which it has specific responsibility, particularly on the county highway network on the corporate estate. Whilst the primary focus of such work is to ensure public safety through essential tree maintenance, our Tree Safety Policy acknowledges the environmental significance of trees and the need to avoid their unnecessary removal. An issue of particular concern at present is the huge threat presented by the tree disease - ash dieback; this expected to result in the loss of around 90% of all of our native ash trees. This authority has signed up to the Devon ash dieback 3/2/1 replacement principle, through which three new trees will be planted for each mature ash it has to fell; two for a semi-mature tree lost; and a one-for-one replacement for any young trees removed.

In relation to the Climate Emergency, this authority is helping to facilitate a countywide process to produce a Devon Carbon Plan and address adaptation to the anticipated impacts of climate change. Tree planting will, inevitably, have a significant part to play in such action. To that end, DCC is already working with partners to promote new tree planting, including the recent launch of two free tree schemes.

## **5. Emergency Planning with DSFRS**

Devon County Council forms part of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which has the statutory responsibility for coordinating the response to major incidents in Devon. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is a Category 1 responder in its own right and, as part of the LRF, must ensure that it is able to respond fully to an major incidents in Devon. I understand that no decisions have yet been made on the final configuration of services and, as part of the LRF, the Devon Emergency Planning Service will be engaged with any future arrangements.

### **Councillor Roger Croad**

Cabinet Member for Community, Public Health, Transportation and Environmental Services

## Appendix 1

The Reading Agency and Libraries Present

# SPACE CHASE

Summer Reading Challenge 2019

### In Devon Libraries...

- **12,703** children took part in the Challenge (11,162 in 2018)
- **7,811** children completed the Challenge (6,661 in 2018)
- **268,677** library items were borrowed by children during July, August and September

### Key Facts

- Participation is up by **14%** (our target was 5%)
- Completion rate is **61.5%** (our target was 60%)
- **44%** of participants were boys
- Children in Devon borrowed **3.8%** more items than last year
- **1,366** children became new library members in order to take part
- Devon Libraries hosted **405** events attended by **9,563** children
- **169** young volunteers helped to deliver the Challenge across 41 libraries
- Young volunteers gave **1861** volunteer hours over the summer
- Library staff visited **197** primary schools to promote the Challenge (160 last year)
- The Summer Reading Challenge resources used in Devon cost £10,390 which equates to **£0.83** per participating child

### Feedback

*“Reading lots of books was fun. When I ran out of books I read whatever I could find”  
Helena aged 9, Honiton*

*“The Summer Reading Challenge is what first engaged my daughter with reading a few years ago and she has now read hundreds of books. We can now see my son getting excited about reading in the same way. Thank you!” Parent, Ivybridge*

*“My daughter spent less time playing games on her phone, it was great to see her with her head in a book. It also gave me a chance to get back into reading, so it became a family affair” Parent, Dawlish*

### Overview

Thanks to the hard work and commitment of all the library staff in our Devon Libraries, the Summer Reading Challenge has been very successful this year. We also acknowledge the valuable contribution made by Friends Groups who have helped to fund and organise events and additional prizes.

A breakdown of participation by library, with comparisons to last year, is attached at the end of this report. Feedback from participants, parents & carers, and library staff has shown that this year's 'Space' theme was very popular and appealed to both genders.

Social media, particularly Facebook and twitter, proved to be a very effective promotion tool for events and for the Challenge generally.

The increased engagement with schools in the build-up to the Challenge may have helped to boost participation and we plan to build on this further next year.

This year libraries were encouraged to identify a specific hard to reach group of children to target for promotion, such as Children in Care or Home-Schooled Children. This enabled us to start monitoring participation from these groups and gives us something to build on for next year.

### Participation by library

	2019 starters	2018 starters	% change	2019 completers	2018 completers	Completion rate
Appledore	89	78	14.00%	63	47	71.00%
Ashburton	48	78	-38.00%	28	48	58.00%
Axminster	143	174	-18.00%	68	98	47.50%
Bampton	25	33	-24.00%	21	15	84.00%
Barnstaple	911	728	25.00%	606	368	66.50%
Bideford	405	398	2.00%	242	210	60.00%
Bovey Tracey	145	119	22.00%	91	73	63.00%
Braunton	217	156	39.00%	141	98	65.00%
Buckfastleigh	335	281	19.00%	248	143	74.00%
Budleigh Salterton	326	161	102.00%	173	104	53.00%
Chagford	58	49	18.00%	39	30	67.00%
Chudleigh	111	124	-10.00%	63	74	57.00%
Chulmleigh	22	24	-8.00%	15	14	68.00%
Clyst Vale	12	0	N/A	6	0	50.00%
Colyton	34	37	-8.00%	25	24	73.50%
Combe Martin	64	59	8.00%	41	38	64.00%
Crediton	389	345	13.00%	255	201	65.50%
Cullompton	387	387	0.00%	246	208	63.50%
Dawlish	127	188	-32.00%	73	101	57.50%
Dartmouth	169	142	19.00%	113	93	67.00%
Exeter	1232	1083	14.00%	649	565	53.00%
Exmouth	849	760	12.00%	584	529	69.00%
Holsworthy	199	147	35.00%	100	100	50.00%
Honiton	285	246	16.00%	178	181	62.50%

Ilfracombe	364	326	12.00%	224	224	61.50%
Ivybridge	411	293	40.00%	294	170	71.50%
Kingsbridge	338	284	19.00%	173	161	51.00%
Kingskerswell	41	53	-23.00%	14	31	34.00%
kingsteignton	151	129	17.00%	115	89	76.00%
Lynton	47	31	52.00%	15	20	32.00%
Moretonhampstead	83	78	6.00%	53	62	64.00%
Newton Abbot	512	385	33.00%	247	189	48.00%
Northam	162	206	-21.00%	100	113	62.00%
Okehampton	382	315	21.00%	258	192	67.50%
Ottery St Mary	250	205	22.00%	148	122	59.00%
Pinhoe	132	61	116.00%	54	31	41.00%
Princetown	41	23	78.00%	19	16	46.00%
Salcombe	29	37	-22.00%	14	13	48.00%
Seaton	189	167	13.00%	137	99	72.50%
Sidmouth	223	210	6.00%	138	103	62.00%
South Molton	218	248	-12.00%	124	136	57.00%
St Thomas	360	357	1.00%	224	248	62.00%
Stoke Fleming	12	5	140.00%	9	5	75.00%
Tavistock	448	423	6.00%	274	254	61.00%
Teignmouth	324	278	17.00%	205	197	63.00%
Tiverton	646	605	7.00%	418	408	65.00%
Topsham	146	122	20.00%	96	71	66.00%
Torrington	265	236	12.00%	160	170	60.00%
Totnes	241	205	18.00%	158	130	65.50%
Uffculme	44	28	57.00%	21	18	48.00%
Ivybridge Mobile	6	4	50.00%	2	2	33.00%
Teignmouth Mobile	10	3	233.00%	9	1	90.00%
Tiverton Mobile	13	12	8.00%	11	5	85.00%
Torrington Mobile	33	36	-8.00%	29	25	88.00%
<b>Devon Totals</b>	<b>12703</b>	<b>11162</b>	<b>14.00%</b>	<b>7811</b>	<b>6667</b>	<b>61.50%</b>

### Children's borrowing July to September

Library	2018	2019	% change
~Ivybridge Mobile	127	128	0.79%
~Teignbridge Mobile	339	223	-34.22%
~Tiverton Mobile	560	764	36.43%
~Torrington Mobile	623	691	10.91%

Appledore	1277	1439	12.69%
Ashburton	1393	1651	18.52%
Axminster	3642	3288	-9.72%
Bampton	370	293	-20.81%
Barnstaple	16226	16880	4.03%
Bideford	5765	6944	20.45%
Bovey Tracey	2614	3193	22.15%
Braunton	4054	4196	3.50%

Buckfastleigh	1780	1741	-2.19%
Budleigh Salterton	3277	3732	13.88%
Chagford	1017	1107	8.85%
Chudleigh	2748	2537	-7.68%
Chulmleigh	38	14	-63.16%
Clyst Vale	98	191	94.90%
Colyton	753	569	-24.44%
Combe Martin	809	1009	24.72%
Crediton	8673	8937	3.04%
Cullompton	7780	7743	-0.48%
Dartmouth	3075	3286	6.86%
Dawlish	3818	3171	-16.95%
Exeter	46912	45085	-3.89%
Exmouth	13840	14831	7.16%
Holsworthy	2433	2590	6.45%
Honiton	6420	6776	5.55%
Ilfracombe	3885	4268	9.86%
Ivybridge	8910	9696	8.82%
Kingsbridge	4892	5248	7.28%
Kingskerswell	1033	794	-23.14%
Kingsteignton	3027	3054	0.89%
Lynton	500	364	-27.20%
Moretonhampstead	1125	1090	-3.11%
Newton Abbot	13249	14487	9.34%
Northam	3298	2878	-12.73%
Okehampton	7200	8338	15.81%
Ottery St Mary	5226	6289	20.34%
Pinhoe	1735	2215	27.67%
Princetown	458	419	-8.52%

Salcombe	386	401	3.89%
Seaton	3149	3321	5.46%
Sidmouth	5076	5481	7.98%
South Molton	3887	3813	-1.90%
St Thomas	7327	6643	-9.34%
Stoke Fleming	181	175	-3.31%
Tavistock	9236	10014	8.42%
Teignmouth	5539	6181	11.59%
Tiverton	11845	11955	0.93%
Topsham	3481	3444	-1.06%
Torrington	4273	5006	17.15%
Totnes	8932	9379	5.00%
Uffculme	753	715	-5.05%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>259,064</b>	<b>288,677</b>	<b>3.78%</b>