



**QUESTIONS TO THE  
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CABINET MEMBERS  
AND/OR  
CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES**

Thursday 23 July 2020

**1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT**

**Re: ND20 Project**

- a) What confidence can the Council give that project ND20, the Willingcott to Knowle section of the Tarka Trail will be delivered in the next five years?
- b) What funding sources does the council anticipate or is currently exploring to ensure the project can be delivered?
- c) Has there been funding previously allocated to this project and, of so, what happened to it?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES**

- a) Major capital expenditure on transport schemes, including Cycle routes is dependent on Government funding. Examples of which were "Access to the Moor", "National Productivity Investment Fund (Exeter)" and "Local Sustainable Transport Fund". We continue to look for, and monitor, funding opportunities and cannot provide any confidence that it will be delivered in the next five years.
- b) While we would look to the Government for any major funding source for large transport schemes there would have to be a local contribution of say 20%. We would therefore look to the District Council, developer contributions and the Local Transport Fund.
- c) We have to date spent £0.5m from the Local Transport Fund and Investing in Devon Fund on design, land acquisition and planning. We now have about 70% of the land and are close to securing approximately 90% of the land by the end of this financial year. There remains some outstanding land and planning issues. The current LTP allocates £0.25m to progress Willingcott to Knowle and Hatherleigh to Meeth on the Traka Trail.

**2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PROWSE**

**Re: Safer Cycling**

During lockdown our residents have commented on the improved air quality in the City of Exeter and the ability to use pavements and cycle paths in a safer environment with the dramatic reduction in vehicular traffic on the roads. As lockdown is eased traffic volumes are increasing. The Council is to be applauded on some of its measures introduced using Government funding. In particular, the section 14 notices, whereby cycle routes have now achieved priority in many roads in the City.

- a. Section 14 notices are temporary. What plans have the Council in assessing the success of the measures introduced?

- b. Exeter City Council controls the air quality testing monitors at strategic points. Can they tell us the good news that during lockdown results were reduced significantly?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES**

- a. We are carrying out regular traffic counts to record the usage of the new routes. These include video surveys of key junctions and weekly spot counts in some locations. We are also collecting qualitative data and have been logging all of the responses we have received both in favour and opposed to each of the schemes.
- b. Advice from Exeter City Council is that it will not be until the end of the year when they have collected all the data that they will be able to make an estimate of the impact city wide. The only continuous nitrogen dioxide monitor in the city is outside the Royal Albert Memorial Museum on Queen Street where the average concentrations for April 2020 were 16 micrograms per cubic metre compared to 32 in 2019.

**3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PROWSE  
Re: E4 Cycle Route**

A recent meeting with Officers finally came up with an agreement to progress the long outstanding issue of completing the E4 route through the City via Union Road. To achieve the preferred route will require significant funding.

- a. Is the Council confident that it will secure the funding from any of a number of sources to ensure that the route is completed in a timely fashion?
- b. Subject to the reply above does the Council have a date in mind? It is essential to complete the route as soon as possible to make the network a success.
- c. The park & ride in the north of the City is a distant dream. Traffic in Wreford's Lane has doubled in ten years and Cowley Bridge Road is just not safe for cyclists. Where are we heading to improve everyone's lot in this area of the City?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES**

- a.& b This remains uncertain; however, Government announced in May a £2bn package to create a new era for walking and cycling. Although we await further details on how this funding will be made available, we feel optimistic about being able to make a strong case for the Union Road route as we have section 106 as match funding and the scheme would deliver the level of ambition Government is seeking for transformational, high quality cycling and walking infrastructure.

We are seeking to progress design and consultation over the next 6-12 months so that we have a 'shovel-ready' scheme, able to take advantage of future funding opportunities. If we were unsuccessful at securing external funding we would still progress the scheme at a slower pace using Local Transport Plan funds.

- c. A number of measures have been outlined in the draft Exeter Transport Strategy for the northern corridor into the city. A Park and Change on the edge of the city remains an aspiration serving the Crediton and Tiverton routes the Boniface Trail strategic cycle route is also an ambition for the County Council and local community. To deliver both these measures it is necessary to overcome a number of environment and planning constraints and they will be subject to future government funding opportunities. Network Rail and GWR are continuing to work in partnership to understand the feasibility of re-opening the Okehampton to Exeter rail Line to regular passenger services. This would increase the frequency of services from Crediton and alongside these other measures would help reduce pressure on these roads.

**4. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ACKLAND**

## **Re: Covid-19 Protocols in Care Homes**

Future residents of care homes and their families need to be confident that entering a care home is not a dangerous endeavour. So, are all the protocols now in place, including weekly testing of residents and care workers, to make sure as far as it is possible to be, that care home residents are safe from being infected with covid-19?

### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER**

The weekly testing of staff and monthly testing of residents of care homes is now being facilitated by government and we are actively encouraging care homes in Devon to register for this national testing programme. This is one of several facets of infection prevention and control in care homes that also includes: testing on discharge from hospital and before admission from the community; the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment; consistently good hygiene practice; the zoning of care homes, especially larger settings; minimising the use of peripatetic staff, keeping staff to fixed shifts and teams, minimising their use of public transport, and removing any financial disincentives to COVID-19 related absence. The CCG has provided infection control practice training which has been free to access by care homes, personal care and supported living providers.

The distribution of the Government's Infection Control Fund to care providers was intended to fund these measures and is additional to the financial support the Council has put in place, including increased fee levels and the reimbursement of PPE costs.

In addition to the national portal, Devon has extended the offer of testing to supported living services through the local test coordination centres.

## **5. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ACKLAND**

### **Re: Carers as Key Workers in Care Homes**

We know that residents of care homes are, in the main, people in the last year or two of their lives, and many have dementia and other serious health conditions. I can say unequivocally that I would have been distraught and it would have affected my ability to cope with the death of my husband if I had been unable to see him on a regular basis in the last few months of his life. Would it not be humane and reasonable for the main carer of the resident to be considered as a key worker within the care home and so be party to the same testing regime/protocols as the care home staff?

### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER**

The policy towards whether visitors to care homes can be accommodated and how this is done safely is determined at provider level informed by national guidance and local advice.

Providers in Devon are mindful of the adverse impacts of lockdown on their residents and their loved ones and have increasingly taken innovative approaches to facilitate visits including remote visits using technology, window visits and socially distanced visits outdoors. Most providers refer to the protocol developed by the Care Provider Alliance that encourages an approach based on risk assessment in advance of any guidance update from the Government or extension of more frequent testing of care home staff and residents and visiting professionals to visiting family members.

We encourage and facilitate the determination and dissemination of best practice by our provider networks referring to national and international evidence of what best balances infection prevention and control with mental health and emotional wellbeing in the interests of residents and their families.

Providers in Devon are generally involving families in updating their policies as circumstances develop and publishing guidance on their websites to inform visitors where visits can be facilitated.

**6. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ACKLAND**  
**Re: Domiciliary Care Homes**

Devon County Council have taken back in house, the management of domiciliary care in parts of the County. We oversee the private care agencies that employ the care staff who support residents in their homes. Are the domiciliary care workers that we send into homes through these agencies being protected with PPE and receiving weekly testing in the same way as care home staff?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER**

Devon County Council (DCC) has met the costs of additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from the start of the outbreak and a payment has just been made to all providers (other than day services where a physical supply of PPE has been given to them) to meet their costs to the end of September.

It is for providers to source their stocks but, in an emergency situation, DCC is holding stocks that we issue to providers whilst ordinary supplies are being delivered. This should mean that all care staff have adequate protection.

Although the research base is emerging, evidence suggests the rate of transmission in domiciliary care settings has been comparatively low and priority in the national testing programme has been afforded to care homes and other shared living situations such as supported living on that basis. If there was an outbreak or a high risk of one in a particular care agency we do have the flexibility to deploy local testing resources but these need to be carefully prioritised. We anticipate domiciliary care agency staff to be included in the national testing programme in due course.

**7. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR AVES**  
**Re: reopening of educational establishments in September**

Can the cabinet member please confirm with council how preschools, schools and colleges can safely open fully in September in line with government announcements?

As a governor, I realise the huge workload this has put on headteachers, teachers and all staff who work in education. Now very exhausted and having had such an anxious time without a proper break during Easter and half term, they will need a proper summer break.

What are you putting in place with other key partners for the summer so that:

- a) all educational staff can recover to be really ready for the Autumn term?
- b) children who have been educationally disadvantaged during this time will be able to do some catch up learning with professional support?
- c) make sure that all families have access to online learning during the summer?
- d) working with others how will we ensure that no child suffers from holiday hunger?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES**

In order to ensure the full opening of schools in September is as safe as possible early years settings, schools and colleges have been putting in place proportionate protective measures for children and staff as laid out in the revised DfE guidance.

The first section of this guidance sets out the public health advice schools must follow to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. It also includes the process that should be followed if anyone develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at school. This guidance has been developed with advice from PHE and includes essential measures such as:

- a requirement that people who are ill stay at home
- robust hand and respiratory hygiene
- enhanced cleaning arrangements

- active engagement with NHS Test and Trace
- formal consideration of how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in school wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.

All schools in Devon are undertaking a health and safety risk assessment which reviews how well they have been able to implement the measures. A template has been provided to help Devon schools do this. The template has been agreed by DCS's health and safety, public health, HR and legal and insurance teams. It has also been shared with unions.

a) The DfE have made it clear that there is no expectation for schools to open over the summer holidays and Devon have supported this view. Therefore, we anticipate that Devon schools will be closed over the holidays although some buildings may be used by other organisations such as out of school clubs. Parents and carers can find out more about this summer holiday provision on the DCC website and a list is available on Pinpoint. Parents who cannot find what they need can complete an Unable to Find Childcare Form.

b) In June, the Government announced that schools will receive additional funding for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to ensure they have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time. Schools will start to use this funding when pupils return in September. Additional funding was also announced to establish a National Tutoring Programme, which will run for the duration of the next academic year and give schools access to subsidised tutoring sessions and free coaches for up to two million disadvantaged pupils. We anticipate further guidance will be received in relation to these funding streams prior to the Autumn term.

Within Devon we have taken steps to ensure our Children in Care continue to receive support over the summer through the following activities.

- Virtual Summer School for our Year 5 and Year 10 Children in Care so they are able to catch up on the learning they may have lost during lockdown and prepare for their return to school in the Autumn. 64 young people are taking part in this programme.
- The Virtual School and Fostering Team are also offering an outdoor education experience for children to have fun, learn to work with others and learn new skills. These days will be led by an experienced outdoor education provider with DCC staff supporting. The programme will be repeated over 4 weeks of the holidays offering children and young people the chance to have 2 days of activities. Each day 15 young people will be able to take part in a range of activities including, archery, bush craft, navigation, climbing etc. Each week different activities with dedicated age groups will take place at different locations around Devon.

c) Schools will be closed over the summer holidays and therefore will not be providing online lessons as they did during term time. The DfE have put together a comprehensive list of online activities that young people can continue to participate in should they wish to do so.

d) Due to the unprecedented nature of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, additional funding has been provided nationally for a Covid Summer Food Fund which enables schools to request vouchers for children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals for the 6-week holiday period. Where eligible families would be unable to access any of the supermarkets available through the national system, schools can make alternative voucher arrangements with a local supermarket or provide a food parcel if they are able to do so.

## **8. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**

### **Re: Team Devon Prospectus**

It is noted that a group called Team Devon recently published a prospectus for dealing with Devon's economic recover from the impact of Covid 19.

The dictionary describes prospectus as meaning. 'a printed booklet advertising a school or university to potential parents or students or giving details of a share offer for the benefit of

investors. What does prospectus mean in this instance and what is its purpose? Is it just aimed at encouraging the national government to fund investment in Devon?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The County Council has brought together a partnership of businesses, local authorities, training and education providers, Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, and other public agencies to form a Devon Economy and Business Recovery Group. This group is acting as a subgroup to the Devon Recovery Co-ordinating Group. Devon MPs have been engaged in the development of the Prospectus and the work of the group.

The Team Devon Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus sets out a high level plan for the recovery of the Devon economy, as a result of COVID-19. A more detailed implementation plan is also being developed by the group and this will be the basis for future funding bids, business case developments and setting key performance indicators. The Prospectus sets out some of the key impacts and opportunities the Devon economy is facing from the pandemic and sets out a single economic recovery programme for the County.

**9. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**  
**Re: Relationship between South West organisations**

What is the relationship between:

- The DCC
- The HoSW Lep and its published strategic plan
- The HoSW Joint Committee and its published Joint industrial strategy
- Team Devon with its Prospectus
- The shadow Peninsula SW Regional Transport Body
- The LEP Scrutiny Committee
- The Resilience Forum
- The BROG
- The Greater Exeter Strategic Plan

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

See Q.10 below.

**10. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**  
**Re: Economic Recovery Strategy and leaving the EU**

How will these work together to develop an economic recovery strategy and implementation plan for Devon and the region to deal with the impact of Covid 19 and leaving the EU?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The LEP has developed a Road Map to Recovery. The specific actions will be drawn from the Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay Economic Recovery Plans. As is stated in the Devon Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus, it is recognised that some of the identified actions are best delivered LEP-wide, and others best delivered at the local level.

The County Council is focused on implementing a recovery programme for Devon, and through our membership of the LEP and the Joint Committee will work with our partners to maximise investment opportunities for Devon, including influencing any funding available through the LEP. The prioritised shovel-ready programme the LEP has submitted to Government includes several projects in Devon, and which will take forward actions set out in the Recovery Prospectus.

The impact of leaving the EU on World Trade Organisation terms is factored in to our position on Recovery, and we are continuing to work with the Heart of the South West Resilience and Opportunities Group to maximise efforts and opportunities.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act, the lead upper tier authority, in this case Devon County Council, is the lead Agency responsible for the Recovery Phase of an emergency, and hence has established a Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). The guidance suggests a number of sub-groups that report to the RCG, including Economy. The RCG and therefore the associated sub-groups are aligned to the Devon Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Resilience Forum structure.

**11. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**

**Re: Team Devon Governance**

What are the governance arrangements in relation to scrutinising Team Devon and the partnership work of all these groups together?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The Economy and Business Recovery Group is not a formal partnership, and each local authority's own scrutiny function would be the route for any scrutiny of decisions and funding made.

**12. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**

**Re: Team Devon Terms of Reference**

What are the terms of reference for Team Devon?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

Terms of Reference for the Economy and Business Recovery Group were developed and agreed, on the basis these would be revisited once the Recovery Co-ordinating Group was established, this review is now taking place. We can provide a copy once completed.

**13. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**

**Re: Team Devon Funding Applications**

The Team Devon prospectus refers to numerous funding applications it intends to make. Who will make these applications? In relation to each area of funding please will you provide a SMART implementation plan /spreadsheet setting out the project funding sought and the area of benefit including the economic multiplier effect for each project (VFM/social value) the funding body to be applied for the funding and timescale for the application . The risk assessment of the likelihood of successfully receiving the funding and whether there is a Plan B if funding does not materialise.

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The Team Devon Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus sets out a high level plan for the recovery of the Devon economy, as a result of COVID-19. A more detailed implementation plan is also being developed by the group and this will be the basis for future funding bids, business case developments and setting key performance indicators.

**14. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**

**Re: HotSW Shovel Ready Projects**

How does the prospectus relate to the funding for HoSW Shovel ready projects identified by the HoSW as a priority in relation to the recent announcement of £35.4 m for shovel ready projects in Devon? Are the Team Devon identified funds additional to the shovel ready funds?

#### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The Getting Building Fund has been submitted by the LEP and is awaiting sign off with Government. A number of Devon capital schemes have been put forward by partners that will benefit Devon, and several that will address the impacts and actions set out in the Economy and Business Recovery Plan.

#### **15. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON Re: Council Spend Relating to Covid-19**

If the Government doesn't reimburse the £8.5 m DCC has spent as a result of Covid-19 will any of this shortfall come out of the economic development budget?

#### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The budget for economic development will be set through the normal budget setting process for the County.

#### **16. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON Re: Local Farms and Agriculture in Devon**

It is reported in Cornwall Live that Cornwall requires around 4,500 manual workers to ensure its seasonal crops – and, in turn, its farms – survive during the coronavirus pandemic.

A mixture of the effects of Brexit and the COVID-19 crisis has led to a lack of overseas migrant workers on Cornish farms, which has caused concern within the agricultural sector.

How have local farms and agriculture in Devon been affected by Covid 19 and Brexit?  
Given the outbreak of Covid 19 on the farm in Hereford do farm workers here in Devon have the required PPE and safe systems of working in place to prevent an outbreak here?  
How many farms and agricultural business are we expecting to go out of business in the next 6 months?

#### **REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT**

The current impacts on the agriculture, food and drink sector are significant in terms of loss of businesses, and impacts on the workforce. The overall impacts are not fully known, nor the duration or the timescale for recovery. Exit from the EU will have an impact on the sector, and the terms of departure, the nature of trade agreements, ports and border controls, tariffs and access to labour remain undetermined. The County Council as a partner in the Heart of the SW Opportunities and Resilience Group continues to monitor the situation, and works alongside the NFU and other business organisations to highlight the concerns for the sector.

Team Devon have highlighted within the Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus vulnerable business sectors, including agriculture, food and farming. Agriculture Food & Drink makes up 20% of Devon's economy by value. The timing of the COVID-19 lockdown coincided with the start of the main growing/harvest season impacting on production, marketing livestock and finalising exports. Lockdown and travel restrictions also resulted in disruptions to labour provision, impacting capacity and increasing costs. Whilst supermarket demand held up (and even increased), this was offset by massively reduced demand for food from the hospitality sector, seeing an overall 20% hit to the sector in May 2020. There are also concerns around how long some markets may take to recover and the impact of any recession on commodity prices in the medium term.

We do not have any data on expected farm closures or redundancies. Agriculture, Food and Drink as a sector nationally has not placed a significant reliance on the national Job Retention Scheme or Self Employed Income Support scheme. Figures for Devon are not available.

#### **17. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE**



**Re: Civic Centre, Barnstaple**

Can the responsible Cabinet Member update me on the position of the sale of the former Civic Centre building in Barnstaple?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

Following the tender exercise officers are working with the preferred bidder to finalise the details of the sale and as part of this the bidder is also working with North Devon District Council to seek pre-application advice.

**18. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE**

**Re: Costs Incurred Due to Covid-19**

Can the Leader advise me as to whether any progress has been made with Government in obtaining additional funding to reimburse the County Council for the extra costs incurred due to the pandemic?

He will recall Government earlier this year told local government to spend what it takes to react to the costs of fighting Covid 19 and the Government promise to cover these extra costs. As reported at the last Cabinet the County Council is some millions short of the funding needed from the Government to deliver on the Government's reimbursement promise.

While I note that he has raised this issue with Devon MPs I see little or no evidence that MPs are doing very much about pressing the Government to deliver on its promise of reimbursement to the County Council.

I also note from the last Cabinet that the County Council appears to have sufficient capacity to manage this reimbursement gap. Accordingly, will he join with me in congratulating Mary Davis and other Officer colleagues on managing the finances of DCC so that we are in a robust position to manage this reimbursement gap if needs be?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

Councillor Greenslade, Thank you for your question.

On July 17th Government announced the allocation of its third tranche of Covid 19 funding. Devon County Council was allocated another £4.7 millions. This means that the Council has now received Covid 19 funding of just over £41.4 millions. This extra £4.7 millions will reduce the funding gap identified of £8.5 millions. It is hoped that further funding will be forthcoming.

I am happy to take this opportunity to thank the County Treasurer and all of her staff for putting the Council on such a sound footing. I would also like to record my thanks to the two Cabinet Members for Finance, Councillor Clatworthy and Councillor Barker for their conscientious work over the last 11 years. John Clatworthy's maxim that he inherited from English China Clay (ECC) "that every copper counts" has put this Council in a more relaxed position financially.

I have continued in my efforts to ensure that Devon MPs were aware of the many issues faced by the Council including the need to maintain financial sustainability. On Monday I addressed an All Party Parliamentary Group on Local Government and briefed them on Devon's response to Covid 19 and the impact on our financial position. As part of that presentation I made it clear that Devon and other Councils need a decent, fair, funding settlement that gives financial certainty for at least four years. I hope that my efforts and those of other Local Government colleagues will pay off.

**19. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR WAY**

**Re: Greater Exeter Strategic Plan**

District Councils surrounding Exeter and Exeter City Council are being asked to consider whether to begin the next round of consultations about the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan. The area to the north of the city, including Mid Devon has long awaited the sort of sustainable travel and access infrastructure improvements currently provided at various other locations around the Exeter area to ease traffic problems and improve air quality. These improvements have included park and ride car parks and dedicated cycle routes. Will the County Council be taking this into consideration during its talks with the authorities deciding these big planning issues and prioritising projects to the north of the city such as a park and ride car park at Cowley, the Boniface Trail cycle route and improvements to rail services?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR DAVIS**

The County Council works closely with the District Councils on infrastructure planning and is providing transport advice for the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan. In the context of the climate emergency, there is a particular need to consider appropriate active travel and public transport provision. On this basis, the draft GESP consultation document, which is being discussed by District Council committees in July and August, includes an emerging transport strategy for the Greater Exeter area. The draft policies identify possible projects which could help in delivering this strategy and include the potential for the Boniface Trail, park and ride provision on the A377 and increased rail service frequencies. Depending on which of the possible development site options are taken forward as the plan progresses, further work on the feasibility of the projects will be required.