

NOTICES OF MOTION

Report of the County Solicitor

Recommendation: that consideration be given to any recommendations to be made to the County Council in respect of the Notices of Motion set out hereunder having regard to the relevant factual briefing/background papers and any other representations made to the Cabinet.

~~~~~

The Notices of Motion submitted to the County Council by the Councillors shown below have been referred to the Cabinet in accordance with Standing Order 8(2) - for consideration, reference to another committee or to make a recommendation back to the Council.

A factual 'Briefing Note/Position Statement' prepared by the relevant Chief Officer and / or Head of Service is also included, to facilitate the Cabinet's discussion of each Notice of Motion.

### **(a) Future Meetings and Commitment to Increased Virtual Meetings (Councillor Biederman)**

*'That Devon County Council make a commitment to holding more virtual meetings, briefings and task groups post Covid-19. They have clearly been very successful, have made a huge saving to the Council in budgetary terms and they also help in the Council's climate emergency aims, by reducing our carbon footprint. Council therefore asks the Procedures Committee to consider a Report on meetings in the future and what Committees, briefings and task groups could meet virtually.'*

### **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Democratic Services**

Members will be aware that prior to the COVID – 19 pandemic, Local Authorities were quite restricted in terms of how they could run Local Authority meetings.

The Local Government Act (1972) is quite clear about Councillor attendance and as such there was no legal provision in England or Northern Ireland to allow councillors to attend meetings remotely. The requirements of the Act in terms of quorum and that Member must physically be present at the meeting in order to vote on decisions or recommendations effectively rules out the possibility of holding meetings remotely in England.

Despite a number of representations being made and lobbying of the Department for Communities and Local Government to amend the legislation, nothing has changed therefore allowing Members to attend virtually is not permitted.

Earlier this year, the COVID 19 pandemic prevented gatherings, socialising and meetings, particularly when the Country was asked by the Prime Minister to enter into a national lockdown. On the 4<sup>th</sup> April, Local Authorities received the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 meetings regulations which for the first time permitted remote attendance at formal meetings of the Authority.

The Regulations apply to local authority meetings (and police and crime panel meetings) that are required to be held, or held, before 7th May 2021.

Whilst the regulations give a number of concessions for example relating to the frequency of meetings, the requirement to hold annual meetings and the need to publish copies of agenda in Council offices (with the website being sufficient), they are still very clear on access of both the public and press to the meeting. They also do not dilute the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 in terms of the need to publish key decisions, general exception and cases of special urgency.

The Regulations state that a meeting is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place. The reference to a “place” includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations (internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers).

A Member ‘in remote attendance’ can attend the meeting as long as certain conditions are satisfied. These include that the Member is able to hear and be heard by the other Members in attendance. Also, being able to hear and be heard by any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting. The regulations would prefer a visual solution, but audio is sufficient.

This also relates to members of the public attending the meeting being heard, but preferably seen.

Members will be familiar with the Meeting Protocol that this Council prepared to demonstrate how meetings would operate using the technology of Microsoft Teams and linking this with current Standing Orders. The most important aspect of the Protocol was that it was as close to current processes, Standing Orders and public participation as possible, thereby ensuring accessibility was at the forefront of this shift.

As already highlighted, Regulations are clear about the meeting being “open to the public” via any remote means (for example, video conferencing, live webcast, interactive streaming). Where a meeting is accessible through these remote means the meeting is deemed to be open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person.

As the Protocol states, Members of the public and press can be invited into the meeting to participate under public participation or can view the meeting via a live stream, with the link published on the agenda page for the meeting.

To date, the Council has conducted in the region of 25 formal remote meetings, including a full AGM. Of course, there are many other meetings that have been held virtually including Scrutiny Standing Overview Groups, Task Groups and even Virtual Communities Surgery's. There will be a full suite of Committee operating from September, with meetings only being cancelled in the event of no business, which is no different to now.

This Council undertook its first remote meeting on the 8th April (Cabinet), which was just 5 days after the Regulations were published. The Council continues to learn and the technology advances all the time, so the experience of remote meetings will continually improve. The Local Government Association took an interest and published us as one of their first case studies on their Remote Council Meetings Guidance webpages.

The Council has now committed to running remote meetings for the remainder of this year.

There are clearly savings to be made from holding remote meetings. Early indications showed a saving of £20,338 when compared to month 1 to 4 of 2019/20 on public transport, travel, catering and subsistence. However a full financial assessment will be carried out for a future Report as well as the climate change and environment impact.

## **(b) Diversity and Council Policy (Councillor Connett)**

*This notice of motion acknowledges the current situation facing underrepresented groups in Devon and seeks to support the work that is taking place UK wide to tackle racism and discrimination. Statistical data shows that individuals from Black Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are underrepresented at every level in UK society, facing issues around social and economic mobility, and educational attainment, particularly affected by implicit racial bias and institutional racism.*

*Council recognises the contributions of individuals from BAME communities in society, business, and infrastructure across Devon both now and historically, and will not shy away from work which seeks to remove barriers, tackle prejudice and address inequality.*

*In doing so the council calls for:*

- *The review of Devon County Council's HR and Equalities practices and the inclusion of regular training for councillors and staff, to ensure the needs of under-represented groups are met through addressing poverty and encouraging economic and social mobility.*

- *Work with Schools, Academies, Trusts and educationalists in Devon to explore the prospect of making changes the curriculum to include BAME experiences, contributions, and the FACTs of History, throughout the year.*
- *Explore the possibility of an education transformation project in conjunction with schools that creates a suite of curriculum resources specific to Devon's history.*
- *Lobby Government to invest and resource changes to the curriculum across the UK through the support of organisations such as The Black Curriculum and via associated campaigns.*
- *An advisory board put in place linked to the Equality Impact Assessment for the Covid -19 recovery plan, to connect the experiences of BAME individuals within the community with the aim of driving forward positive change.*
- *Encourage County-based organisations to contribute to diversity and social mobility through reviewing the Councillor Locality Grant criteria to ensure it can include (but not exclusively); projects that contribute to addressing inequalities and raising educational attainment within under-represented groups.*

## **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Policy**

### **Review of Council practices and inclusion of training**

The Local Government Association's **Equality Framework for Local Government** helps local councils to meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duties. It reflects the latest legislation affecting equality such as Gender Pay Gap reporting and is due to be updated in light of recent and continued moves to improve racial equality.

The County Council can use the LGA's framework to review its practices, as we have in the past, through self-assessment and peer challenge.

A revised Devon County Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Essentials e-learning course was launched in Autumn 2019 and is proving very successful. It is now mandatory for all staff to complete it when they join the authority and at least once every two years. About one third of the Council's current workforce has completed the training so far and completions are continuing on a daily basis.

HR activities will be taking place to improve our understanding of workforce diversity and address any gaps.

The election in May also provides a great opportunity to use LGA resources around recruitment of BAME candidates. Local parties/groups could consider positive action steps to improve diversity.

There are opportunities for Members to participate in training and development. Members are invited to equality training as part of their induction and ad-hoc

sessions can be provided on request. In addition to training, **online guidance** is available including a Diversity Guide and Acceptable Language Guide.

Regular community engagement with BAME and other diverse groups is also recommended for Member development purposes.

A range of community organisations in Devon work closely with BAME people including: North Devon Sunrise, Refugee Support Devon, Hikmat, Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council and Inclusive Exeter (formerly Exeter Communities Together). They are often happy to receive visits or be supported in other ways (volunteering, Trustees etc), although it is understandable that this may be challenging whilst the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. Attendance at local community festivals (of which many reverted to online this year) is also a good way of engaging with BAME communities, these include Exeter Respect Festival, Windrush Day and North Devon Diversity Festival.

### **Education and Curriculum**

We encourage Schools to review their equality policy regularly and ensure their equality objectives are set (using the Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit) and displayed clearly on their website (or published in a way that is accessible to those members of the school community and the public who want to see it).

Schools are also encouraged to articulate clear expectations and priorities which includes ensuring the school environment is free of racism and other areas of prejudice and raising the achievement of BAME pupils.

As part of our narrowing the gap work we encourage schools to achieve a successful system for improving outcomes for BAME young people in every aspect of school life this includes ensuring an inclusive culture with learning environments that value diversity and foster respect and good relations.

We can additionally

- support teacher's delivery of the new PSHE curriculum and help them prepare for for, and respond to, increased vulnerability and/or outrage that is being felt by the BAME communities using Babcock LDP and other services such as 'The global Centre' and 'Planet Rainbow'.
- Encourage Schools to access cultural awareness and race equality training, workshops and conferences offered by Babcock LDP and other organisations with a view to enabling staff to become confident in understanding and addressing systemic and unconscious bias.

- Ensure accessible resources are available to Schools with clear signposting for further support and information.
- Encourage more BAME people into the teaching profession through the recruitment website.
- Encourage Schools to acknowledge and celebrate key events and milestones e.g.
  - Black History Month: Black History in Devon
  - GRT History Month: Devon Travellers
  - Refugee Week: Refugees in Devon
  - Ramadan & Eid: Celebrations in Devon
  - Bilingual Devon
  - Windrush Celebrations

## **Recovery Planning**

There is an opportunity to shape a future for Devon which builds on the positive impacts of the Response phase of the pandemic. The Partnership Recovery Coordination Group is ensuring that the impacts of the recovery planning work on equality, health & wellbeing, the economy and the environment are assessed. A sub-group, including Equality, Public Health and Smarter Devon staff, has been established to coordinate that work. The assessment will consider impacts on people and groups such as: vulnerable children and young people; gypsies and travellers; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people; and the medically most vulnerable.

Recovery planning presents an opportunity to reconnect people and nature in support of their health and wellbeing. Fairness must be a core principle in addressing the costs and benefits of acting on the climate/environmental crisis through the recovery process. It will be vital to ensure that recovery does not lock-in greenhouse gas emissions, degradation of natural capital assets or increased risk thereby environment-proofing the recovery process.

Members play an important role in reaching communities across Devon, and therefore can support this process by ensuring that they themselves are well connected with BAME individuals and organisations (listed above). Members can then feed back issues and aspirations of BAME people to officers involved in Recovery planning and impact assessment, as well as through Scrutiny processes. In addition to this, the Council's Equality Reference Group which includes representation from the Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality Council is a useful 'critical friend' to the County Council and contributes to impact assessments on a regular basis.

## **Locality Budgets and Corporate Equality Budget**

Each County Councillor has an annual locality budget of £10,000 to enable them to respond to local needs in their electoral division by supporting projects or activities that benefit the communities they represent. Members are encouraged to support projects which contribute to addressing inequalities and raise educational attainment within under-represented groups.

The Council's Corporate Equality Budget, which totals £45,000, has a grants process which has criteria linked to the Public Sector Equality Duty and Council strategic aims. This enables Devon wide and 'community of interest' organisations not linked to a locality to apply for funding for projects which seek to reduce inequalities, address discrimination and harassment and foster good community relations. However, at around £5,000 to 10,000, the grants budget is only able to support a small number of projects. The rest of the budget is used for community engagement, events and projects which aim to increase understanding of equality and diversity, advance equality and challenge inequalities.

### **(c) Black Lives Matter (Councillor Wright)**

*This Council welcomes the peaceful protests against the murder of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer, including those organised in Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, Exeter and Plymouth - and the way these have brought to light how this much of this country's wealth was built on slavery and other racial oppression.*

*This Council acknowledges the recent further pain caused to the BAME community, by the Windrush Scandal.*

*This Council acknowledges too, that the only way this deep historical wound can be healed is by people in high profile positions (especially politicians) proving that they are listening with compassion to the BAME community – and taking necessary action.*

*This Council resolves to pledge its support for the Black Lives Matter campaign by:*

- *taking a lead among public organisations in Devon to seek out opportunities to promote and celebrate the work in Devon by BAME people, both in the past and currently.*
- *Inviting every Devon County Councillor to:*

*1. show leadership and support for people of colour in Devon, individually supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, using whichever public platform they feel most comfortable with;*

2.  *speak with people from the BAME community in their wards to determine what are the issues of concern for them - and take the necessary steps to resolve those issues;*

- *Writing to the Secretary of State for Education urging him to:*

3.  *review the primary school, GCSE and A Level national curriculum with a view to ensuring that the historical record of the British Empire is treated in a way which fully takes account of slavery, the actions and views of historical figures and other oppressive experiences of BAME people, many of whose descendents are now part of our community.*

4.  *show compassion and understanding by starting a national debate led by the BAME community, which seeks to define racism, the impacts of it in today's society - and demonstrate how we can all help people of colour feel fully included and welcomed in the UK (this could be part of the current government review).*

5.  *identify a Cabinet minister champion for the BAME community.*

- *inviting Devon town/parish/city councils to review any landmarks, street names or statues that implicitly celebrate slavery, with a view to clarifying their history, such as the historical plaque in Exmouth for slave trader, John Colleton, who also has three streets named after him in Exeter.*

*NB. Motion was created with students at The Kings School, especially young BAME people.*

## **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Policy**

### **Celebration and engagement activities**

The Council's Corporate Equality Officer is making plans for a celebration of Black History Month with Devon Development Education. It is unfortunate that our plans to celebrate Windrush Day had to change due to the pandemic as we were going to have a wonderful reception at County Hall, with a flag raising. We hope that we will be able to do this in 2021. Further information about BHM is available here: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/equality/communities/race/bhm>

The Council is also supporting the republication of the book Devon and The Slave Trade by Todd Gray, a Foreword has been written by Leader, Cllr John Hart.

At the heart of this Motion is the need to connect with and talk to BAME people. If anyone has specific questions or concerns about how to approach this, the Corporate Equality Officer would be happy to advise members individually. Please also see the note on BAME engagement and community organisations in the response to the previous motion.



## **Curriculum and education**

- Diverse Devon is accessible online and would provide schools with lessons and assemblies for delivery in school.
- National Education Union - Framework for developing an anti-racist approach in Schools.
- Babcock LDP and other services that can offer anti-racism training, support, guidance and resources.

## **Review of monuments and place names**

The Local Government Association has published note on responding to requests for changes to place names and statues:

<https://local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/statues>. The Corporate Equality Officer can also advise further.

Members may also find Todd Gray's article on our difficult and complex past insightful, published in Devon Live:

<https://www.devonlive.com/news/history/tear-down-keep-them-devons-4291413>

## **(d) A Better Future For Local Government - Leadership and Finances (Councillor Hannaford)**

### ***Council Notes***

*Local Councils have seen a huge reduction of £16 billion in core grant from central Government over the last 10 years and this is now a critical tipping point.*

*In spite of this, in the face of the global pandemic, councils including Devon County Council have been proactively working with the NHS, Public Health England, blue light services, supporting forums, local community volunteers, and other agencies, through the Local Resilience Forum to keep people safe from Covid19.*

*DCC has brought and distributed personal protective equipment (PPE), and helped set up logistical operations with others, to deliver medicine and food across wide geographies, and make sure vulnerable and older people receive the care and support they need, and crucially keep our children safe.*

*We have yet to work through the long term impacts that this will have on Devon's economy, schools, health services, and the most vulnerable people – Devon's 20% poorest communities, those with long term disabilities and mental health issues, and our black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. In Devon we are now facing unprecedented levels of financial burdens unless the costs of dealing with the pandemic are properly reimbursed by central government.*

## **Council Believes**

*A new relationship must emerge between national, regional and local government that is based on central government's genuine belief that local is best. Our local response to the pandemic has demonstrated only local government working with its partners has the intimate understanding of our communities, places, people and services to do this effectively.*

*Let this be the 'new normal' a relationship between local and central government roles.*

*DCC and our local government partners must have the finance and ability to fully respond in this new environment and to the social, educational, public health and economic impacts of COVID-19, to find effective and efficient local solutions. Councils have a significant opportunity and role to do things differently now in developing;*

- *a sustainable net zero carbon economy working with the South West (HotSW) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and business leaders*
- *reliable broadband to the whole of Devon*
- *sustainable transport and enhancing our cycling and walking infrastructure*
- *an integrated social and health care system*
- *agile and flexible working*
- *skills for all ages. significant investment in the supply of social and affordable housing*

## **Council Resolves**

*Devon County Council's approach for future actions must not only incorporate these seven key needs outlined but also seek more devolved powers. They must do this through representation to central government and our local members of parliament to acquire the necessary legislative and budgetary changes. Local government could then provide greater community leadership so that here in Devon we can better serve our people.*

## **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Policy**

### **Introduction**

In his address to the Local Government Association conference in July, the Local Government Minister stated that the British state needed to be "fully match-fit for the future" and that requires a "shift of power from Whitehall to people on the ground who know their areas so well, understand their priorities, and are empowered with the mandate, levers and agency to act upon them."

The Minister went on to say that Covid-19 has underlined the reality that an over centralised state is not, and never will be, best placed to respond effectively to the challenges faced by local communities.

Here in Devon, the County Council, singly and with Team Devon partners, has proved the Minister's point to be true many times over. As a Covid-19 Beacon Council, Devon has provided local leadership and support, and responded swiftly to local events and needs whenever required.

Public confidence in the machinery of state is strengthened when local democratic accountability and local knowledge is combined with enough resources delivered efficiently at scale and speed. As the reports in the appendix demonstrate, there is much the County Council is already doing to meet the needs identified in the Notice of Motion to full Council and there is more the County Council could do if enabled by genuine devolution of power from Whitehall.

It remains to be seen whether the Government's forthcoming Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper demonstrates the lessons of Covid-19 have been learned and proposes a meaningful shift in power or proves to be another of the many false dawns in the history of post-war English local government. When published, Members will want to study the contents of the White Paper carefully before considering what actions should be taken that may best meet the needs and interests of the people of Devon.

## **Appendix**

### **Towards a sustainable net zero economy**

Devon's stunning environment attracts both new businesses and visitors to the area every year. There is an opportunity to grow the environmental technology and clean growth sectors by positioning Devon as a clean, green, healthy County in which to live and work, while saving many businesses money through lower long-term water, energy, and waste costs.

Devon's carbon emissions reduced by 23% during lockdown. The opportunity exists to strengthen sector sustainability through collaboration of the construction and clean tech sectors to deliver home and commercial retrofit energy efficiency solutions. The County also benefits from state-of-the-art innovation within the sector, with Exeter leading in environmental science and data management. Environmental technology and clean growth will be backed with up to £1.5 million grant funding to develop bespoke business support; sustainable farming and food will be promoted to sustain and increase behaviour to "buy local"; and sustainable tourism, leisure, and hospitality will be supported with the establishment of a Great South West Tourism Zone to build on the £2.5 billion of visitor spending that Devon currently attracts.

Through our Team Devon prospectus we will seek to roll-out an ambitious pilot investing in domestic energy efficiency and energy generation measures; advance plans for a £2.5 million investment to work with SMEs on reducing carbon emissions; establish a £3.75 million "Centre for Clean Mobility" at Exeter

Science Park for research and development of autonomous transport; and bring forward proposals to champion a SMART aviation cluster and freeport working with Exeter Airport and other partners to support the development of new electrical air vehicles and green aircraft.

The County Council has set itself a target to be carbon neutral by 2030, the authority having revised its energy and carbon strategy in response to the worldwide climate emergency. The County Council's carbon footprint has already fallen by almost 40% since 2012/13 – and it is likely to reach the authority's original target of a 50% reduction this year, nine years earlier than planned.

The County Council recognises the need to go further if Devon as a county is to make a telling contribution to the worldwide response to the climate change crisis. An important step has been the production of an evidence-led Carbon Plan for the Council's emissions which has been guided by the Centre for Energy and Environment at the University of Exeter.

Alongside the actions the County Council is taking to reduce its carbon usage, the Chief Executive chairs a Devon Climate Emergency Response Group which is made up of senior officer and executives from 25 organisations across Devon including District Councils, emergency services, businesses and voluntary organisations.

The group provides strategic co-ordination as a Team Devon response to the climate crisis. As part of that wider Devon work, the County Council has committed £250,000 to fund a Devon-wide Carbon Plan and a Citizen's Assembly as a forum for public engagement on climate change policy proposals.

A Net Zero Task Force chaired by Professor Patrick Devine-Wright, Professor in Human Geography at the University of Plymouth, has been established to advise on and help deliver the Carbon Plan. Prof Devine-Wright is a Lead Author for the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, currently contributing to the 6th Assessment Report due for publication in 2021. Fellow members of the Net Zero Task Force include environmental experts and specialists from the worlds of academia, business, health and community development.

## **Broadband**

Fast, reliable broadband connectivity for businesses and communities across Devon is a top priority for the County Council. That is why along with Somerset County Council, Devon provides joint leadership for Connecting Devon and Somerset, a central and local government partnership that subsidises the construction of broadband infrastructure mainly in rural areas, bridging gaps in commercially funded networks.

The County Council provides funding support for CDS and Devon's Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills is the CDS programme director.

In May, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said: "Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) has achieved genuine success during their management of broadband delivery in the region. CDS has directly provided superfast access to more than 300,000 homes and businesses, often in rural and sparsely populated areas. They have also delivered connectivity to more premises than any other English programme."

The CDS programme is the largest and one of the most cost-effective in England with costs per premise in the lowest quartile nationally\*. CDS covers the local authority areas of Devon and Somerset County Councils, North Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset Councils. Coverage across the whole area is around 90% at nearly 1 million premises †. \*Source: *Building Digital UK (BDUK)*. † *Total coverage = CDS funded + commercially funded*.

Take-up of CDS funded broadband services is nearly 70% compared with a national average of 61.4%, an increase of circa 5% over the last quarter\*. As a result, CDS has more live customers than the next largest local body has potential connections. The CDS programme is expected to deliver an £800 million boost to the region's economic productivity †. \*Source: *Building Digital UK (BDUK)*. † *UK Broadband Impact Study, SQW*.

CDS has launched its Fibre Extension Programme, comprising two new initiatives with Openreach and Airband that will, between them, deliver full fibre to more than 8,000 additional homes and businesses across the CDS area by the end of 2021. Surveying and engineering will follow Covid-19 social distancing precautions.

The new collaboration with Openreach is a £6 million expansion of fibre broadband coverage helping villages, hamlets and isolated homes and businesses in particularly hard to reach or deprived rural areas. Survey teams for Openreach have already begun working in communities, planning the best routes for these new fibre connections. This work will help shape the design of the local networks and ensure roll-out can happen as rapidly as possible. Around 2,000 homes and businesses in more than 20 communities will benefit from the roll-out. Funding is a reinvestment of monies returned to CDS under the Government's "gainshare" agreement with Openreach, effectively a dividend on the high take-up of broadband services by the public and businesses.

CDS' contract with Airband will deliver full fibre connections to over 6,000 premises in Devon. Engineering began in early July in North Devon and will be rolling out to 57 communities across central, south west and northern and west Devon.

These schemes will complement a big £38 million CDS procurement programme supported by £18.7 million of Government funding to extend gigabit-capable broadband to tens of thousands of homes and businesses in six lots covering areas of Devon and Somerset which the commercial sector is not planning to

cover. Initial tenders arrived in June and a process of negotiation seeking to optimise proposals has taken place. Subject to evaluation of final tenders and selection of preferred bidders, it is anticipated that contracts will be awarded in December 2020.

It is anticipated that work on the new programme will begin in early 2021 and take up to three years to complete.

In parallel with these initiatives, CDS is working closely with Building Digital UK to expand take-up of the Government's Rural Gigabit Voucher programme. CDS is offering support to communities who wish to contract with telecoms providers to design and shape bespoke broadband solutions for their areas. To date, 4,231 vouchers have been issued in the region with a value of nearly £5 million pounds, representing nearly 25% of all vouchers issued nationally. CDS will provide additional financial support where appropriate through its Community Challenge Programme to help bridge any local funding gaps.

### **Mobile Boost**

CDS is also shortly to announce details of its new Mobile Boost scheme to some of the most rural areas of our region. Funded through the recent HotSW LEP Digital Call, the scheme is aimed at small businesses and households who currently have inadequate indoor mobile phone coverage from their existing provider and who are currently struggling with connectivity due to their rural location. The scheme will offer vouchers with a value of £800 for eligible business and residential premises to acquire a mobile signal booster which will improve internal coverage using OFCOM approved equipment. Whilst the project is predicated on ensuring the ability to make voice calls, the equipment will also improve indoor 4G coverage. The scheme will be promoted through District Council economic development networks and will run alongside current CDS and commercial provision as a further contribution to enhancing digital connectivity within the region. All work will be required to comply with Covid-19 social distancing precautions.

### **Sustainable Transport**

The Government announced its Emergency Active Travel Fund in May this year, which encouraged local authorities to reallocate road space towards pedestrians and cyclists to encourage "active travel".

The County Council responded positively and swiftly, securing the full £338,000 allocation from the first tranche of Government funding, and delivering ambitious temporary pop-up infrastructure in several places across the County. This included point closures in Exeter to filter out traffic and create low-traffic environments for safer cycling, connecting residents with major job destinations including the city centre, the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital and Sowton. Funding was also made available to support local pedestrian improvements in towns including Barnstaple, Totnes, Teignmouth, Sidmouth and Holsworthy and

improved crossings were delivered in Newton Abbot and Bideford.

The County Council has now bid for a second tranche of funding, worth up to £1.3 million, to deliver ambitious, permanent cycle improvements in Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple which best met the Government's tight criteria including being shovel-ready and deliverable by March 2021.

Earlier, in July, the County Council opened its latest section of strategic cycle route on the eastern edge of Exeter, which included design features which are being promoted in the latest Government guidance including segregation of cycleways and priority side-road crossings for cyclists.

The County Council continues to commit funds to develop plans for its strategic rural network, including the Teign Estuary Trail and completing gaps in the Coast to Coast cycle network on the Tarka Trail (Meeth to Hatherleigh and Willingcott to Knowle).

### **An integrated social and health care system**

In Devon, community-based health and social care services have been integrated since 2008 with joint leadership and co-located staff.

Our health and care commissioning functions are also co-located with an increasing number of joint leadership positions and shared functions.

It is the stated ambition of the Devon health and care partnership to become an Integrated Care System with place-based governance.

During the COVID-19 period, the benefits of system working, with the full participation of our independent and voluntary sector providers, have been demonstrated.

This can be evidenced, for example, by the comparatively low levels of outbreaks, infections and fatalities in Devon's care homes with an integrated approach to Infection Prevention and Control.

Devon has the largest care home sector in the South West and one of the largest in England with 333 care homes and yet it is one of five local authority areas in England with significantly fewer care home fatalities than would be expected given the number of infections in the wider community. The county also remains the 149th lowest for Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population out of 150 local authority areas in England. It is testimony to the swift and excellent support provided by the County Council's adult social care and public health services working in close collaboration with NHS colleagues.

The County Council has made a submission to the Parliamentary Health and Social Care Committee to inform its Inquiry into the management of COVID-19 accordingly.

It can also be illustrated by our joint approaches to addressing shared challenges such as attracting, sustaining and developing the health and care workforce through Proud to Care.

We are anticipating the Government taking learning gained during the Response to and Recovery from COVID-19 to inform future reform of the health and care sector.

This will include sustaining and further developing the new ways of working and models of service delivery developed during the COVID-19 period.

It must be hoped, however, that Government recognises that continuing delivery of social care through democratically accountable councils, alongside the local democratic oversight and scrutiny of the NHS, has many strengths, strengths that have more than proved their worth during the pandemic and which outweigh the tenuous benefits of centralising social care as a Government-run service and the certain disruption to vital local services that will result as a consequence.

There is no need for a costly national take-over. As has been amply proved here in Devon, the benefits of locally delivered social care and public health services that know their patch and can respond swiftly, working alongside regional and national resources, works well and has kept the people and communities of Devon safe.

### **Skills and employment**

At the heart of the County Council's ambition for the people of Devon post COVID-19 lies a determination that every resident should have an equal opportunity to a purposeful education; to enter meaningful employment and ultimately be able to achieve and secure a long-term income. This will both see the efficiency and productivity of all our sectors enhanced, but also lead to a more inclusive, balanced and prosperous Devon for the future. This ambition is central to the Team Devon Covid-19 Economy and Business Recovery Prospectus.

To achieve this ambition, we must resolve several workforce challenges, namely unemployment, education and aspiration, and deprivation and inclusion.

As part of the Team Devon response, the County Council is therefore placing a strong focus on supporting those most at risk or in need: young people, displaced workers in vulnerable sectors, and those with a barrier to work, as well as those sectors facing the greatest impacts – Tourism, Retail and Food and Farming, or with the greatest potential for future growth - health, digital and advanced engineering.

The current work programme includes:

- **People Recovery Group and Task and Finish Groups.** The fortnightly meeting of key stakeholders in the learning, skills and employment sector is now well established. Following an initial scoping exercise to inform the development of the Recovery Plan, this has now moved into the action phase, and three task and finish groups began their work this month (focused upon Skills, Employment and Young People). Membership of these includes District Council colleagues, education and training providers, Job Centre Plus, employers, services for children and young people, Proud to Care, Apprenticeship support organisations, advice and guidance providers and our Digital Skills Network.



- **Skills**

- Support for Apprenticeships – In May 2020 the County Council commissioned work from the Devon and Cornwall Training Provider Network (DCTPN) to support the impact and take up of Apprenticeships. The scope of the work has included:
  - information gathering and intelligence from the provider network, in particularly around the impact of Covid-19 on providers as businesses, the impact on apprentices' learning, the take-up of furlough scheme for apprentices and the availability of traineeship programmes for example.
  - Preparing a network response form the County to failures of providers and apprenticeship placements, liaising with the Education and Skills Funding Agency in the event of a provider failure. This includes coordination during an employer failure to ensure the least disruption to apprentices in Devon, and wider support for providers, employers and apprentices to maintain their participation and confidence in the programme.
  - Regular and constant communications with the provider network and employers, advising and listening and thereby helping the County Council to inform Government planning and the Covid-19 response. At the heart of this has been a focus on confidence building around the Apprenticeships programme as the economy moves into the recovery phase.
- Digital Skills Partnership – The partnership has continued and accelerated its work coordinating a digital strategy that raises digital skills for our community, reduces social and geographical imbalances and ensures everyone has access to digital services. Specifically, the work programme has included:
  - Bounce Back Digital. A series of professionally hosted webinars introducing key digital topics was held through June and July. In addition, 20 free follow-on courses were held aimed at helping small businesses mitigate the impact of Covid-19. The full programme of webinars and courses can be found here: <https://heartofswlep.co.uk/about-the-lep/how-we-are-organised/digital-skills-partnership/bounce-back-digital/>
  - Early dissemination of remote teaching tools was shared with schools' pre-closure and ongoing support continues around digital learning tools and resources.
  - Regular updates on digital skills opportunities for learners, furloughed workers and businesses being shared through fortnightly newsletters reaching 5000+ individuals.
  - Engaging with the DeviceDotNow and Business in the Community to leverage hardware and connectivity for vulnerable households.

Supporting both the region's Online Centres to sign up to be distributors for the programme, and surveying the need across schools, youth groups and charities.

- An initial round of Digital Skills Innovation Funding, completed in July, which helped 170 individuals upskill or retrain into digital careers.
  - Re-purposing of the balance of the Digital Skills Innovation Fund project to implement a programme of digital support to help SMEs affected. The Digital Skills Resilience programme will help 600 businesses with short courses covering how to set up e-commerce websites, transact online and use digital bookkeeping services, productivity tools, digital marketing and cybersecurity.
  - Digital Utilisation for Growth - This initiative supports SMEs to develop their digital ability and through doing so expand their networks, extend their potential client base and in turn grow their business. Delivered by local provider Cosmic, the programme is up and running. Initial sessions have been held with over 100 businesses to establish their needs and suitable training has been delivered, with good feedback from employers.
  - Skills support at Learn Devon - Learn Devon, the County's adult education provider, is offering English and Maths qualifications including GCSEs. There have been over 250 enrolments since an enhanced, on-line response package was launched in April. In addition, over 250 learners have taken up a range of digital skills support options, including support for those needing to improve their digital skills to access Universal Credit.
  - Get Help to Retrain and the National Retraining Scheme (NRS). The Heart of the South West LEP, working through the County Council's Employment and Skills team, had been participating in the Department for Education's NRS pilot programme, Get Help to Retrain, since the beginning of 2020. Consequently, the LEP area has now been given an opportunity to bid for one of 3 pilot programmes nationally, each worth up to £1.25m, that will address digital skills barriers to employment over courses of up to 13 weeks duration. Contract values will be awarded based on the volume of vacancies requiring digital skills in the area, and training solutions are currently being designed to meet local need.
- **Employment**
    - The Redundancy Support Programme - The County Council's Employment and Skills team is currently working with partners at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to streamline the offer and support that will be available to those that are made redundant in the coming months. This activity requires the recruitment of 2 x 0.6 FTE temporary roles to act as co-ordinators of the work across the county, and this recruitment is now underway. The remit will include liaison with our District Council colleagues, working with training providers and providers

of other services such as mental health support, partnership working with Job Centre Plus (JCP) as well as responding to specific redundancy situations as they occur.

- Sector-based work academies is a project run by DWP and JCPs with the aim of linking up unemployed people with job vacancies in a specific sector - The County Council's Employment and Skills team are currently supporting the roll out of our first sector-based academy working alongside our Proud to Care team with a two-day workshop in North Devon this month and will seek to match up to 25 people with the 25 vacancies that have already been identified. Proud to Care will give information on working within the sector, Learn Devon will give virtual interview skills training and the programme will end with virtual interviews with real employers.
- Support for Redundancy through Learn Devon - Learn Devon has put together a comprehensive package of support for those facing redundancy, those who are newly unemployed or those who have been out of work for 13 weeks or more. The offer includes individual skills audits, training for those hoping to start their own business, courses focussed on wellbeing and mental health, English as a second language, work related qualifications as well as confidence building and motivational support for the long-term unemployed. Learn Devon has moved most of its provision to an on-line format including e-learning and virtual learning classes coupled with learner support delivered virtually and by telephone. There has been a significant rise in the take up of these learning opportunities during the Covid-19 crisis.
- The Disability Employment Hub - Initially this programme, designed to support employers with diversifying their workforce, was significantly affected by Covid-19. Planned face to face learning programmes were cancelled and communications with businesses halted to allow them the space to deal with the most pressing issue of enabling their business to weather the Covid-19 storm. The Disability Employment Hub is now back in action. Learning programmes have been moved to an on-line format, specific advice and support is available to employers on the HR issues they face regarding their most vulnerable workers at this time and case studies have been developed which showcase good practice. The Disability Employment Hub team has engaged with DWP locally and nationally on the issues faced by this group of workers and continues to develop its role. Further information on the work of the Employment Hub can be found here: <https://www.readydevon.org.uk/>

- **Young People**

- The Careers Hub - Operating over the Heart of the South West area, the Careers Hub has secured further core funding from The Careers & Enterprise Company, together with match funding from the HotSW Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and HotSW Local Authorities, to extend and expand the current service. From September, the HotSW Careers Hub

will support all state funded secondary schools, including Special Educational Need and Disability provision and Pupil Referral Units, and FE colleges across Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay. The Careers Hub team has continued to support school Careers Leaders as they worked to adapt their careers offer for pupils during the Covid-19 pandemic, sharing good practice, seeking out innovative ways of delivering careers activity, maintaining links with employer representatives and helping schools and colleges to continue on their journey towards achieving all 8 of the Gatsby quality benchmarks. Recruitment of four additional posts to staff the expanded Careers Hub is now underway. Further information on the work of the Careers Hub can be found here: <https://heartofswlep.co.uk/about-the-lep/how-we-are-organised/heart-south-west-careers-hub/>

- Additional support for Electively Home Educated young people making a transition to post 16 learning. - A small budget has been secured to work exclusively with this cohort over the HotSW area. The CSW Group will provide tailored services to up to 264 young people who have just reached the end of their year 11 studies. The programme will include 8 on-line webinar style sessions with the offer of one to one follow up advice and guidance to enable this group to make a successful transition into further learning and training routes.
- Digital skills and equipment for young people. - The task and finish group has already enabled the join up of the Digital Skills Network with the Wave youth service and work is underway to explore ways in which the two can add value to each other. This will include bringing together the various programmes for supplying IT equipment to young people and families with the aim of including as many families as possible while avoiding duplication of effort and approach. Employers and other stakeholders will be approached to donate equipment to be recycled and thus increase the supply of kit to closer match the demand as more and more learning and other services move to a digital format.
- Youth Hubs. - In partnership with and using funding from DWP, the County Council will design and deliver up to two Youth Hubs covering North and Mid Devon, Exeter, East and South Devon. Youth Hubs will have an on-line presence to include information, signposting, resources, learning opportunities and provide that “one stop shop” for unemployed young people. It is also intended that the work will deliver up to 13 weeks of mentoring support for young people aged 16-24 to help them re-enter learning, training or work.
- Additional support for young people intending to begin apprenticeship programmes in the next academic year. - The CSW Group lead on this initiative and contacted every year 11 and year 12 young person in the county who had indicated that apprenticeship would be their next programme of study. In total, 475 young people were contacted. All were advised on their options, depending on their individual circumstances, and where appropriate they were assisted to put an alternative plan in place.

This group will be considered “at risk” of becoming NEET and will be offered additional advice and support following A level and GCSE results. The aim is to ensure that all young people have a suitable offer, learning programme or course which enables them to move forward with their career aspirations.

- E-Cool Project - The County Council will host an Interreg Europe-funded on-line programme of activity over two days later this year focused on developing entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurship mindset across our various education and training settings – schools, colleges and work-based provision. All partners share good practices and there is an opportunity to explore the most popular projects in greater depth, sometime by visiting the project concerned. E-Cool will soon enter its action planning phase where we will use some of the key learning points to influence policy and practice across our strategic and delivery landscape. Specifically, there are two main actions:
  - Action 1: Creating and running an entrepreneurial kick starter programme in schools and communities, aimed at developing people’s abilities and skills, so that they can start their own businesses and while receiving this support get the mentorship needed to run their business successfully.
  - Action 2: Develop stronger links within our entrepreneurial network. This will include expanding the network and facilitating engagement with the programme in the development stage as well as the delivery. Network members will be encouraged to adopt a higher level of ownership in supporting the next generation of business owners and entrepreneurs within Devon.

The programme will continue to run up to its intended closure in 2023.

Work also continues to deliver on the remaining aspirations of the Covid-19 Recovery Strategy which includes seeking out new sources of funding, develop activity to fill those spaces not covered by Government’s own recovery package and leading locally on the required partnership working to deliver maximum benefit to both employers and individuals.

### **Social and affordable housing**

Although housing is not a statutory responsibility of the County Council’s, the authority believes the provision of social and affordable homes to meet local needs is fundamental to the well-being of all communities and reducing the plight of rough sleeping. It is an essential basic need, critically important to ensuring a future in Devon for young people who want to live, work and raise a family in our county. The County Council supports District Council colleagues in their concerns about the Planning White Paper’s potential impact on affordable homes provision and recently facilitated a briefing for Devon MPs on the issue.

-----

This Report has no specific equality, environmental, legal or public health implications that will not be assessed and appropriate safeguards and/or actions taken or included within the detailed policies or practices or requirements in relation to the matters referred to herein.

JAN SHADBOLT

[Electoral Divisions: All]

**Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers**

Contact for Enquiries: K Strahan

Tel No: 01392 382264 Room: G31

| <b><u>Background Paper</u></b> | <b><u>Date</u></b> | <b><u>File Reference</u></b> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|

NIL