



**QUESTIONS TO THE
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBERS**

Thursday 1 October 2020

**1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR G HOOK
Re: South Devon Highway Fines**

- A) In the last 12 months how many fines have been issued on the South Devon Highway as a consequence of speeding?
- B) How many of these have been paid?
- C) What sum of money has been generated and what has happened to that cash?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

a) In the last 12 months 3089 Notices of Intended Prosecution have been issued for speeding offences that were recorded by the Average Speed Camera system on the South Devon Highway.

b & c) Any fines are collected by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service. This level of detailed information for the safety camera operations within Devon is not readily available from either DCC or the Peninsula Road Safety Partnership.

**2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR G HOOK
Re: Compensation of South Devon Highway**

Is there any update on the settlement of local resident's compensation claims?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

Negotiations are progressing well. Additionally, with the traffic levels returning to near normal in September we are now able to start undertaking the required additional noise surveys. We have also engaged a sub-contractor to assist with this work to make the most of the potentially available time and hope to complete before the half term at the end of October.

**3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR G HOOK
Re: Training Courses for Speeding**

Is there still the option of a Training Course offered to speeding offenders? If so, of those speeding offenders on the South Devon Highway how many were offered and how many accepted the option of a Training Course?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Yes, there is still an option to undertake a training course if the drivers speed is within national guidance, and also if the driver has not already taken a course within the previous 3 year period. Details for the number of speeding drivers on the South Devon Highway that were offered a course, or the number of these drivers that accepted this option is also not information that is readily available from either DCC or the Peninsula Road Safety Partnership. However, for guidance approximately 50% of all speeding offences captured within Devon and Cornwall are dealt with by way of the offer of a speed awareness course.

4. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR G HOOK Re: Council Savings as a result of Covid-19

While the lockdown has been and is likely to continue to be a financially painful experience for local government, there has been the opportunity for at least some albeit relatively small cash savings. Can a figure be placed on cash savings since lockdown started in terms of expense claims covering for instance, mileage and sustenance, as compared to equivalent expenses for the same period in recent years?

Is it proposed to continue with Zoom meetings indefinitely, as a contribution to such cash savings and the reduction in air pollution and as a time saving measure for all concerned?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

I wholeheartedly agree that the COVID 19 pandemic has been a painful experience for so many people as well as placing additional financial burdens on individuals, businesses and of course Local Authorities.

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.

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 came into force in April 2020 in response to the pandemic, now permits remote attendance at formal meetings of the Authority. It must be remembered however that these regulations are temporary until 7th May 2021.

This Council has committed to running remote meetings for the remainder of this year and will reassess the situation later in the year regarding meetings to be held between January and the 7 May 2021.

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.

There is also a Motion from the July Council meeting which has asked the Council to further consider the wider issues such as budgets, climate change and the environment and therefore the Cabinet have asked the Procedures Committee to produce and consider a Report responding in full to the issues raised by the Motion, including any national debates on this matter. This will be considered in November and will include a full financial assessment as well as the climate change and environmental impact. It will also give an update on the national conversations with the Local Government Association and the Association of Democratic Services Officers who are actively lobbying for more flexibility for Local Authority meetings in the future, so Local Authorities can determine what suits them best.

5. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PROWSE
Re: Low Carbon Advertising Policy

My knowledge of the Council tells me that our role in promoting advertising is limited. Given our commitment to the climate emergency what policy, if any, do we have on restricting the extent to our involvement in allowing advertising that would undermine our efforts and objectives to meet our climate change policy?

Further,

(a) There exists an advertising concession agreement with the bus shelter company most of which have advertising panels, What input, if any, does the Council have in restricting the type of advertising?

(b) If we have no influence does a 'break' agreement exist where we could review the types of advertising?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

Devon County Council is working alongside a range of partners to deliver Devon's Carbon Plan and we have been, and will continue to, communicate the activities of the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group.

Devon County Council has a joint agreement with Exeter City Council and Clearchannel for the provision of bus shelters in Exeter at no cost to the Councils in return for the display of advertising. There is very little provision, limited to those of a political nature, within the agreement for DCC to restrict, or influence, the type of advertising displayed. However, it must meet the requirements of the Advertising Standards Authority. There are no break clauses within the agreement which is for a twenty-year period and has twelve years left to run, other than for breach of contract. With the present substantial downturn in advertising it is unlikely that any alterations to the contract would be possible without imposing additional costs on both Councils.

6. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE
Re: Flash Flooding Report

Thanks to Cllr Hughes for his reply at Cabinet re the serious flash flooding event in Barnstaple in August.

As part of his answer he said he was awaiting a report into this flooding event. Has he now received this report and will he share the report with Cllr Mathews and I so that we can input from our extensive local knowledge of this serious flooding event?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

In response to Cllr Greenslade's further question regarding the investigation report into the recent flooding in Barnstaple. The report is well underway and a draft is soon to be complete. In accordance with our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy we aim to complete and publish a Section 19 Flood Investigation Report for a single location within 3 months of the event. This provides adequate time to gather as much information as possible from those affected or involved in the event. A final version of the report will be publicly available on our website.

Under normal circumstances we would hold a local 'drop-in' event for all concerned to attend and share their knowledge of the event. Due to the current pandemic arrangements we have been gathering information, with great support from North Devon Council and Barnstaple Town Council, through virtual systems and have had a very good response to date. In view of the councillor's further response we will share a draft report with both Cllrs Greenslade and Mathews to gather any further knowledge they may have regarding the event before we publish the final report.

7. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE
Re: Test and Trace

Thanks to Cllr Hart for his reply to my question at Cabinet about DCC involvement in test and trace in the County.

The positive response he gave is welcome and no doubt the public would be encouraged as well.

Accordingly, will he agree to produce a press release based on my question and his answer so that the wider Devon community can be assured about the work DCC is doing to help fight this appalling virus?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

Devon County Council continues to communicate regularly with our communities and stakeholders reassuring them of our response to COVID-19. This includes dedicated webpages with up-to-date data, information and guidance; our popular Connect Me bulletin which reaches 112,000 subscribers; media releases including reassurances from myself and the Director of Public Health; MP

briefings; social media; Members' bulletin; Internal comms; and a community newspaper with our partners to 300,000 households.

8. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE

Re: Covid-19 in Devon Schools

Can Cllr McInnes tell me how many Devon Schools that reopened in September have had attendance by pupils and staff affected by cases of Covid-19 in their school or by the need to self isolate due to possible contact with others who have or may have contracted Covid-19?

Further can he say what percentage of pupils and staff who would normally be at school are actually in attendance at this time?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES

All Devon schools reopened in September and to date there have been 6 schools who, following Public Health England advice, have had to close to certain year groups or have self-isolated 'bubbles' of children. All groups currently self-isolating are expected be back in school by 6th October.

Currently 90.4% pupils are attending school (this compares to an annual average in normal circumstances of 95.2%).

The Council only has access to information relating to teachers who are unable to attend schools rather than all staff. Currently there are 244 teachers not at work (for any reason) and this represents 4% of the teaching workforce (based on Nov 2019 figures which is the latest available). As absence data is not usually collected as a "percentage who are absent at any one time" it is not possible to make comparisons with previous years.

9. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR HODGSON

Re: Active Travel

What measures have been taken to ensure that Active Travel opportunities, as promoted by central government during the COVID crisis are being implemented as a wider and more joined up initiative beyond the capital investment schemes we already have identified in capital investment strategies in Devon County? The government has sought to promote and support 'Active Travel' on routes to school, to local shops and village centres and between towns and villages; the stated intent being to build on the healthy exercise many people had rediscovered during COVID Lockdown and the implication being that Local Authorities seek to improve these non-vehicular networks and develop additional links where needed. Has Devon County Council sought additional funds from central government under this grant offer to secure finance that would enable some of the additional new proposals put forward by Members in response to Cllr Hughes' invitation when the grants for Active Travel were announced?'

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

In May this year, the Government announced its emergency active travel fund and Devon County Council has spent its £338,000 1st tranche allocation delivering temporary, 'pop-up' walking and cycling facilities across the County. This has included extension of town centre pedestrianisation in Barnstaple, new crossings in Bideford and Newton Abbot and point closures, one-way restrictions and widened footways to support low traffic cycle corridors in Exeter. In addition, there have been several trials of road closures, one-way restrictions, improved signage, reallocation of roadspace and parking removal in Beer, Bovey Tracey, Sidmouth, Holsworthy, Ivybridge, Totnes, Dawlish, Teignmouth, Tavistock and west of Exeter near Ide.

The 2nd tranche of emergency active travel funding was announced in July and indicatively allocated Devon County Council £1.3m. This is a more formal bid process and the County Council submitted its application in August and is awaiting confirmation of its funding. This funding is aimed at more permanent measures that can be delivered by the end of this financial year and should therefore be 'shovel-ready'. Building upon the tranche 1 schemes, in Newton Abbot we are seeking to make the temporary crossings as part of the East-West cycle route permanent, which would improve links to schools, jobs and the hospital. In Barnstaple, the bid includes improved crossings and new routes providing better walking and cycling links to the rail station, the hospital, jobs in business parks and the town centre as well as leisure opportunities on the NCN Tarka Trail. In Exeter, proposals to convert some of the temporary modal filters to permanent schemes as well as new sections of segregated paths to improve east-west and north-south access to schools, jobs and public open space are included. The bid also includes a budget to extend trial measures in the market towns and potentially convert some of these measures into permanent schemes if they are supported by the community.