

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.

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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) Food Justice (Councillor Aves)**

#### ***This Council notes:***

*That Trussell Trust research shows three million children in the UK are at risk of hunger during the school holidays. The Trussell Trust anticipates that ending furlough in October would trigger a rise in foodbank use of at least 61%.*

*Foodbank use has already dramatically increased. The Independent Food Aid Network recorded a 59% increase in demand for emergency food support between February and March 2020.*

*The Covid-19 emergency has exposed major health inequalities across the country with children and families suffering disproportionately.*

*Between March and August 2020 there has already been a 115% increase in Universal Credit claimants nationally and in Devon even greater, 165% for all claimants and 173% for 16-24 year olds.*

*That Government has committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which have an international and domestic commitment to ending hunger by 2030. That Government has asked Henry Dimbleby to lead on producing a National Food Strategy.*

#### ***This Council believes:***

*No one in the UK should go hungry, not least children.*

*Food justice is about taking action on the causes of hunger such as affordability and availability of good nutritious food.*

*That the stopping of furlough payments will lead to further unemployment and more food poverty as a result.*

*Local councils, schools and communities play a key role in supporting those that are experiencing food poverty during the Covid-19 pandemic and that should be recognised.*

***The council resolves to:***

- 1. Nominate an existing cabinet member to take on responsibility for Food Justice.*
- 2. Commit to setting up a food partnership to work with district councils and other partners to develop a Food Action Plan.*
- 3. Re-double its efforts to increase Free School Meal sign ups to ensure that all those who are entitled to them or need them, receive them.*
- 4. Encourage Scrutiny to look at the extent of food poverty – map it and understand what is going on across the County.*
- 5. Write in association with Devon MPs, to encourage Government to:*
  - a) commit to legislate the existing commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals to end hunger by 2030;*
  - b) commit funding in the next spending review for the five Sustain policies to protect children's health and increase access to nutritious food that is culturally appropriate, because the National Food Strategy will take a year to be adopted;*
  - c) support our local food production and suppliers, our farming and fishing industries in Devon, to protect workers jobs so that our food supplies are sustained throughout the pandemic and any shortages or delays experienced during the EU Brexit;*
  - d) increase Universal Credit so people can buy enough food;*
  - e) immediately act to help those most affected.*

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

### 1. Introduction

Food insecurity is a wide-ranging issue, covering affordability, accessibility and quality of food, and related impacts on diet, health and the environment.

Food and farming have played a key economic and cultural role in Devon for centuries. The Council continues to play an important role in promoting locally grown and sourced food. As a community leader it works to support Devon's economy, combat climate change, reduce health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing. Through the 9,570-acre County Farms estate, it has a direct interest in the future of local food production, the environment and Devon's rural communities.

In addition, the Council, in placing support to the most vulnerable as a key priority, recognises that it must continue to understand the causes and impacts of food insecurity on the most vulnerable; and where it can, alongside partners across the system, play a part in reducing food insecurity in Devon.

## 2. Relevant Current Activity in Devon County Council

DCC is working on several initiatives to improve food security, including:

- Ensuring people in hardship as a result of COVID19 can access emergency supplies of food via the COVID-19 hardship fund.
- Economic recovery planning
- Linking with existing food partnerships across the County, including Food Exeter, and exploring the development of a Devon Food Partnership
- Healthy Weight Declaration: Encouraging healthier food policies
- Breastfeeding Promotion and Support
- Healthy Start: Food vouchers and vitamins for eligible families
- One Small Step healthy lifestyle service
- Sugar Smart: Encouraging healthier food environments inc. reducing promotion of cheap, low nutritional quality products.
- Cooking workshops to increase skills and reduce food waste
- Potential development of food larders and fridges across the county

## 3. COVID Experiences and Learning

Hardship due to COVID19 has been mitigated by several national changes to the welfare system, including Furlough and Self-Employed Income Support schemes, increases in Universal Credit and reductions in Council Tax.

Devon County Council provided £1m to District Councils for COVID19 hardship support to individuals. Since then this funding has been aligned with a further £757k from DEFRA to develop, alongside District Council partners, a comprehensive hardship offer for vulnerable people, including the provision of food and access to support agencies and advice where required. Around £400k of rapid funding was also provided to around 300 small and medium organisations who provided food and wider care to thousands of vulnerable people across Devon.

Communications have increased significantly to promote the various support available for people in need. A webpage was created to compile this information together, detailing available financial and food support. This includes food banks, food larders, community food projects and free food offers from businesses, therefore supporting the significant increase in community activity to meet the increased food need brought by the pandemic.

## 4. What are Devon's current risks around resilience and insecurity?

Food poverty increases the risk of behavioural, academic and emotional problems in children and can lead to a range of chronic diseases in adulthood. Historically, Devon performs comparatively well on indicators relating to food poverty:

- 12.5% of children live in low-income families, compared to South West (15.9%) and England (17.1%) averages (2016).

- Pre-pandemic, 11.9% of secondary school children are eligible for free school meals, compared to South West (13.0%) and England (15.9%) averages.
- Only 63.4% of adults in Devon had the recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables on a 'usual' day, although this was above the South West (59.5%) and England (54.6%) averages. (2018/19)
- In 2018/19, 27% of year 6 children in Devon were overweight or obese, although again this is lower than the South West (29.9%) and England (34.3%) averages.

However, COVID19 has intensified these issues in Devon, as elsewhere.

Unemployment increased by 171.9% between March and May 2020, with nearly 14,750 people claiming Universal Credit and similar benefits in the Devon County Council area. During March to September 2020, 4203 successful applications for free school meals were made, compared to 1549 successful applications in the same time period during 2019.

EU exit will also have an impact, with the risk of food shortages heightened by Devon's geographic position at the end of most major supply chains.

The Agriculture Bill and trade talks as part of EU exit could, without safeguards, result in low quality, unhealthy, cheap food products being imported to the country. This presents a potential risk to the security and viability of local food producers, who must uphold British food standards. It would also have an impact on the healthiness of our food environment and accessibility of nutritious food, and therefore the diets and health of our population.

## 5. How a Strategy will help

DCC has a strong record of project work to address food insecurity. However, given the present situation and future economic outlook, there is an opportunity to adopt a leadership role in ensuring food security and fostering local food resilience. With partners, we can coordinate our various workstreams, align them with DCC priorities (in particular climate change, fairness and inequality) and scale up work to both address immediate demand for food aid and improve the food system in the longer-term.

Sustainable improvements to food security in the long term could include:

- Effective systems that integrate financial and food-based solutions and avoids directing more people to charitable food aid;
- Support to local food traders and markets to stay open, provide affordable food and implement green practices;
- Transformation of catering and procurement, including encouraging sustainable local supply chains;
- Exploring and analysing the food chain to encourage sustainable food and farming and a reduction in food waste.

## **(b) Devon Economy and Recovery (Councillor Atkinson)**

*The strength of the UK and Devon economy and GDP depends in the major part on the recovery of the service sectors as we are principally a service led economy. Though we also have manufacturing and production industries nationally and in Devon. It is acknowledged that our economy has contracted as a result of the pandemic.*

*The EU has set up a £750bn Euro coronavirus pandemic recovery fund and long-term spending plans to provide grants to kick start Europe's recovery from the pandemic particularly investing in green industry and infrastructure and to target resources to recovery, resilience and transformation.*

*To date only £20 million of new funding to help small and medium sized businesses across England to get back on track after the pandemic has been announced by the government and this means access only to grants of between £1,000 - £5,000 for new equipment and technology and specialist advice. No funding has been allocated to the Shared Prosperity Fund to replace the loss of EU Structural Funds after Brexit.*

*This Council will write to the government and request it:*

- to ensure that there are no new austerity measures like those introduced in 2010 after the banking crisis;*
- to set up a similar well-funded fund proportionate to the size of this country to provide grants to support Britain and Devon's economic recovery resilience and transformation;*
- to make grants available out of the fund to invest in and support:*
  - Devon's local food and drink production and suppliers, our farming and fishing industries in Devon, so as to protect jobs so that our food supplies are sustained throughout the pandemic and any shortages or delays experienced during the exit from the EU;*
  - Devon's service sectors such as retail hospitality tourism education health human services information technology finance arts and culture;*
  - Devon's shipbuilding and engineering and environmental science sectors*
  - Devon's Green economy and sustainable energy production and transport systems and to support local industry to achieve net zero carbon climate change targets set by the Paris Agreement*
  - Devon's blue economy - its marine environment which is aiming to become more sustainable;*
  - New infrastructure to support sustainable green and blue growth.*

## **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills**

A Report went to Cabinet on 14th October which set out the key impacts facing the Devon economy including forecasted impacts and the Team Devon Economic Recovery Prospectus. The Council approved the recommendation to consider supporting an economic recovery programme of £6m over the next 2-3 years as part of the 21/22 budget setting process.

A case has been made to Government as Team Devon, backed by all Devon MPs for additional funding to deliver the key priorities set out in the Team Devon Economic Recovery Prospectus. This case included evidence on the impacts being faced by our businesses, key sectors, communities and workforce. It also set out opportunities to grow back a stronger, sustainable and inclusive economy. Actions put forward include a range of support including grants to support hard hit sectors such as retail, tourism, agriculture, food and drink and construction sectors, support to grow opportunities within environmental technologies, health and care, digital and the social economy. Measures are aimed at both businesses and their workforce through several skills and employment activities. Asks also included capital and infrastructure investments in our City, market and coastal towns, including work space and regeneration proposals to develop our natural capital and energy networks.

Working with the LEP, we have also secured significant investment in a number of Devon capital projects as part of the Getting Building Fund and the Council continues to invest in other capital schemes including a Future Skills Academy at the airport and at the Exeter Science Park to help stimulate growth.

Regular meetings are held with Devon MPs with Team Devon CEX and Leaders and we have highlighted gaps in the current national support offered to businesses, including the Kickstart Grants programme for SMEs and Tourism Businesses. We continue to operate and deliver the growth hub and the careers hub on behalf of the Local Enterprise Partnership and host the Digital Skills Partnership and its programme of digital skills and innovation support.

Working with Heart of the SW Economic Resilience and Opportunities Group, chaired by Phil Norrey we continue to engage directly with businesses, Government departments and public sector partners on impacts and opportunities from COVID, preparations for exiting the EU and other economic shocks. Reporting in to the Heart of the SW Joint Committee evidence and a case for the future devolution and use of the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Funding has also been undertaken and we await a final position from Government along with any devolution white paper.

On behalf of SW Councils, the Council has also commissioned economic forecasting research from Oxford Economics for all upper tier areas and this has provided helpful scenarios and modelling of economic impacts from COVID. A baseline, pessimistic and optimistic forecast were presented which have underpinned the Team Devon Economic Recovery Plan. Included in these scenarios was consideration of the impacts from leaving the EU under WTO terms. We are currently in the process of discussing with regional partners additional forecasting of the combined impacts from Winter, COVID and leaving the EU to further enhance our preparations and planning as an authority and our economic plans.

### **(c) Great South West Initiative (Councillor Atkinson)**

*Since the abolition of the Regional Development Agency and the establishment of local LEPS economic development in the region has become fragmented. Control of public funds for economic development rest with central government on a piecemeal basis.*

*At the recent AGM of the Heart of the South West LEP the chair lamented that there has been no rural productivity deal for the South West and that the South West does not garner the level of support we need from the government. He cited that attempts to deal with this by establishing the Great South West with its prospectus had failed to get the support of government.*

*The council agrees to write to the government to ask it to support the Great South West Initiative and in particular:*

- Give formal recognition and*
- Provide an identified Minister to link into Government.*
- Provide at the very least £2million requested over three years to move forward at pace and enable it to develop full business cases across the range of topics covered in its prospectus though arguably now more is required sooner to support the recovery of the economy after the impact of the pandemic*
- Support an enhanced export and investment hub.*
- Recognition to a Great South West Tourism Zone; and an*
- Agreement to create a rural productivity deal.*

### **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Economy Enterprise and Skills**

Devon County Council is a leading local authority supporter and promoter of the Great South West initiative, providing political leadership and professional advice to the regional partnership.

The Leader of the Council is the local government lead Member on the Great South West Steering Group, a campaign partnership of the region's LEPs, local authorities, business leaders, universities and colleges.

The mission of the Great South West partnership is to transform the fortunes of the region which, with a population of over 3 million is the size of Wales and, with an economy of £64 billion, bigger than Great Manchester, but is severely constrained by productivity that is lower than both and over £12,000 per job lower than the UK average.

The County Council acts as the co-ordinator for the Steering Group and the liaison office with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Great South West chaired by Sir Gary Streeter, MP for South West Devon, and co-chaired by Ben Bradshaw, MP for Exeter. Selaine Saxby, MP for North Devon, is a vice-chair. The group, which includes MPs from Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay seeks to promote the economic and social advancement of the region.

The County Council has provided professional advice from the Economy, Enterprise and Skills service and the Policy team for the Great South West

prospectus and has worked closely with regional partners and MPs to promote the document with Government Ministers and officials.

Meetings have been held at Ministerial level including the Prime Minister to secure formal Government recognition and financial support to kick-start priorities in the Great South West prospectus.

The Prime Minister has given his personal backing to the Great South West and the region's compelling prospectus for growth, Securing Our Future, that will support the Government's "Build Back Better" policy by delivering a green and blue economic revolution for the region, increasing regional economy by £45 billion and creating 190,000 new jobs.

Unfortunately, the regional partnership has so far been unable to convince Ministers of the importance of recognising and agreeing funding for the Great South West as the clean energy powerhouse for the region and the UK. The position has been overshadowed by delays to the publication of a Recovery and Devolution White Paper and Ministerial changes at the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

Therefore, the Leader of Council wrote to the Prime Minister on October 13th on behalf of the Great South West partnership seeking the earliest opportunity to discuss with him and his officials how the priorities within the prospectus can be turned into a solid reality with Government support. Additionally, efforts are being made to secure a meeting with the new Local Government Minister Luke Hall.

The letter, co-signed by Sir Gary Streeter, Steve Hindley, Chair of the Great South West, and the Chairs of the three Local Enterprise Partnerships in the region, welcomes the Prime Minister's vision for the UK to become the world leader in low cost clean power generation.

The letter highlights the huge contribution that the Great South West can make to achieving that ambition thanks to the unparalleled scale of the region's natural assets and the expertise of its world-leading research institutions.

For example, new research commissioned by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP shows that 1GW of floating offshore windfarms in the Celtic Sea could support 3,200 jobs in the South West and Wales and £682 million of spend in the local supply chain by 2030, powering hundreds of thousands of homes.

The four counties of the region, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset, possess rich resources in marine engineering, surveying, geotechnical and port expertise and facilities, backed by world-renowned excellence in offshore renewables business and research. The region's universities and institutions such as the Met Office in Exeter, the UK Hydrographic Office in Taunton, Plymouth Marine Laboratory and CEFAS in Poole have some of the best brains in the world to help lead this transformation.

Through excellent partnerships the Great South West region is making progress where it can including plans for the South West Floating Offshore Wind Accelerator project which will kick-start the creation of the offshore wind industry in the Great South West and will be submitted to the Government next month.

There is much more the region can do and to fast forward the delivery we are seeking Government support with five essential actions:

- Firstly, formal Government recognition of the Great South West as a powerhouse region
- Second, £2 million in pump priming to accelerate the development of proposals in our prospectus
- Third, an enhanced export and inward investment hub for the region to drive productivity
- Fourth, a Great South West Tourism Deal with a focus on green tourism development
- Fifth, a Rural Productivity Deal that will enable SMEs to thrive in the green revolution.

Together, with this critical help from Government, the Great South West can create the UK's first zero carbon local economy, become a net exporter of clean energy to the rest of the UK and deliver a more prosperous future for the region.

## **(d) The Protection of UK Jobs and Businesses (Councillor Hannaford)**

### ***Council Notes With Concern***

*The South West region has seen some of the highest employee furlough rates in the country during the first part of the Covid-19 pandemic. Figures show that under the Government's Job Retention Scheme, 808,900 people in the region were furloughed, with take-up in the South-West of 32.1%, being the second highest for any region in England after the West Midlands.*

*Retail has been the sector hardest hit by mass redundancies since the pandemic began, with manufacturing, tourism, hospitality and aviation also being badly affected.*

*Tens of thousands of job losses have been announced, and more mass redundancies are expected in these sectors, yet they will not receive any tailored support when the Government's jobs-retention scheme is scheduled to finish at the end of October. Our country is facing an unprecedented jobs crisis. The Office for Budget Responsibility predicts that, by the end of this year, nearly one in eight of the UK's workforce will be unemployed.*

*The Government's current plan to end furlough outright is over-simplistic and will only exacerbate the problem - it puts millions of jobs at risk. Regions such as the South West, are as a direct result at risk of suffering from deepening inequality. Britain already has the worst regional inequalities in Europe, and without targeted action now, these are likely to get even worse.*

### ***Council Supports***

*The work of the Treasury select committee, that has called on the Government to "carefully consider" targeted extensions to its coronavirus job retention scheme, that is due to end for all sectors. The new 'Challenges of Recovery' report from the cross-party group of MPs, concludes that although the retention scheme*

*“cannot persist indefinitely” the Chancellor should consider further support measures.*

*Commenting on the new publication, Treasury select committee chair Mel Stride MP said: “Our second report of the inquiry focuses on emerging challenges as lockdown measures are lifted. One such challenge is to target assistance effectively at those businesses and individuals who need it. The Chancellor should carefully consider targeted extensions to the coronavirus job retention scheme and explain his conclusions.”*

*The new report is the second by the committee on the economic impacts of Covid-19. The first identified gaps in the Government’s financial schemes that left at least one million people unsupported.*

*The proposals set out in the earlier June report were ignored, which led the Treasury select committee to accuse the Government of “turning its back on those who are suffering”.*

*The newly released report also says the Government should extend reforms to Universal Credit past their one-year cut-off, support small businesses struggling with debt and define “levelling up”.*

*Although the Prime Minister claims to have made reducing regional inequalities a central aim of his administration, the committee accuses his ‘levelling up’ promise of being merely an “empty slogan”.*

*The Chair Mel Stride MP added: “The key will be assisting those businesses who, with additional support, can come through the crisis as sustainable enterprises, rather than focusing on those that will unfortunately just not be viable in the changed post-crisis economy. As the committee has said throughout the crisis, the Chancellor must continue to show flexibility in his approach. We hope that the Treasury’s unwillingness to implement the recommendations from our first report is not a sign of how it will respond to this one.”*

### **Council Believes That**

*We need a financial support system that specifically targets industries worst hit by the pandemic, seeks greater economic protections for any areas under local lockdown restrictions, and ensures incomes for people who are forced to self-isolate. Without targeted support viable businesses will fail and employment will be lost. This will extinguish any hopes of a quick economic recovery from the deep economic recession that we are facing. Our region and the whole country is now facing a social and economic toxic shock through the threat of mass unemployment in tandem with an international health crisis from a second wave of the pandemic.*

### **Council Resolves**

*To formally write to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and all our local Members of Parliament as a matter of urgency to call again on the Government, in the strongest possible terms, to not implement its damaging blanket approach to indiscriminately sever and totally withdraw the current furlough scheme. Which fails to consider the circumstances of different regions, such as the South West, and the most effected sectors, with the deep impact on*

*the communities that have a proud history in these industries. Therefore to urge the Government to do right by our local communities and businesses and see them through the crisis by targeting support, extra relief for lockdown areas, extend the eviction ban, adequate support for self-isolators, and not pull the life raft away while the storm is still raging, to save jobs, and to potentially save lives.*

## **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Economy, Enterprise and Skills**

The Chancellor announced on 24 September an extension of national support measures for a further six months. This revised package of measures is focused on retaining viable jobs and supporting business cash flow. This included a Job Support Scheme to follow on from the Job Retention Scheme on 1<sup>st</sup> November. This continues to provide support for retaining jobs, although on less favourable terms. The continuation of the Self Employment Income Support Scheme was also announced, again on less favourable terms. We are awaiting guidance from Government on the eligibility criteria and definition of what constitutes a 'viable job.' Once we have this information we will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub to communicate this to the Devon business community.

Other measures to support business cash flow included the restructuring of the Government backed loans – Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans and Bounceback Better Loan Schemes offered through the British Business Bank, along with protection on evictions and VAT deferral payments. Added to the above were further announcements on 9 October to support business forced to close. An enhanced package under the Job Support Scheme is available for six months covering 67% of wages of firms legally required to close. Grants upto £2100 per employee a month are available and employers will only be required to contribute up to 5% of employee costs – NI and Pensions, with flexibility for employers to top up the wages. There is a review point of the Job Support Scheme in January.

To support and incentivise compliance with self isolation and local restrictions the Government has introduced two schemes to support employees and businesses.

The Test and Trace Isolation Payment is being run by Devon District Councils and opened on 12 October for applications from eligible residents on low incomes who could receive a £500 payment to support them if they are asked to self isolate and are unable to go to work.

On 8<sup>th</sup> October the Government announced that it would roll out a national scheme to support businesses forced to close due to self-isolation or local restrictions. The Local Restrictions Support Grant will be payable to eligible businesses two weeks after closure. Small businesses with a rateable value below £15,000 can claim £1300 per month, medium sized businesses with rateable values between £15,000 to £51,000 can claim £2,000 per month and larger business the maximum of £3,000 per month. This scheme will be administered by Devon District Councils who are awaiting guidance and funding to run this scheme. Further changes were announced by the Chancellor on 22 October; making the new Job Support Scheme (open) more generous; increasing Self Employed (SEISS) scheme support in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grants from 20% to 40%

of trading profits; and providing funding to local authorities with tier 2 restrictions for grants to hospitality and accommodation businesses.

The Council, working with Team Devon and the LEP continue to state and make the case for our economy and the interventions set out in the Team Devon Recovery Prospectus and has made the case to Government to retain unspent business support grants to support our shared priorities. The Council and partners recognise the impacts on our residents, communities and economy and in April 2020 and together with our District Council partners we have developed a Vulnerable Support Scheme with funding from the County Council providing emergency assistance to those in our community who have been affected by Covid.

We also continue to work closely with local and regional partners around Government's wider suite of employment support measures, including the roll out of the Kickstart scheme for young people, support for traineeships and apprenticeships, and broader support for those being made redundant and seeking work'

We continue to engage with our MPs and work with our Team Devon partners to push for additional investment to level up our economy. We have set out a case to Government, backed by Devon MPs which highlights the underlying economic fragilities of our economy, and the impact, depth and duration of the consequences from the pandemic on our tourism, retail, construction, agriculture, food and drink sectors and the jobs that each supports.

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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**

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