

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Friday 12 February 2021

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT
Re: Community Connectors

Is the Cabinet aware that well regarded and valued Community Connectors employed by some of the partners to the Wellbeing Exeter Project have been given notice, citing a delay in Devon County Council confirming its funding? Last month, on 20 January, Exeter City Council, which hosts the contract for this scheme, advised County Hall it would be terminating contracts to partner agencies providing the Community Connector service.

It is clear that Devon told Exeter City Council that same day that funding was confirmed, subject to some minor clarifications.

Why has it taken until 8 February for a meeting to be arranged of the 'partners'?

Why is the Community Connector scheme being allowed to fail and dedicated staff to leave at a time when the community, more than ever, needs this service?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

The value of the support offered to communities by Wellbeing Exeter and its partners has never been questioned. However changes to delivery arrangements arising from the pandemic have led to some questions around the existing delivery model and some (but not all) partners such as Westbank have chosen to withdraw from contracts. To understand the issues behind this a meeting was convened on 8 February and agreement to look again at the arrangements for delivery and strengthen governance. I am pleased that following this meeting that all partners agreed to look again at this matter and that DCC again confirmed its funding for the 21/22 financial year. A joint statement was agreed and is detailed below

The current core funding cycle for the Wellbeing Exeter programme ends on 31st March 2021. As a result of this timing, and the current impact of the pandemic on individuals and communities, highlighting inequalities, the core funding partners have committed to a collective re-design of the programme to develop a medium term strategy to 2025. This will involve a strengthening of the governance, a review of the model of delivery and ensuring the resource available supports those residents and communities facing the greatest challenges. The key core and delivery funding partners; Sport England, Primary Care Networks in Exeter, Devon County Council, the Devon Clinical

Commissioning Group and Exeter City Council, will work alongside Devon Community Foundation to conduct a joint review and transition to a new programme from April 2021 onwards.

This is a good outcome for residents in the city. Whilst the service will not be delivered in exactly the same way by all the same providers, the core funding and delivery partners will develop a new programme that targets investment and impact accordingly.

2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE
Re: Flash Flooding in Barnstaple

Thank you to Councillor Hughes for making sure Cllr Mathews and I received a copy of the report into the flash flooding in Barnstaple last August. If I understand the outcome of the report action to address the protection of central Barnstaple from such events in the future as been given a higher priority.

Can Councillor Hughes confirm that a higher priority to addressing this flooding risk is correct and can he say what is the timescale for the prevention work and what is the nature of the prevention work planned?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD

Following the recent flood events in Barnstaple we have re-evaluated our catchment prioritisation in accordance with the Local Strategy and Barnstaple has now been identified as one of our highest priorities. This means that a more detailed review of the flood risk will be investigated within the Council's next 6 year programme, with the view of obtaining partnership funding through Defra's Flood Defence Grant in Aid, Local Levy, Risk Management Authorities and other interested parties, such as local businesses. Including other matched funding.

To avoid delay we have already appointed our consultant to carry out a more detailed assessment of the surface water flood risk in Barnstaple. At this early stage of the detailed investigations it is not possible to say what the final proposals are, but we will liaise closely with relevant partners to keep them informed.

The optioneering, detailed design, landowner agreements, planning permissions, notices, etc. for whatever the preferred option is will take time. The difficulty is the area flooded is quite dispersed and although opportunities for some quick wins will be explored it is quite normal to take 5 years plus from the date of an event to actually deliver the works.

3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE
Re: Traffic Figures for Barnstaple Taw Bridge

Can Councillor Hughes advise me what the traffic flow figures for the Barnstaple Taw Bridge are for December 2007, December 2019, and December 2020?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Average Traffic flows on Taw Bridge were as shown in the table below. It is noted that flows on the bridge reduced by around 12% in 2020 compared with the year before. This reduction rate was much the same as several other similar roads in Devon at the time and considered to be in part due to Covid19 restrictions in place during this period.

Date	Average Daily 2-way Traffic Flow
December 2007	17,869
December 2019	24,288
December 2020	21,363

4. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE
Re: Funding Level Per Devon School Pupil

Previously Councillor McInnes advised me that the funding level per Devon School pupil had hardly improved in respect to the average funding per school pupil nationally.

Now we have updated budget figures for 2021/22 can he say how funding per Devon School pupil in the next year will compare to the national average and whether this has improved at all compared to the level for 2017/18?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES

Schools Block Funding (2017/18) – Devon ranked 111 out of 150 local authorities (the 40th lowest funded). At the time Devon's basic per pupil funding £4,350 compared to a National Average of £4,619.

Per pupil Funding in Devon has risen significantly since then and for 2021/22 we are for the first time able to pay schools at the full National funding minimum recommended values. This means per pupil funding for Devon will be £5,019 against a National Average £5,259. Our ranking however, has dropped and we are now 128th out of 149 local Authorities (the 22nd lowest funded).

5. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE
Re: Costs of the Covid 19 Pandemic and Reimbursement

Can Councillor Hart advise me of how the costs arising from the Covid-19 pandemic incurred by the County Council compare to the level of reimbursement by Government?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART

The situation remains broadly in line with the information detailed within the Month 8 budget monitoring report that cabinet considered in January. Since this report there have been several new grants confirmed, plans are under development around how best to deploy this funding to meet the grant terms and conditions.

The costs incurred to date arising from the COVID pandemic have been fully covered by the funding received so far, with the majority of the funding expected to be utilised by the end of the current financial year.

Where this is not the case, and the terms of the grant permit, any grants not fully spent will be carried into the new financial year to support future response activities.