

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 Notice 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) Neonicotinoid Ban (Councillor Brazil)**

It is desperately disappointing that once again the Government has permitted the use of a pesticide known to have catastrophic effects on bees. This Council will not permit the use of thiamethoxam or any neonicotinoid pesticides on County farms or any County land. We would also encourage farmers to adopt more sustainable farming practices and reduce their reliance on toxic pesticides. The Government needs to support our farmers to do this and uphold its own ban on neonicotinoids.

### **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment**

#### **Background**

Neonicotinoids are a range of insecticides first developed in 1991, which are now the most widely used insecticides in the world due to their efficacy against sap-feeding insects, such as aphids, and the diseases they transmit. However, they are long-lasting in both the plant and in soils and have been proven to have a highly detrimental effect on bees and other insects and can have wider environmental effects which cascade down the food chain.

In December 2013 the European Commission (EC) first introduced a precautionary ban on the three most common neonicotinoids. Since 2018, 10 EU countries have been granted emergency use authorisations for neonicotinoid seed treatments and the UK's approach to authorisation has not changed since leaving the EU. In response to a request from farming and commercial interests last

January, Defra granted this type of emergency use authorisation to counter the threat to sugar beet crops from beet yellow virus, despite a similar request being rejected in 2018 due to the damaging environmental implications. A similar emergency use authorisation has, once again, been approved this year.

Defra indicates that risks are carefully evaluated and temporary emergency authorisations for restricted pesticides are only granted in special circumstances when strict requirements are met. Such requirements were not met in 2021 because of the cold spring, which meant that the emergency authorisation for the use of neonicotinoids was not implemented.

The County Council does not use any neonicotinoid insecticides on the corporate estate. In relation to its farms estate, there are no provisions within the leases that would enable the landlord to prevent the tenant using authorised pesticides provided the tenant is acting within the law and industry best practice. Despite this, the County Council has, through its Pollinator Action Plan, signalled its intent to promote environmentally sustainable alternatives.

## **(b) Cost of Living Crisis (Councillor Hannaford)**

### **Council notes with concern that:**

According to the **House of Commons Library**, the **UK cost of living** has been rising since **early 2021**, but in **December 2021** inflation reached its highest recorded level in decades, seriously affecting the ability of households to afford basic goods and essential services. Economic experts agree that the UK is now expected to experience will be the **sharpest fall in disposable incomes since records began in 1990**, as the cost of living crisis wreaks havoc among **middle and lower-income households**.

### **Inflation**

Consumer prices, as measured by the **Consumer Prices Index (CPI)**, were **5.4% higher in December 2021** than a year before – **the highest inflation rate recorded since 1992**. In mid-December, the **Bank of England forecast** the CPI inflation rate to remain around **5%** over the winter, before rising to **6% in April 2022**. **However now against a backdrop of rising household energy prices, the Bank said** inflation was on course to peak close to 7.25% in April, a **sharp adjustment to its previous forecast**.

### **Fuel and Petrol Prices**

Petrol and diesel prices both fell over the first two months of the first lockdown. At the end of May 2020 they were at their lowest level for around five years: the UK average was 104.9 pence for a litre of petrol and 111.7 pence for diesel. Prices increased steadily during most of 2021 and particularly rapidly in October and November. Petrol reached a **record price of 147.5 pence per litre** on 29 November 2021. Diesel reached a **record price of 151.3 pence per litre** on the same day. Both prices have fallen slightly since then; on 17 January 2022 average prices were 144.8 and 148.7 pence for a litre of petrol and diesel respectively. However these prices were still historically very high and are even

more economically regressive in a rural county like Devon, where driving is often essential.

### **Housing Costs**

Particularly in the private rental sector ever rising costs are adding pressure to those in most in need. The latest **HomeLet Rental Index** figures show average monthly rental costs in the UK rose by **8.6 percent**, with the average rent being **£1,060**. An article on the cost-of-living crisis in the homeless charity magazine, **The Big Issue**, noted, “Already, data shows that private rents are unaffordable for the poorest in the country, with data from 2021 showing that there are **just two areas in England** where the poorest families spend less than **30 per cent** of their income on **rent costs**.”

As proven by the research done by **Team Devon**, the distortion of the rental market from ever more **holiday homes, second homes**, and an explosion in **Airbnb properties**, and the scarcity of affordable and social housing in all parts of Devon, are all feeding into this crisis.

Also following recent **Bank of England** interest rate increases, homeowners with mortgages are expected to see an average £15-a-month increase, but for many its much higher, depending on their own individual rates, and especially in Devon where property prices remain some of the highest in the UK.

### **Energy Prices and Devon’s Fuel Poverty**

A particularly important driver of inflation is obviously energy prices, with household energy tariffs increasing. Between January and November 2021 domestic **gas prices increased by 28%** and **domestic electricity prices by 19%**.

Energy regulator **Ofgem** has now announced the new energy price cap on , confirming it will increase by **54 per cent, or £693**, from 1 April. This will allow energy firms to charge customers up to **£1,971 per year**, up from the previous limit of **£1,277**. The energy price cap is the maximum amount a utility company can charge an average customer in the UK per year for the amount of electricity and gas they use.

**Consultancy Cornwall Insight** said that the households whose energy bills are tied to the price cap can expect the cap to rise further, to around **£2,350**, at the next review in **October**.

The number of homes set to be plunged into ‘**fuel stress**’ could rise to over **six million in April** when a new price cap comes into play, according to the think-tank **Resolution Foundation**. **This will see the proportion of households in England in fuel stress rise from nine per cent to 27 per cent.**

The current international situation in **Ukraine** could make matters even worse, with **Europe highly dependent on Russian natural gas**. Although the UK imports barely any gas from Russia. It meets about half of its gas requirements from the North Sea, while another third is sourced from Norway. The rest is imported by pipelines connecting the UK to Europe, or in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG), which is transported by tankers typically from Qatar or the US.

**However the UK's gas sources could all becoming eye-wateringly expensive if markets in Europe soar.** The UK's market is closely connected to markets in Europe, so a price rise in Germany or the Netherlands , should tensions rise , **would also lead to higher prices in Britain.**

Rising energy charges such as these could **devastate the UK's poorest families**, analysis suggests, as many adults could be forced to **spend more than half of their income after housing costs on electric and gas bills.**

The latest government information from April 2021 , that does not factor in the forthcoming price hikes, already indicates **substantial fuel poverty in Devon**, and it is also widely estimated that these figures hide a much higher actual number in reality.

|              | Number of households <sup>1</sup> | Number of households in fuel poverty | Proportion of households fuel poor (%) |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Devon</b> | <b>355,130</b>                    | <b>38,051</b>                        | <b>10.7</b>                            |
| East Devon   | 64,942                            | 6,148                                | 9.5                                    |
| Exeter       | 54,298                            | 6,439                                | 11.9                                   |
| Mid Devon    | 36,079                            | 4,162                                | 11.5                                   |
| North Devon  | 43,963                            | 5,073                                | 11.5                                   |
| South Hams   | 40,597                            | 3,834                                | 9.4                                    |
| Teignbridge  | 59,478                            | 5,886                                | 9.9                                    |
| Torridge     | 30,763                            | 3,637                                | 11.8                                   |
| West Devon   | 25,010                            | 2,872                                | 11.5                                   |

### **Food Prices**

**Food and non-alcoholic drink prices were up by 4.2% in the year to December 2021 on the official CPI measure of inflation. They may rise further in the coming months. However some everyday food items have increased in price by 344% in a year.**

It comes as food poverty campaigner, activist and chef **Jack Monroe** has successfully urged the **Office for National Statistics (ONS)** to reconsider how the cost of living is actually measured in the wake of rising prices for **everyday essentials**, such a **flour, pasta, rice and milk**, rather than luxury items , that the poor cannot afford and never buy.

Nationally its estimated that **Foodbanks** are already handing out 32 meals a minute, despite seeing a big drop in donations because of the cost of living crisis.

**One in 10 households in the Devon County Council area suffer "substantial disruptions" to get enough food.** Overall, **17%** of households were shown to experience some **food insecurity** and "not having reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food".

### **Other Pressures On Household Budgets**

As well as higher inflation, household budgets will be also be further squeezed by changes in taxes and benefits in the coming months. This includes an **increase in National Insurance Contributions from April 2022**, and **changes to income tax**, as well as the **withdrawal of the £20 Universal Credit uplift.**

**Stagnant wages** will also affect household incomes. Furthermore **public transport costs** will be raised.

Overall a recent report by **The Resolution Foundation** predicts households will be on average at least **£1,200 a year worse off from this year**.

### **Low Income Households & Child Poverty**

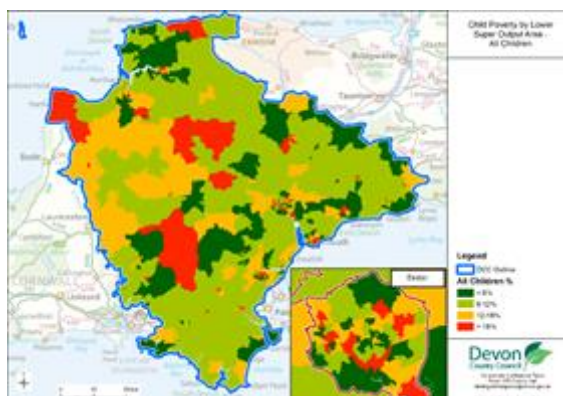
Low income households spend a larger proportion than average on energy and food, and will therefore be relatively more affected by increases in prices. **The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)** say that low-income families may have to spend, on average, **18%** of their income on energy bills, which rises to **54% for single adult households**, and around a quarter for **single parents and couples without children**.

Low income households are paying an estimated **“poverty premium” of £478 each year**, according to research by the campaign group **Fair By Design**.

As a result **thousands of people already in poverty across Devon** are paying more for essentials such as **energy and insurance**, because they are unable to afford lump sums and instead have to opt for pricier regular payments. This includes higher tariffs and fees through **prepayment meters** and **car insurance premiums**.

Recent data from **2016** shows that **12.3% of children in Devon are in low income families** compared to 17% for England, although this does not take into account the social and economic effects of the pandemic.

However **a fifth of children were living in households with a low income for at least three of the four years between 2016-2019**, rising to around one in three children in single-parent families. **The child poverty rate for children in families with three or more children, was almost twice as high as the rate for children in one- or two-child families (47% versus 24%)**.



### **Financing Progressive Measures**

The governments financial position is much better than expected. **Tax revenues are coming in higher than forecast**, and some substantial expected **government spending has not occurred**. We are nine months into the current financial year and thanks largely to that more money is coming into the exchequer

than expected, the deficit is lower than expected. It is still huge, **£147bn**, because of the economic effects of the global pandemic, but that is **£13bn less** than the **Office for Budget Responsibility** expected. So in conjunction with an new **annual windfall tax** and **some careful strategic borrowing**, the government does have some considerable financial headway to make sure **its leveling up agenda in the face of a cost of living crisis is more than just an empty slogan**.

### **Council Notes:**

The recent announcements by the **Chancellor** including;

- All households will receive **£200 off their energy bills in October under a rebate and claw back” scheme** – but then pay the discount back by £40 a year over five years from 2023.
- **Council taxpayers** in England in bands A to D would receive **a rebate of £150** from their bills in April, which will not have to be paid back.
- Local authorities would receive **£150m** to make **discretionary payments** to the neediest.
- The number of poorer households eligible for the **warm homes discount** – worth **£150 from October** – would be **increased by a third to 3m**.

### **Council Believes That:**

The Government has made **an limited intervention** to tackle the energy bills crisis. **But this isn't the only cost of living challenge families face**.

As such the Chancellor's announcements are **hopelessly inadequate**. For most families it's just £7 a week and more than half must be paid back. It's too little, it's poorly targeted, and it's stop gap measures instead of fixing the big problems.

**The support may not reach people quickly enough. The £200 energy bills rebate won't arrive in people's bank accounts until October. But people are struggling right now.**

And while the **£150 Council Tax rebate** is coming this April, **one-in-eight of the poorest families in England won't even qualify** for support because of the houses they live in.

**Finally, most of the £9 billion of support is being paid for via higher energy bills over the next five years.** This is a very risky strategy, especially if the cost of gas doesn't fall sharply and soon. **High energy bills could be a feature of the 2020s** – continuing to hammer the poorest in society – and **a reminder of the need to wean ourselves off fossil fuels**.

### **Council therefore resolves;**

**To call on the UK Government and our local Members of Parliament to effectively tackle the cost-of-living crisis facing Devon families and act now to support them with the following specific measures;**

- a) A new **revised local government settlement** that adequately funds local councils so that **council tax does not have to be raised this year** to protect and operate vital front line services.
- b) A twelve month pause in the proposed **National Insurance rise** to directly help those on low and fixed incomes.
- c) Revise the planned **3.1%** increase in the **value of welfare and benefits**, and build in a rise of 6% to protect the poorest and most vulnerable in society.
- d) A VAT cut on everyone's **home energy bills** for a year from **5% to 0% percent**.
- e) Increasing the **Warm Home Discount** from **£140 to £400** per year and expanding the number of households eligible to **9.3 million**.
- f) Introducing a **year-long increase to corporation tax** for North Sea oil and gas producers in order to secure at least a **£1.2 billion windfall** from their increased price rise profits to help mitigate household energy bills.

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

The Council recognises that several factors are currently combining to increase the cost of living for Devon's households, and that cost of living increases will disproportionately affect those on middle and lower incomes.

It also recognises that increases in living costs will push more people into poverty, which in turn is linked to poor health and housing outcomes, as well as poor educational outcomes and reduced life chances for children.

The main driver of increases in household fuel bills is the higher price of wholesale energy, which is determined by global prices. The UK's energy price cap sets out a maximum level for default energy tariffs, twice a year, based on the cost of supplying energy. This rose by more than 12% in October 2021, and it is expected to rise again in April 2022. According to the Resolution Foundation, if household energy bills jump by more than 50%, the average household bill could rise to about £2,000 annually.

Fuel poverty is linked to an estimated 30% of excess winter deaths, exacerbating conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism, chronic lung disease and asthma. Cold can weaken the body's immune system and result in an increase in incidence of colds and flu. Children in households facing fuel poverty have poorer educational outcomes are more likely to miss school through ill health.

Some areas of Devon have low average pay, accentuating the burden of rising energy and other costs. Of the UK's top 15 lowest paid areas, a fifth are in Devon. West Devon has the lowest pay in Devon and the third worst pay in the UK while Torrington has the second lowest pay in Devon and the fourth lowest in the UK. Torrington workers earn £393 a week on average, while North Devon averages just £419 a week. The UK average wage is £504 a week.

Analysis by the County's Economy Team shows that:

- By the end of 2024, average earnings in Devon are likely to be £740 a year lower than if the Pandemic had not occurred.
- Real wages have been falling since May 2021, with the Consumer Prices Index above earnings growth from October 2021 through to 2022 (Resolution Foundation). In Devon inflation has been outpacing pay since October (except for in Nov), with post pandemic pay increases slowing.
- Wage inflation in Devon is above the national average. However, pay is starting from a very low base, and only some sectors like Logistics/Transport and Construction are doing well. Health and care less so.
- Some WFH/ hybrid / in-migration (London effect) factors are resulting in bigger salaries, which is positive, but is widening income gaps.
- The rise in National Living Wage of 6.6% in April 2022 will provide some help for lowest earners from falling real incomes.
- The National Insurance Rise in April will impact most working households.
- Housing costs (especially for buyers) have risen among the fastest on record over the past 2 years. Focused in coastal towns/rural areas, especially difficult for key workers. However, house price growth is now slowing.
- Taxes and Energy Bills combined to rise overnight in April 2022 by average £1,200 per household.
- For lowest decile households, energy bills will rise from 8.5% to 12% of total household budget. Greater increase in bills for people coming off fixed price tariffs.
- Wholesale Gas and Electricity prices increased x8 and x5 respectively year to Dec 2021

Nationally, the number of people homeless in England is predicted to jump by a third by 2024 because of benefits freezes, rising food and energy bills and the end of Covid eviction bans.

Data shows that in Devon there has been a big drop in rental availability, which affects key workers and local people. However, Airbnb data from 2021 showed little increase in overall numbers from 2019, so there appears not to be a direct switch from residential rentals to Airbnb in many cases – although some will have happened.



## AirBnB and Vrbo Listings Devon

| <b>Entire Property Listings</b> | Sep-19 | Sep-21       | Jan-22 |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| Devon (excluding Plymouth)      | 10420  | <b>11026</b> | 9372   |
| Torbay                          | 1182   | <b>1442</b>  | 1186   |
| <b>Devon CC Area</b>            | 9238   | <b>9584</b>  | 8186   |

| <b>All Listings</b>        | Sep-19 | Sep-21       | Jan-22 |
|----------------------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| Devon (excluding Plymouth) | 12918  | <b>12643</b> | 10760  |
| Torbay                     | 1613   | <b>1686</b>  | 1412   |
| <b>Devon CC Area</b>       | 11305  | <b>10957</b> | 9348   |

The Government has announced that all Council Tax payers in Bands A-D will receive a £150 payment, to be made via their City or District Council. An additional £144m discretionary fund has been announced for which the government is due to publish guidance by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022. This support is likely to target vulnerable and low-income households including those who are not personally liable for Council Tax, as well as those in Council Tax bands E-H who are on a low income.

In addition, the Warm Home Discount will be expanded, and nearly 3 million low-income households will benefit from a £150 discount from their energy bills.

DCC is leading several programmes to tackle poverty and inequality, which is a priority of the new Strategic Plan:

- Coordinating the distribution of Government funding to combat the symptoms of poverty e.g., the Household Support Grant.
- Via the Household Support Grant, funding Citizens Advice Devon to issue fuel vouchers to those in need.
- Developing local support networks to reduce food and fuel poverty and support people that are experiencing hardship.
- Developing a shared understanding of Food and Fuel Insecurity, and the impacts in Devon; DCC's emerging role; alongside the wider opportunities in partnership.
- Leading DCC participation in convening and facilitating a whole systems partnership approach to tackling food and fuel insecurity.
- Promoting services that increase resilience, self-reliance, and independence.

The Council's 2022/23 Budget Impact Assessment considered the overall impacts of Council's proposed budget for 2022/23 and provided high-level information to assist in the budget setting decision making process. The assessment included consideration of patterns of poverty in Devon as well as historically high levels of fuel poverty in isolated and deprived rural areas and some urban areas.

The Governments Levelling Up White Paper enables geographic Devon to put forward proposals for a County Deal, with devolved powers and funding to support local priorities. County deals are intended to help the government achieve its

levelling-up objectives of reducing regional disparities in economic and public service performance and strengthening local leadership and local pride.

Although a Devon deal is still to be drafted, improving social mobility and tackling inequality and poverty has been established as one of the core themes of the future deal. This may provide the opportunity to use additional local levers for mitigating the impact of future cost of living increases on Devon's vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

### **(c) Motion for the Ocean – Ocean Recovery Declaration (Councillor Aves)**

Devon County Council is developing the Devon Carbon Plan aiming to reach net zero carbon by 2050 at the latest. The Plan includes the ambition to enhance the ability of habitats along our 200 miles of coast, in our countryside and in our villages, towns and cities to store carbon. This offers tremendous opportunities to reverse the decline of biodiversity and restore healthy ecosystems. This council has shown its wider environmental values through its support of projects such as the Exe Estuary Management Partnership.

In May 2019, after Devon County Council declared a Climate Emergency, a partnership formed to respond to the climate and ecological emergency in Devon. Its members represent private sector interests, environmental organisations, academic institutions, and public bodies, including our neighbours Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council. Plymouth City Council is leading the way in connecting people to the ocean through the development of the UK's first National Marine Park, in Plymouth Sound and as the first Council to pass the Ocean Recovery Declaration.

#### **International and national context**

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development runs from 2021 to 2030. Last year the UK hosted COP26 in Glasgow and the G7 came to Cornwall. The UK Government has publicly declared its ambition to be a global leader in marine conservation. All eyes are on the ocean.

There is national and global recognition that the world ocean is in crisis. The impact of the climate crisis on the ocean is profound, including in our local waters. Raised atmospheric carbon dissolves in the seawater and causes ocean acidification, dissolving the shells, reefs and other hard parts of marine animals. The heating of the climate causes ocean heating too which makes some parts of the ocean intolerable for life and is changing what lives and is caught locally. It also increases the volume of the ocean which causes sea level rise, added to by ice melt at the poles. Thanks to a more turbulent climate, increased storminess and sea level rise is a serious threat to all coastal communities, economies and infrastructure including Devon coasts. Marine microplastics have been found in all marine environments and in the bodies of many species, including humans. Fish stocks collapse from permitted and illegal overfishing. Poor water quality is impacting seafood and preventing safe bathing.

We must play our part in securing the sustainability and health of the ocean. Action is needed at all levels, from individuals developing their ocean literacy (understanding of the relationship between people and the ocean), individual and collective marine citizenship (promoting and demanding an ocean recovery through local, national and international policy changes).

**This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery.**

We recognise that we need ocean recovery to meet our net zero carbon targets, and we need net zero carbon to recover our ocean.

**This Council pledges to:**

1. Report to Full Council within 6 months on the actions and projects that will begin an ocean recovery in Devon.
2. Embed ocean recovery in all strategic decisions, budgets, procurement and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly in planning, regeneration, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements and considering ocean-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
3. Ensure that local planning supports ocean recovery, working closely with the Marine Management Organisation to embed strong links between the Local Plans and the South West Marine Plan to support ocean recovery.
4. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in local marine industries and invest in the development of a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity, including the local fishing industry and the vital work of the Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCA).
5. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in the county, including ensuring all pupils have a first-hand experience of the ocean before leaving primary school, and promote sustainable and equitable access to the ocean through physical and digital experiences for all students.
6. Create an online portal of the Council website to update on ocean recovery progress, signpost to ocean literacy development opportunities, and marine citizenship pledges.
7. Write to the Government to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by
  - a. Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.
  - b. Work with coastal communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.

- c. Appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities.
- d. Stop plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle.
- e. And by listening to marine and social scientific advice to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
  - i. Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
  - ii. Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
  - iii. Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire ocean that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.
  - iv. Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits from ocean management, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.

### **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment**

This Notice of Motion is based on a model 'Motion for the Ocean', otherwise referred to as an 'Ocean Recovery Declaration', which is currently being promoted for adoption by local authorities by the Ocean Conservation Trust. A key advocate for and one of three authors of the model motion is the marine scientist, Dr Pamela Buchan, who is Vice Chair of Devon & Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA). In her further role as City Councillor, Dr Buchan was instrumental in Plymouth City Council becoming the first local authority to formally adopt this 'Motion for the Ocean'. Through the associated involvement of the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group, a number of other local authorities, including South Tyneside Council and North Norfolk District Council, have recently done likewise.

As the relevant Cabinet Member and DCC representative on the Coastal Special Interest Group, Cllr. Andrea Davis had already instructed officers to consider the possible adoption of this 'Motion for the Ocean'. The notice of motion submitted by Cllr. Aves provides an opportunity to formalise this. Such action would accord with the significant commitment already shown by this authority to marine and maritime issues and fits well alongside our roles as a signatory of and secretariat to the Devon Climate Emergency, as host for the Devon Maritime Forum, as a funding partner in five other coastal partnerships, our lead role in the Devon Local

Nature Partnership and representation on and support for the Devon & Severn IFCA. The Council's environmental performance programme, linked to its environmental policy, provides the means to address and report on action to be taken in support of ocean recovery.

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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.

ANDREW YENDOLE

[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

## **Appendix 1 to County Solicitor's Report**

### **'Motion for the Ocean' – Devon County Council**

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#### ***Devon's ocean-based interests***

Devon is a maritime county, unique in the UK in having two distinct and geographically separated coastlines. Its ocean-based interests underpin Devon's rich heritage, are a famed aspect of its stunning natural environment and a cornerstone of its economy. Devon's coastlines and coastal waters are enjoyed by millions of visitors each year and are vital to the wellbeing of its residents.

#### ***Why is this declaration needed now?***

The health of our ocean is inextricably linked with our climate and with human health, wellbeing and prosperity. A healthy ocean is fundamental in regulating the global climate system and is an essential ally in our fight against climate change. The ocean absorbs more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system as well as absorbing around 20% of annual carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions generated by human activity.

However, decades of irresponsible marine exploitation and pollution have led to significant levels of degradation, and this together with the detrimental impacts of our changing climate on marine ecosystems has led to national and global recognition that the world ocean is in crisis. An unhealthy ocean does not absorb or store carbon as effectively as a healthy one, further worsening the impacts of the climate crisis.

The UK government's recent Marine Strategy assessment confirms that our marine environment is not healthy. An ocean in crisis is not only bad news for our climate, but also for our local fishing and tourism industries and for the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our coastal communities.

In Devon, like the rest of planet, we are witnessing the ocean crisis first-hand. Fish stocks continue to collapse from permitted and illegal overfishing and poor water quality is impacting seafood and safe bathing. Our beaches are covered in litter with each tide, much of it plastic, though this is just the tip of the iceberg of the amount of litter in our oceans. Marine microplastics have been found in all marine environments and in the bodies of many species, including humans and the species of fish we regularly eat. Our residents are on the frontline of climate change and are being disproportionately impacted relative to inland communities. The impact of the climate crisis on the ocean is profound, from rising water temperatures and changes in ocean chemistry, to sea level rise and increased storminess, including in our local waters. This is changing what seafood is caught locally, accelerating the erosion of our coastline - increasing the risk to infrastructure and properties, and increasing the risk of flooding and storm damage. Urgent action is needed to halt these devastating changes and recover the health of our ocean to enable it to deliver the full range of benefits, including climate regulation, carbon storage in coastal and marine habitats, coastal protection, a thriving local economy, clean safe recreation and happy, healthy coastal communities. We must play our part in recovering the health of the ocean.

In Devon, the ocean is at the heart of our heritage and economy. From the maritime and marine expertise of our coastal communities, to the millions of visitors who come to Devon to experience the sight, sound and feel of the ocean. The ocean can play a vital role in our economic recovery, and we must strive to develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers both ocean recovery and local prosperity. We must ensure that ocean recovery is embedded in our relevant strategic decision-making, policymaking and budget-setting; as well as being considered in future strategies and plans, including those seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

At present, not everyone has the opportunity or means to access and enjoy the ocean. Even within Devon, there are people of all ages who have never experienced the joy of our ocean. First-hand experience of the ocean is essential if people are to be motivated to play their part in protecting it, whether that is through disposing of their litter responsibly, recycling what they can or volunteering in ocean conservation with local organisations. Helping individuals develop their ocean literacy (understanding of the relationship between people and the ocean) is an essential part of this motion, as is individual and collective marine citizenship (promoting and demanding an ocean recovery through local, national and international policy changes).

Local authorities cannot solve the ocean crisis alone, but we can – and must – play our part.

**This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery.**

We recognise that we need ocean recovery to meet our net zero carbon targets, and we need net zero carbon to recover our ocean.

This Council pledges to:

1. Embed objectives for ocean recovery into the Council's Environmental Performance Programme through amendment to its suite of action plans and the reporting process overseen by its Environmental Performance Board.
2. Through its Impact Assessment process, consider ocean recovery in all strategic decisions, plans, budgets and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly in planning, regeneration, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements, and considering ocean-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon-neutral and climate resilient future.
3. Promote closer working between the Devon County Council and the Marine Management Organisation and support strong links between relevant Local Plans and the South West and the South Marine Plans to support ocean recovery.
4. Ensure that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy strives to support ocean recovery.
5. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries and develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity.

6. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in Devon, including opportunities for pupils to experience the ocean first-hand before leaving primary school - striving to include home-schooled children - and promote equitable access to the ocean through physical and digital experiences for all residents.
7. Create content and links on the Council website to update on ocean recovery progress, signpost to ocean literacy development opportunities, and marine citizenship pledges.
8. Write to the Government asking them to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by
  - a) Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and Natural England have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.
  - b) Ensuring coastal communities have a meaningful say in the development of marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes.
  - c) Appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities.
  - d) And by listening to marine scientific advice, including marine social science, to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
    - i. Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
    - ii. Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
    - iii. Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire ocean that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.
    - iv. Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits of ocean recovery, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.
    - v. Stop plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle.



## **Glossary**

A “Blue Economy” is one which uses ocean resources sustainably or even regeneratively whilst improving community wellbeing and social equity. It is not simply marine or maritime economic activity.

“Ocean literacy” is where a person understands the ocean's influence on them and their influence on the ocean. For example, an understanding that the ocean stores carbon and an understanding that what they put down the drain can impact on ocean health.

“Marine citizenship” is where an individual practices their rights and duties relating to the health of the marine environment, e.g. a resident writing to their local Councillor to ask them to take action for ocean recovery; or collective marine citizenship, e.g. promoting or making local, national or international policy changes.