

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday 13 November 2024

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT
Re: Email boxes from Devon County Council

How many general email boxes does Devon County Council use for residents to contact the Council?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR SAYWELL

The Customer Service Centre advertise 4 main public-facing mailboxes:

- General Enquiries – customer@devon.gov.uk
- Blue Badges – csc.bluebadge@devon.gov.uk
- Highways – csc.roads@devon.gov.uk
- Childrens and Young People's Services – csc.cyps@devon.gov.uk

The Customer Relations Team advertise 1 public-facing mailbox:
customer.relations@devon.gov.uk

There are other mailboxes available publicly across the local authority, but most of these mailboxes go directly to the teams themselves.

2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT
Re: Standards for email boxes from Devon County Council

Does the council have a customer service standard to ensure the mail boxes are reviewed on a regular basis so that emails are responded to?
If so, what is the standard?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR SAYWELL

Please see the link to Devon County Councils customer service standards here: [Email contact - Inside Devon \(Customer service standards\) - tasks and guides](#)

These standards are currently being reviewed.

3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT

Re: Auto responses from emails

Does the council have an approved or recommended 'auto-response' so that residents and customers know their email is received and will be attended to?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR SAYWELL

Within the Customer Service Centre auto-responses on the mailboxes all follow a similar pattern, but are adapted for each mailbox. There is no council-wide approved auto-response in place for public facing mailboxes.

4. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT

Re: Wording of auto responses from emails

Does the Council consider that auto responses such as *'Thank you for your email. We will endeavour to respond as soon as possible.'* are unhelpful because they give no certainty of a response.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR SAYWELL

An auto-reply is used in some cases to provide an initial acknowledgement of the email received rather than to set specific timescales for response.

5. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT

Re: Audit of email boxes

Will the Council order an urgent and rapid audit of its general service email boxes to understand how many outstanding emails from residents and customers have been left unread and unanswered?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR SAYWELL

It is agreed that the Council will undertake a review of customer and resident service email boxes. The scope and brief for this review will be agreed in conjunction with Devon Assurance Partnership.

6. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BRAZIL

Re: Connecting Devon and Somerset scheme

With the collapse of the Connecting Devon & Somerset broadband scheme into chaos, given the £millions spent by taxpayers, who is going to take responsibility and who is going to sort it out?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR GILBERT

CDS funding falls under the Government's Superfast programme and, as such, we can only target premises that currently have speeds available of less than 30Mbps. This inevitably means that, whilst our delivery is now all gigabit capable, we are tackling the most challenging rural premises. The national target for coverage under the Superfast programme is 95% and the CDS region currently stands at 93.5% with contracts continuing to deliver across the region to increase this coverage.

Whilst we are naturally very disappointed that Airband by agreement are reducing the coverage under their current contracts, the additional build of ca. 8.5K premises that our negotiations have secured from the company is not insignificant, raising a further approximately 20,000 residents* from sub-superfast speeds to 1,000Mbps.

The contracts that CDS holds, are payment by results based. Our providers are paid retrospectively against completed milestones that result in premises being connected. As such, local authority partners in the CDS programme protect the taxpayer against the loss of subsidy that might otherwise result from advance payments.

CDS is in discussion with BDUK to consider options to provide connections to premises that are no longer being covered under a CDS contract. These mechanisms include, but are not limited to, ongoing Project Gigabit procurements, the Gigabit Voucher scheme and local top-ups of the Voucher Scheme. CDS and BDUK remain committed to finding timely and deliverable solutions to our residents and businesses.

**Approximately 2.25 to 2.5 residents per premise*