

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR POLICY, CORPORATE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

This report provides information relating to the portfolio for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management which includes the overall strategic direction and the development of external relations and partnerships including Team Devon, and oversight of the formulation and coordination of corporate planning and policy development within the Council's Policy and Budget Framework and, in particular, the oversight of its governance and external affairs arrangements.

The portfolio also includes responsibility for the management of the Council's property, the use of its assets and the development of its estates, including the schools' and education property portfolio and the Farms Estate.

External Partnerships

At its meeting in December 2024, the Council agreed its membership of, and participation in, the Team Devon Joint Committee. It endorsed an initial focus of the Team Devon Joint Committee's work on the preparation of a Devon-wide housing strategy and also, in the context of devolution to Devon and Torbay, economic growth, employment and skills.

In January 2025 Cabinet approved a new Civic Agreement between Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) and Devon County Council. Based on shared principles and priorities, the agreement sets out a framework for engagement and closer working in the years ahead.

The arrangement builds on the earlier Civic Agreement with the Devon and Torbay Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Assembly and the Council, approved in July 2024. In January 2025, the Leader and the Chief Executive met with representatives of the Assembly's Executive, made of from local leaders in the sector. The agreement has made positive early strides in developing relationships and understanding of key opportunities and challenges for Devon, and ways to work to address them as partners.

Corporate Governance

The governance review launched in March 2023, continues to make good progress through the cross-party Governance Working Group. The group is supported by the Local Government Association (LGA). There are a number of completed projects to date including reviews of the key decision threshold, public participation, financial regulations, Budget and Policy Framework, a Local Member protocol, review of the Scrutiny process, the Committee structure, Ombudsman processes, Member delegated decisions, Council procedure rules, Members Code of Conduct and complaints arrangements.

Work continues on the officer scheme of delegation, Member portal and dashboards.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) received royal assent on 4th February 2025 and was formally established on 5th February 2025. The inaugural meeting of the DTCCA is on 19th March 2025 and will be held in Tavistock.

With the recent confirmation that the Elections will go ahead in May 2025, the Council is preparing for the local elections, in liaison with the District Councils.

Officers are developing a full induction programme for all Councillors.

Asset Management

Property Strategy

A key priority set out in the Council’s Corporate plan agreed by Cabinet on 12 July 2023 is to make the best use of our building and assets. The Property Strategy focuses on four key principles; Reduce, Dispose, Retain, and Repurpose which form the methodology for reviewing the future use of the Council’s assets:

The following Council meetings relating to Land and Property have taken place since October 2023:

Meeting	Date	Paper	Link
Cabinet	11 th October 2023	Property Change Programme Strategy & Phase 1	Cabinet - Property Change Programme October 2023.pdf
Cabinet	8 th May 2024	Property Change Programme Phase 2	The Property Change Programme.pdf
Land & Property Committee	10 th October 2024	Property Change Programme Phase 3	Property Change Programme.pdf
Land & Property Committee	31 st January 2025	Property Change Programme Phase 4	Property Change report.pdf
Land & Property Committee	7 th April 2025		
Land & Property Committee	6 th June 2025		

Capital Receipts

Over the last 5 financial years receipts from the sale of Council land and buildings has generated capital receipts in excess of £39.25m (gross), these are set out in the table below: (and a total of £81.34m since 2014/15):

Year	Total Capital Receipts
19/20	£6,130,000
20/21	£5,798,000
21/22	£6,063,000
22/23	£14,223,000
23/24	£7,046,035
Total	£39,260,035

Indicative capital receipts over the next 5 financial years are estimated to be in the region of **£35m** (from 24/25).

Capital Investment

Area	Year	Capital Budget	Revenue Budget
Corporate	24/25	£1,759,517*	£1,054,000
Farms	24/25	£1,138,494	£856,000**

*Corporate capital budget includes building maintenance, property enabling and replace and upgrade corporate estate budget lines.

**Farms budget shown is gross expenditure, net budget is (£534,000) surplus after rent income.

An additional £900,000 budget is included in the proposed budget for 2025/26, subject to approval by Council on 20th February 2025, for Farms Capital investment and subsequent investment requirements will be considered as part of the Medium-Term Capital Plan.

Works across the Farms Estate to continue the programme of upgrades and to meet the Decent Homes' Standard for our dwellings. 46 dwellings have had some works completed leaving a further 18 to be completed across the estate.

All projects are related to farmhouse refurbishment work which is required under the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, Decent Homes Standards, and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. The works will also improve the energy efficiency of the dwellings which will improve EPC's (and by association meet current Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards [MEES]) and reduce carbon emissions thereby supporting the Council's pledge to achieve net zero. The improvement works are via investment in the fabric of the building including replacement and upgrades of; roofs, windows, insulation, heating plant, mechanical ventilations, sewerage treatment plants and solar PV, whilst also upgrading the fixtures including modernising the kitchens and bathrooms.

An additional £1,238,000 is included in the proposed budget for 2025/26, subject to approval by Council on 20th February 2025, for the Corporate Capital Investment programme and a further £675,000 in 26/27. Subsequent investment requirements will be considered as part of the Medium-Term Capital Plan.

Key investment areas this year have included;

- Accommodation for Children in Care and Care Leavers (including additional investment through the reprioritisation of the Councils capital programme)
- Key sites to facilitate the co-location of services and release of other Council assets to generate capital receipts.
- Compliance works, including fire door upgrades, fire compartmentation works and ventilation upgrades.
- Various boiler and plant upgrades, including investment in renewable energy heating sources (i.e. heat pumps)
- Maintaining and improving the fabric of buildings, including roofing works, window upgrades and external maintenance.

Councillor James McInnes
Cabinet Member for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management