

**CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY SERVICES SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

27 March 2025

Present:-

Councillors C Slade (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Y Atkinson, R Chesterton, A Dewhirst, J Hodgson, D Sellis, M Squires and J Trail BEM

Apologies:-

Councillors F Letch MBE, J Berry, J Brook, R Radford, D Thomas and J Wilton-Love

Members attending in accordance with Standing Order 25

Councillors R Croad and S Hughes.

\* 214 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were received, over and above the other registrable interests of Councillors of Devon County Council, arising from membership of City, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities.

[A list of county councillors who are also district, borough, city, parish or town councillors](#)

\* 215 **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the ordinary and budget meetings held on 30 January 2025 be signed as a correct record.

\* 216 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There was no matter raised as a matter of urgency.

\* 217 **Public Participation**

There were no oral representations from Members of the Public.

\* 218 **Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Head of Scrutiny updated the Committee as to the work programme.

**RESOLVED** that the following items be added:

\* 219 **Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy- March 2025 Update**

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities introduced

the update Report of the Director of Public Health and Communities (CX/25/06), following the June 2024 Scrutiny Committee meeting which considered the development of a Devon-wide multi-agency response to the statutory Serious Violence Duty, requiring specified authorities to work together to 'prevent and reduce serious violence'. The Strategy was a five-year approach for multiagency work to prevent serious violence in Devon. The confirmed multiagency funding for 2025/26 was welcome.

As requested by this Committee, today's Report provides an interim delivery update, on achievements during the first fiscal delivery year (2024-25), whilst acknowledging that full delivery data is awaiting quarter four completion. The Government's ambition was to evolve policy around preventing and responding to serious violence and had expressed commitment to preventing serious violence in the context of young people, including plans to address crime, anti-social behaviour, exploitation and knife crime.

Members' discussion included:-

- the ongoing challenges in identifying all children impacted by parental imprisonment (noting Officer response about exploring with partners ways in which to increase identification to offer targeted support through raising system awareness);
- desire to raise MP's awareness about the above national identification issue;
- the importance of using the Serious Violence Strategy to influence other relevant strategies and work (e.g. Early Years Strategy);
- further developing referral mechanisms for support to young people impacted by Domestic Abuse and longer term prevention monitoring after support programmes;
- ongoing monitoring of knife crime as an area of potential concern;
- further strengthening partnership working with schools;
- the beneficial role of youth services in supporting young people and prevention work and wish for this to revert to being accessible to all young people as part of a range of measures;
- noting the Chief Executive's comments about Home Office proposed reforms to child sexual abuse and exploitation, with emphasis on broader prevention work. This was an opportunity for Devon to look across all changes, reforms and legalities for a change in reporting and shaping priorities, to bring this forward to the Committee early in the new Council;
- recognition of the importance of developing a formal way for Members to be kept well informed.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Dewhirst and **SECONDED** by Councillor Hodgson and

**RESOLVED:**

(a) that the progress made towards delivery of the Devon-wide Preventing Serious Violence Strategy be welcomed;

(b) that advertisement of the Lets Talk Programme be improved to promote awareness;

(c) that a Masterclass Report on this item be considered in the development of the Committee work programme for 2025-26; and

(d) that a further report on the progress towards delivery of the Devon-wide Preventing Serious Violence Strategy, be considered in the development of the Committee work programme for 2025-26, which included the assurance framework.

\* 220

**Scrutiny Champion Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Abuse**

Further to the Committee's DSVVA Champion's report to the last meeting, Councillor Atkinson referred to the Council's Interpersonal and Gender-based Violence and Abuse (IGBVA) Needs assessment Findings highlights (tabled), as considered by a meeting of the Council's DSVVA champions and Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities in March 2025. The needs assessment contained in this latest document was concerning, including statistics:-

- IGBVA recorded had increased, with Domestic Abuse up by 8.54% from the previous year's police data;
- 11500 estimated victims of sexual violence;
- 32800 estimated victims of domestic abuse;
- 28000 estimated children impacted.

IGBVA was gendered, disproportionately impacting particular groups of people as detailed in the report. IGBVA contributed to negative mental health and suicidal ideation. Further investigation was needed into the lack of progress in prosecution and court outcomes.

A range of positive work had taken place across the system since the last assessment, supported through improved access to multi-agency data.

The Devon Domestic Abuse Alliance was to be a newly multi agency commissioned service from 1 April 2025, with a single point gateway entry to access the service delivery model and service offer. The Alliance would look at both the victim and perpetrator. Details of how to access the service at: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/new-domestic-abuse-support-service-launches-in-april/>

Members' comments and discussion included:-

- the data incidents increase was unclear whether this was an increase in crime, or better awareness and reporting of a mostly hidden crime;
- crime data included both physical and coercive behaviour;
- the role across Devon's Scrutiny Committees in building on the work of raising awareness and actions;
- range of various groups affected;
- recognition that violence was the highest crime in Devon.

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities welcomed and thanked the Committee for its support to him in this role, now standing down after long service in this role.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Slade and **SECONDED** by Councillor Trail and

**RESOLVED:**

(a) that this Committee's DSVAs Champion, together with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities be thanked for their continued work and the progress update; and

(b) that the Report be circulated to all Members of this Committee.

\* 221

**Highways Performance Dashboard - Winter 2024/25**

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport introduced the Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport (CET/25/40) reported on performance during the winter 2024/25, indicating that:-

-although there had been two snow events, generally this winter there had been fewer sub-zero days and less rainfall, avoiding the typical winter spike in potholes during the post-Christmas period. This had prevented further serious deterioration to the highway as a result of significantly adverse winter weather, enabling more routine winter highway maintenance work to continue;

-the Department of Transport had now advised of its criteria for additional funding announced in December 2024 for highway maintenance and specifically potholes, which Devon was working on to ensure it fulfilled the criteria and secured the funding;

-a national Department of Transport audit report on the condition and maintenance of the country's roads and value of highway assets required Devon to publish its data by end June 2025. The government shift towards considering best practice, true asset management and prevention instead of reactionary works was welcomed.

Members' discussion included:-

- welcoming the proposed offer of additional government highway maintenance funding which Devon must secure;
- importance of gulley cleaning and jetting in highway maintenance and flood resilience, with relatively small amounts of funding being cost effective;
- white lining programme priorities and progress of works;
- countywide frustrations of utility company works road closures, that were not always proportionate or reopened in a timely manner. Improved communications with utility companies on best practice to enable communities to function during closures would be welcomed;
- noting that historical virtual footways were no longer considered good practice and their maintenance was therefore not supported;
- role of Neighbourhood Highway Officer where landowners were not co-operating over water/mud run off and silting onto the highway from private land. Officers worked with the NFU to promote major landowners' awareness of their role and responsibilities.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Trail and **SECONDED** by Councillor Chesterton and

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport and her team be thanked for their twice-yearly highway maintenance updates to this Committee;
- (b) that utility works on the highway be considered in the development of the Committee work programme for 2025-26; and
- (c) that the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport provide a briefing note on government guidance for additional highway maintenance funding.

(note: a 5 minute adjournment followed this item, due to the length of the meeting).

\* **222** **Update on Voice and Wellbeing themes of the People Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce and Digital Transformation introduced the Report of the Director of People and Culture (PC/25/1), following updates to the Committee at the November 2024 and January 2025 meetings and Cabinet's approval in 2023. He outlined the

increase in staff engagement and the major focus of staff wellbeing within the strategy as the Council considered local government reorganisation.

The Director of People and Culture reported on the increased staff engagement activity and broadly positive data, building upon this and proactive, robust support of staff in particular those in frontline services, who had experienced an increase in violence and aggression from some clients and public. A zero tolerance approach towards this must be maintained.

The Committee received an assurance on the Report recommendations supporting employee wellbeing and employee engagement in developing the People Strategy action plan.

Members' discussion included:-

-follow up work on areas highlighted within staff responses;

-support for zero tolerance of violence and aggression;

-extension of wellbeing strategy to increase awareness of the support available to members, including where experiencing intimidating behaviour from members of the public in their communities, noting also the highlighting of wellbeing services to the new Members' Induction Day, May 2025.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Slade and **SECONDED** by Councillor Squires and

**RESOLVED:** that

(a) the wide range of positive work taking place across the Council to create a structured and consistent approach to staff engagement be acknowledged;

(b) the Committee was assured that supporting employee wellbeing was an organisational priority;

(c) the Committee was assured that the employee voice was informing the development of the second year of the action plan for People Strategy delivery;

(d) that the People Strategy work continue to be built upon, including extending support to all Members.

\* **223** **Future Finance Project Standing Overview Group, 16 January 2025**

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (LDS/25/11).

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Slade and **SECONDED** by Councillor Trail and

**RESOLVED:** that

(a) the Report be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, ensuring transparency of Scrutiny activities; and

(b) a further meeting of this overview group be arranged ahead of the June or September 2025 Committee meeting, to consider implementation and lessons learnt.

\* 224 **Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee – 4 Year Overview**

The Committee considered the Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (LDS/25/16) on the end of term report summarising the Scrutiny work of this Committee over the last four years and its role in good governance, to assist the new Committee (2025-2029).

The Chair and former Chair thanked Members and Officers for their support to this Committee over the life of this Council. The Chair in particular acknowledged the support from Councillors Letch, Dewhirst and Bullivant in their respective Chair/Vice-Chair roles, as well as the Committee's Officers' support and engagement with this Committee.

It was **MOVED** by Councillor Slade and **SECONDED** by Councillor Dewhirst and

**RESOLVED:** that appreciation of Members' and Officers' support to this Committee be formally placed on record.

\* 225 **Future Meetings**

Please use link below for County Council Calendar of Meetings:

<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=175>

**\*DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.45 am and finished at 12.45 pm

