

Axminster Division Report 28th February 2022

DCC Budget

The Devon County Council Budget was approved at Full Council on the 17th of February after many months of work in what has been the most challenging one in living memory, for a variety of reasons, not least the Pandemic.

Members are probably aware that the DCC part of Council tax will go up by 2.99%, the lowest increase in 7 years, adding 87p per week or £45 a year to Homes in the Band D Council tax bracket.

The Portfolio holder for Finance at DCC I has managed to put back £1m in to Highways for cyclic maintenance, drainage schemes and pothole repairs, as well as £329k of funding for community organisations, who were invaluable during the Pandemic.

In recognition of greater healthcare working between the NHS and DCC we have received £10m to offset high service needs in the Adult Social Care sector and currently negotiating with the Department for Education on a multi-million settlement to help with the Special Educational needs deficit in Devon.

Wider issues

Council tax rebate

Details of the Government Council tax discount, helping to counter some of the hike of upcoming fuel price increases are now known. They are an automatic one off grant, which is not means tested, spreading across Council Tax Bands A-D.

DCC has today received details of the total sum, which will then be split across the District Councils to distribute as the collection authority. The £150 discount will be applied and deducted from the bill, when issued.

Energy costs – clearly a major concern for the overwhelming number of our population the Government has announced a package of support to help households with rising energy bills, worth around £9bn in 2022-23. Attached is a 'Fact sheet' that the County Treasurer has kindly prepared. This offers a step by step guide as to how this will work (as well as other help with the cost of living), and support in the form of grants will be administered via the District Councils, as with the Council tax discount.

Funding allocations of the allocations for the Devon Districts is shown below:

Local Authority	Discretionary Fund (£)	Non-Discretionary Fund (£)	Total Fund (£)
East Devon	269,850	7,116,750	7,386,600
Exeter	188,700	7,426,800	7,615,500
Mid Devon	143,550	4,228,800	4,372,350
North Devon	192,000	5,655,750	5,847,750
South Hams	173,700	4,332,600	4,506,300
Teignbridge	273,300	7,107,900	7,381,200
Torrige	143,250	4,039,050	4,182,300
West Devon	110,550	2,875,350	2,985,900
Total	1,494,900	42,783,000	44,277,900

Devon County Council – has recently been released its Council Plan, setting out its key objectives and ambitions for the people and County of Devon, with climate change and the environment at the top of the tree. This document will run like a Golden Thread through everything that DCC does and you can view more details of the key points at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/council-publishes-its-priorities-for-the-next-four-years-and-invites-public-to-be-part-of-achieving-them/>

Those priorities are:

- Helping Devon respond to the climate and ecological emergency, and working to protect and improve our natural environment
- Working together to ensure all children are safe, healthy and can thrive with opportunities to fulfil their potential
- Helping Devon achieve inclusive economic recovery and sustainable growth, ensure more people can take advantage of opportunities, and invest carefully to improve infrastructure
- Making Devon a fairer place, address poverty, health and other inequalities, and ensure support for those people and families struggling most
- Help people to be healthier and more resilient, ensure everyone gets the care they need, and support people to live their lives well
- Support all our communities to be safer, better connected and more resilient with a focus on communities at greatest risk or in greatest need

I am particularly pleased that South Western Railway (SWR) has completed the installation of Co Bikes docking stations plus 30 e-bikes at Cranbrook and Honiton stations, launching a new eco-friendly onward travel option for their customers, and I hope this scheme will be rolled out to Axminster as well.

The e-bikes, supplied by Co Bikes, will provide SWR customers with a green and efficient transport alternative, helping to tackle congestion on roads, improve air quality and give locals and visitors alike an alternative way of travelling around East Devon and Exeter, where there is already an extensive network.

Over £200,000 has been invested in the schemes, which has come about through a network of partnerships between SWR, the Department for Transport, Devon County Council and others, as well as Co Bikes.

There are e-bike docks available at Cranbrook Station and another 10 at Honiton and to use the new Co Bikes, people will need to download the 'Nextbike' app on a smart phone and register for an account. To activate the account, customers make a £10 payment which is then used for their first e-bike trips and off you go!

Finally

Covid is still very much present in our communities and while there are huge ground for optimism, caution needs to be maintained. I attach the latest update issued by the Devon Clinical Commissioning Group on Friday the 25th of February, which contains a lot of information, but I'm sure will be of interest to members of the Council

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