**Axminster Division Report 13th March 2023**

**SEND and AP**

H M Government published its SEND (Special educational needs and disabilities) and AP (alternative Provision) improvement plan last week, confirming extra investment in training for teachers, and additional specialist school places for those with greatest needs.

Thirty-three new special free schools (are to be built under the new plan, including one in East Devon, provisionally located in or close to Cranbrook. A further 49 special free schools across the country are already in the pipeline.

Free schools are funded by the government but are not run by the local authority. They have more control over how they do things. They're 'all-ability' schools, so cannot use academic selection processes like a grammar school.

There will also be expanded training for staff, ranging from up to 5,000 early years special educational needs co-ordinators, to 400 educational psychologists, covering a range of educational needs.

This is welcome news as Devon has seen a surge in demand for SEND and AP places, and despite a very large chunk of the total Devon CC budget going on Children’s and Adults services (around 80% of the total) it is still not enough, where the SEND budget for 2022/23 will finish up approximately £40m overspent. We continue to be is discussion with the Department for Education on further support from them via a mechanism called the education ‘safety valve’, as this position is clearly not sustainable in the longer term.

**Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2023 - update**

The funding round for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme for 2023 is nearing completion where DCC will have 62 Providers delivering holiday activities and food across Devon for our benefit related Free School Meal children. A range of activities will be available for Primary and Secondary age ranges.

As in previous years the relevant information on the providers will be published on the DCC web site, although it is not live just yet, but should be imminently.

The offer is 4 days at Easter, 16 days in the summer and 4 days at Christmas. A day is defined as 4 hours, including a nutritious meal.

There is a change this year in that DCC is introducing a code for parents to be able to book a place. We will be writing to each parent with a unique coded which they will need to share with the HAF provider to book a place. This is a requirement for

the Department for Education and we will asking local schools the let parents know that

the HAF site is live. It is not possible to have the scheme in every school, but DCC are trying to offer a spread across the County.

Places are fully funded and there is an ‘extended criteria for those children who fall outside of Benefit related free school meals who would like to participate.

The web link with further information is https://www.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/family-support/haf-programme/

**Food waste**

Shockingly too much food is still needlessly going to waste. New figures reveal that over a quarter of what we put in our ‘black bin’ waste in Devon is food, much of it is in its original packaging, unopened.

The new figures follow a study of the contents of our black rubbish bins and coincide with the recent Food Waste Action Week 2023, which took place from the 6th to 13th of March.

Although we have a food waste collection, around 28 per cent of the contents of our ‘black bin’ is food, which is such a waste of food and money.

This amounts annually to 37,000 tonnes of food across Devon. Most of this food could have been eaten with a bit of planning and by taking some simple steps. In Devon an astonishing 79 per cent of food waste is avoidable while 44 per cent was still in its packaging.

The study also found large amounts of plastic and paper were being put into black bins, despite that 41 per cent of it in Devon could have been recycled if it had been put into the correct kerbside collection bin.

Food Action Week encouraged people to make some simple changes which could save them time and money. Through their “Win. Don’t Bin” campaign ‘WRAP’ https://wrap.org.uk/about-us is offering handy tips and recipe ideas, including checking the fridge before shopping, keeping track of fridge contents, using food before it reaches the use by date, using leftovers, checking the fridge temperature and making a weekly meal plan.

In support of this, through the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC), Devon County council is working with Torbay Council and our district partners to deliver a range of initiatives to reduce food waste and ensure any wasted food is put it in the right bin for collection.