

Axminster Division Report 3rd April 2023

As we are now in a restricted election period, commonly referred to as 'Purdah' in the run up to Town, Parish and District Council elections on May 4th this report focuses on matters in a more 'global sense'.

'Voter ID requirement'

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections.

This will apply to:

- Local elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- UK parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions

From October 2023 this will also apply to UK General elections.

If you don't have accepted photo ID, you can apply for a free voter ID document, which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate from EDDC or register for a postal vote. See <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/elections-and-registering-to-vote/voter-id-2023/> and <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/elections-and-registering-to-vote/voter-id-2023/accepted-forms-of-photo-id/> for further information

'Devolution deal for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay moves a step closer'

A new deal that will transfer money and powers into the hands of local Leaders across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, has moved a step closer with the backing of the Government's Levelling Up Minister, Dehenna Davison. Outline approval has been given for a Devon-wide devolution deal which could bring greater local control and allow partners to tap into additional resources to help tackle key local priorities, such as affordable housing, better public transport and connectivity, and providing for the skills that the local economy needs. The deal wouldn't require a change to the established democratic structures across the area, or the need for an elected Mayor. Instead, new powers would be devolved to a partnership of existing local councils who would deliver on a joint programme working alongside a wide range of other local stakeholders. Local partners across Devon have now been invited to work together to prepare a final business case to present to

Government for approval later in the year. Any final deal would require local consent with the full agreement of all the constituent councils as well as Parliamentary approval.

‘Every penny of the extra £9.4m will be spent making our roads more resilient’

Every penny of the extra £9.4 million for Devon, announced in the Chancellor's budget recently, will be spent on improving our roads and making them more resilient. In addition, a further £5.5bn of funding for Highways maintenance was announced on the 31st of March.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-street-works-regime-to-clamp-down-on-pothole-pain> Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced the extra cash specifically to fund vital highways maintenance. Most of the money will go towards the Local Area Capital Programmes, which will reflect local priorities identified through our elected members and Neighbourhood Highway Officers. Using inspections and survey data, the remaining funding will be directed to preventative works to stop potholes forming in the first place. Prolonged spells of very wet weather and freezing road temperatures this winter have been hugely detrimental to the condition of our 8,000-mile road network. To tackle it, over the past few months, we doubled the number of pothole teams, introduced weekend working and extended working hours across the network. That resulted in up to 2,200 potholes being repaired each week.

‘DCC has secured additional funding to help households weather the rising costs of living, to help pay for food, energy and other essential items’

This is the fourth tranche of the government’s Household Support Fund that we’ve been able to secure. The latest bid amounts to a little over £10 million, to cover the period from April 2023 until March 2024. It will take Devon’s total level of Household Support Funding received so far to just over £25 million. The funding is to support households in most need that are struggling to pay for food, energy, water bills and other related essentials. For households that may not be eligible for other support that is already available from the government. We have to submit plans mid-May to the Department of Work and Pensions, setting out how we, with our Team Devon District and City councils and other voluntary and community

partners, will make the latest funding available. Plans are expected to include:

- A funding allocation to specifically support families in receipt of Free School Meals, to provide food vouchers that can be exchanged at supermarkets to buy food during school holidays. 20,000 children in Devon were eligible for free school meal vouchers during the last holidays
- Some funding will also go to provide financial support for food, energy and other essentials to eligible low-income households with children and young people, via the County Council's Early Help service.
- Team Devon's District/City councils will plan to continue helping households that are in greatest financial need and struggling to pay for food, energy and other related essentials. They will publicise further details soon, once plans have been finalised.
- Citizens Advice Devon will continue to receive funding to support households that are using pre-payment and credit meters, to help with energy costs.
- Working with the Sustainable Warmth project, the fund will also be used to pilot a scheme to provide minor but rapid energy efficiency improvements to the homes of eligible households.
- The Devon Community Foundation is exploring how best to deploy funds to voluntary and community organisations that support specific groups who may struggle to access the help and support they need.
- The Household Support Fund is one aspect of the support that councils across the county are making available to households. For further information about the range of support available please visit <https://www.devon.gov.uk/cost-of-living/>

‘New roadside posters encouraging road users to slow down for horses and their riders are being displayed in parts of Devon’

We're supporting The British Horse Society's (BHS) "Dead Slow" road safety campaign, teaming up with the BHS, Horses & Road Safety Awareness (HRSA) and Vision Zero South West to promote the campaign in the county. The aim is to educate motorists on how to approach and pass horses safely on the county's roads, with the posters advising drivers to reduce their speed to a maximum of 10mph and leave at least two metres space. Since 2018, around 375 incidents involving equestrians on Devon's roads have been reported to the Police and the BHS. These collisions have left 19 horses injured and three dead, while 29 horse riders have been

injured and one rider killed. Alan Hiscox, Director of Safety at The British Horse Society, said: “Horses are still being killed and injured on our roads, riders continue to be seriously injured and too many drivers underestimate the importance of driving carefully around horses. This is detrimental to the safety of equestrians. You only have to look at the two horses who were tragically killed in the space of just two weeks at the beginning of 2023. “Together, we can stop these tragic incidents from happening over and over again. To do this, it is essential that we all follow the Highway Code guidelines in place, which are aligned with our key Dead Slow behavioural messages. Collaborating with Devon County Council, and displaying these posters, will be a critical step towards driving greater awareness and ultimately improving the safety of all vulnerable road users.”

ENDS