

Annual Report by Cllr Marcus Hartnell Devon County Councillor for Seaton & Colyton

Roles & Responsibilities 2021/22 Devon County Council (DCC)

Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee (CIRS)
Investment & Pension Fund Committee
East Devon Highways & Traffic Orders Committee
East Devon Locality (County) Committee
Community Safety Partnership

Constituency Activity

I represent the following communities:

Seaton (Town Council, East Devon District Council & Devon County Council)
Colyton & Colyford (Devon County Council)
Southleigh, Northleigh & Farway (Devon County Council)
Offwell & Widworthy (Devon County Council)
Beer & Branscombe (Devon County Council)

As a tri-hatted Councillor I have helped many constituents over the past year. The most common requests are related to highways matters and it is also the most frustrating. The overall condition of our roads has improved in recent years however a combination of reduced budgets and rising costs will mean that the next financial year will be very challenging. I continue to make regular inspections with the local Highway Officer and with local Councillors. This is proving to be more effective than holding traffic group meetings. I have supported Southleigh Parish Council to enable repairs to the foundations and retaining wall near Turners Court to protect the road from subsiding. This project was jointly funded by Southleigh Parish Council, DCC Community Enhancement Fund and my locality budget. I have supported applications from Colyton, Colyford & Beer for 20mph speed limits to improve road safety and continue to push for safety improvements on the A3052 through Colyford and the A35 through Wilmington & Offwell.

The final planning and delivery stages of the multi-use trail (Stop line way) in Seaton between the Cemetery and White Cross Farm are progressing. The Compulsory Purchase of land is complete with initial survey and design work being undertaken now in readiness for the autumn when work will commence clearing vegetation. Completion should be in 2023.

Along with my fellow EDDC Ward members I have been involved in discussions covering the future development of the Moridunum and Seafront improvements, the next steps for the Seaton Jurassic Visitor Centre and the Joint Axe Valley Levelling up bid. All three of these items dovetail between EDDC & DCC and are ongoing.

In my role of EDDC Councillor I did not support the increase in parking charges to £2 per hour across many East Devon coastal car parks, and I am concerned what impact this will have. As many households will be feeling the squeeze from increased energy and food prices, the amount of consumer discretionary spend will reduce accordingly. There is a real risk visitors will park for shorter periods which will hit our shops and businesses, jeopardising the post Covid economic recovery. As County Councillor I am concerned that these price increases will create parking problems in other areas, as those who are not prepared to pay these extortionate prices will use on-street parking to the annoyance of residents.

On a more positive note, I was pleased to propose the role of a Disability Champion for Seaton. This role will assist Seaton Town Council with its decision making, ensuring when decisions are made consideration is given to people with disabilities. I am pleased to have pledged £1k of my locality budget towards rubber matting for the beach at Seaton, enabling wheelchair users to have access onto the pebbles.

About my Locality Budget – please bring forward projects/proposals where you require top-up funding to deliver. Guidance can be found at <https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillors-nav/locality-budgets/>

Best Place – Devon County Council Plan 2021-2025

The DCC strategic plan up to 2025 can be viewed online.

The plan focuses on how we will help the county to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, build on the resilience of local people and communities to create a fairer, healthier, and more caring place, and grasp the opportunity to create a greener, more prosperous and inclusive future for all.

The best place - Strategic Plan ([devon.gov.uk](https://www.devon.gov.uk))

Committee work

All County Committees are meeting in person at County Hall and meetings are also recorded or live streamed for public viewing.

The CIRS committee has overseen the 3-year extension of the Milestone highways maintenance contract, input into the new council plan, the budget, rural road safety and speed policy, as well as received regular Highway's performance stats and ongoing updates in relation to Covid-19.

The Investment & Pension Fund Committee is responsible for the £5bn Devon pension fund. The work of the committee is to receive regular reports on investment strategy and policy, climate change impact, audit, and ongoing training for members. Of particular interest is the committee decision last year to divest passive investments in companies with exposure to fossil fuels and mining. As a result, 25% of the total pension fund is now invested in a Passive Climate Transition Benchmark (CTB) fund.

My first year as your Devon County Councillor has been really fulfilling and enjoyable. I have enjoyed meeting and getting know many Town & Parish Councillors across the division, and through attending many of your meetings beginning to understand the challenges faced, which vary from broadband provision to potholes and everything in between!

Over the coming year the Council faces budgetary pressures in all services, with inflation and demand for services being the most significant. The Highways maintenance budget will be challenging and the pressures from both funding and increasing costs will mean tough choices. To assist with tackling some of the minor works that are important to communities but often don't get prioritised, I'd like to advocate the Road Warden Scheme. This is a formal agreement between Devon County Council and a town or parish council, which enables them to deliver minor works in or around the public highway. Work can be carried out by a qualified Road Warden volunteer. I plan to complete Road Warden training myself and encourage at least one member of each Town/Parish to do the same. Works we can then tackle as volunteers are Pothole repairs (when they do not meet the county council's intervention criteria); clearing weeds; cleaning signs; cleaning drainage (gully grating); cutting grass; repairing finger posts; cutting hedges and vegetation; managing verges for wildlife and with Chapter 8 training and setting up and managing road closures for special events. I believe this approach will make each community more resilient and empowered. More details will follow in my monthly reports.

I very much look forward to working with Councillors, Town/Parish Clerks, and residents over the coming year to assist with your priorities and to support each community, ensuring you are informed, supported, and prepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

**Cllr Marcus Hartnell
April 2022**