

Seaton & Colyton Division Report – June

Annual Council – First Full Council meeting at County Hall for 2 Years

It was great to attend the annual Council meeting at County Hall on 26th May. I had the pleasure of seconding the proposal of Cllr Ian Hall (Axminster) as Chairman of Devon County Council for the 2022/23 civic year. I have been appointed as Vice Chair of the Audit Committee and retain my positions on both the Corporate Infrastructure & Regulatory Services Committee (CIRS) and the Investment & Pension Fund Committee.

Meeting with Community Services Manager at Seaton Hospital

I met with the Community Services Manager for Seaton Hospital at the end of May. We discussed the much lower levels of Covid now in the community and the reduced pressure on services as a result, although while we are learning to live with Covid it hasn't gone away, and people should continue to be mindful and respect those who are vulnerable. The immediate challenge is around recruitment and retaining adequate staff numbers across local nursing and domiciliary care teams where demand is high.

Devon's Economy – Covid-19 recovery update

A theme that remains persistent throughout the local economy is that of recruitment difficulties and skills shortages especially in areas such as Health & care, Social work, Hospitality, Retail and Manufacturing.

In the period January to April 2022, the wider local economy has seen some recovery as restrictions have ended, although some sectors including Arts, Entertainment, Retail, Public transport and Other services (which includes hairdressers & beauty) have not yet fully recovered. Accommodation & Food and Construction have recovered to pre-pandemic levels but remain vulnerable to economic disruption.

Significant economic impacts are now being felt as a result of the invasion of Ukraine and also another series of Covid related lockdowns in China. This has created uncertainty in the global economy, particularly in energy markets, with knock-ons also being felt in food and commodity markets. Higher energy, goods, food, and manufacturing input prices have already significantly impacted the Cost of Living in the UK and are causing issues for instance with the price of construction materials. The repercussions of the invasion of Ukraine will add to these pressures and increase inflation further in coming months, with the long-term consequences not yet being clear, although discretionary spend is expected to decline if pay rates do not maintain parity with inflation. Consumer confidence has recently fallen to a record low as a result of pressures on household budgets and a reduced outlook for household finances over the next 12 months.

A Government support package has recently been put in place which currently includes the following:

- A £400 reduction in electricity bills in 2022/23 (at a cost of £12bn), now not repayable.

- A £150 reduction in Council Tax Bills for (Band A-D) properties at a cost of £2.9bn.
- £650 additional payment to the 8m lowest income households on Universal Credit, Tax Credits and Pensions Credit.
- A £300 separate additional payment to 3m pensioner households
- A £150 separate additional payment to 6m receiving non-means-tested disability benefits.
- Discretionary funding of £144m to support vulnerable people and those who do not pay council tax.
- Increasing the household support fund from £500m to £1.5bn raising the amount available to DCC from £5m (already spent) by an additional £10m to be spent over 2022/23.
- Eligibility for the Warm Home Discount scheme to be expanded by a third with a £10 uplift from £140 to £150 in winter 2022.
- A 5p per litre cut in fuel duty at a cost of £2.4bn.

Ukraine Refugee Situation

As of 18th May, subject to a successful visa application, currently some 1550 refugees are either due to arrive in Devon or are here as part of the scheme, around 900 adults and 650 children of school age – around 10% are over 60. They have been matched with some 600 sponsors/ properties.

In total, there have been 5,150 potential Devon sponsors in the DCC administrative area who have completed an expression of interest to host Ukrainian refugees.

DCC are currently working through the huge list of properties to see whether they are suitable to house refugees and over 1800 enhanced DBS checks are in process on potential hosts over the age of 16.

So far, over 150 applications for school places, with over 100 already allocated a school place.

The government have allocated £10,500 per individual (to include £350 per month to the homeowner or sponsor and an initial £200 for each guest). In addition, funding will go directly to school for individual students.

£2m Funding for Cranbrook Community Facilities

I attended a special meeting of the CIRS committee on 10th May. The Liberal Democrat and Labour Groups had requested a call-in of a cabinet decision to use £2m of recovered funding from the South West Exeter Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to meet a funding gap to construct a community facility building in Cranbrook Town Centre. The reason for the call in were primarily based on the view that the decision was a “concerning, unacceptable, divisive approach and precedent, to delivering community facilities and infrastructure in Devon, that conflicts one new emerging community against another”. The call in demonstrated a lack of understanding of the rules of the HIF scheme where recovered funding from South West Exeter can't be reinvested on the same site.

I moved a proposal to endorse the cabinet decision which was carried. This funding will secure delivery of a single multi-purpose building in Cranbrook that will assist in improving health &

wellbeing and provide opportunities for children and young people as well as support for the community.

Calling all parents and carers living or working in Devon. We need your help this summer!

Whether you currently use childcare or not, your voice counts. The answers you give in this short survey will help the early years and childcare team at Devon County Council to plan and make sure that there is enough childcare available in Devon.

Even if you have participated in previous surveys, it is important to get your views now, so we can look at changes to childcare demands over time.

Take part at devon.cc/parents-childcare-survey

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