

District Report

Cllr Paul Arnott

August 2022

East Devon launches a first-ever, major Cultural strategy for the district

The new strategy aims to strengthen, promote and grow arts and culture in East Devon, offering high quality creative opportunities, accessible to people of all ages, in all communities.

Over the last four months, people, places, organisations and activities have been mapped revealing what is already happening across East Devon and how it is currently funded. The public were consulted widely, through interviews, workshops and a public survey which received nearly 500 responses. 98% of survey respondents thought it was important that East Devon had a strong cultural offer and 61% confirmed that a lack of local provision was a big barrier to taking part in culture in East Devon.

There are eight core themes to the strategy. They include strengthening and supporting community-led culture organisations to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing in East Devon's towns and villages, protecting and enhancing the environment, growing cultural tourism alongside the new Tourism Strategy, as well as supporting new places of culture to ensure East Devon residents, especially children and young people, can experience high quality culture in their local areas.

The Culture Strategy has identified the extraordinary range of cultural activities that take place across East Devon. Such activities not only help to define our district, they also help it to cope with the challenges of living in the 21st Century. The Council's priority is now to start implementing the strategy by putting in place partnerships and resources to achieve these cultural ambitions. This includes the appointment of a Cultural Producer, who will be a linchpin for coordination, communications, advocacy and fundraising. They will also lead the ACED (Arts and Culture East Devon) network which will be a vital engine for driving the strategy and all the opportunities it can bring.

It is also available to view at eastdevon.gov.uk/arts-and-culture.

Simon Jupp MP asked to help with the matter of his former Conservative member at the district now serving 21 years for historic sexual abuse of minors

It is one year since John Humphreys was convicted and sentenced to one of the longest sentences for these offences in British legal history. Since that conviction, his colleagues in the Conservative party have adopted a "blood-out-of-a-stone" position on the many facts which subsequently emerged.

Among a number of key concerns, we now know that the NSPCC raised concerns with Devon County Council in 2014, yet neither the county nor the police called a mandatory LADO meeting. Because of

this, Humphreys was able to continue for a further half decade as a dominant and prominent Conservative councillor in Exmouth and at District.

Another concern is that even though he had been charged, in the lead-up to the December 2019 general election, the then candidate Simon Jupp was a guest in one of Humphreys' properties – which had previously been a scene of some of the crimes. It is not clear why Mr Jupp did not make that clear at the point of conviction but instead only confirmed that he had stayed there for two months on being challenged by a journalist. This is not satisfactory when all political representatives are meant to be conducting themselves to the highest standards of the Nolan Principles.

In this context, the July Full Council meeting passed a motion to write to Simon Jupp, MP about former councillor John Humphreys. Conservative members were whipped to abstain.

The motion agreed was:

This Council wishes to express its deep disappointment that John Humphreys was permitted by the Conservative party to hold prominent roles as a local Conservative politician for more than four years following his arrest for serious sexual offences against two boys in May 2016. Humphreys was subsequently convicted and imprisoned for 21 years in August 2021.

Despite being under criminal investigation from May 2016, John Humphreys subsequently:

- (A) stood as a Conservative candidate for election (Exmouth Town Council May 2019) and thereafter remained an Exmouth Town Councillor representing the Conservative Party until August 2020
- (B) continued being a Conservative District Councillor until May 2019
- (C) campaigned in the town, district and parliamentary elections for the Conservative Party (May and December 2019)
- (D) was nominated by the Conservative Party for the award of Alderman which he received from East Devon District Council in December 2019.

In the eleven months since John Humphreys' conviction, the Conservative Party locally and nationally, has refused to explain why it allowed John Humphreys to continue in these positions of prominence and even nominated him as an Alderman despite being under criminal investigation.

In the interests of the safety and wellbeing of children in the district this Council calls on Simon Jupp MP to obtain from the relevant part of the Conservative party an urgent explanation as to what went wrong with the Conservative Party's vetting and safeguarding processes in East Devon and provide reassurance that these issues have now been addressed and resolved.'

East Devon District Council has submitted an Investment Plan to secure UK Shared Prosperity Funds to help level up the local economy and support local communities.

Following EDDC Cabinet approval on 13 July 2022, the plan will unlock East Devon's allocation of £1,796,363 to be spent over three years.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) replaces the European structural funds, with spending now being determined locally to more effectively address local needs. The Investment Plan set out twelve separate themes, to be delivered either locally or collaboratively with other local authorities in Devon:

Action on Poverty Fund
Active Travel Fund

Business Support Programme
Disability Employment Support Programme
East Devon Council for Voluntary Service
East Devon Culture Programme
East Devon Leisure Programme
East Devon Towns Feasibility Work
NEET Employment Support Programme
Net Zero Innovation Fund
Retrofit Programme
Sustainable Tourism Fund

A local partnership group of stakeholders has played a key role in reviewing and advising on actions to be included in the Investment Plan and a panel of East Devon councillors will provide guidance and oversight on how these are delivered

Local authorities from across Devon are exploring ways to work collaboratively and align their Investment Plans. This will help achieve improved results across a wider geography with better value for money.

The Investment Plan will unlock essential funds for our local residents and businesses, enabling a range of initiatives across East Devon. The Plan reflects local needs and opportunities as well as addressing key priorities such as supporting the transition to a low carbon economy.

We'd like to thank local businesses, community groups and other stakeholders and partners who have helped to shape and develop the Investment Plan. Local support and buy-in is key to ensuring the funds will have the maximum impact on the ground.

We look forward to receiving Government approval later in the year so we can start delivering this extensive package of initiatives.

A decision is expected by October 2022. For more information, check EDDC's UKSPF webpage regularly.