

County Councillor update for February 2020

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**Budget:** Report from Cllr Stuart Barker Cabinet member Finance

The Budget report sent to members, has 150 pages detailing the comprehensive nature of the budget.

Overall the budget represents an increased spend of £43 million or 8.7% in service budgets with an increase of 10% in Adult Care and Health and 8.5% in Children's Services. We have also been able to increase the Highways budget by over 5% with extra allocation to help with surface water and drainage issues.

The budget includes investment in services of over £50 million and the savings of £7.5 million is the lowest level since our administration's first budget in 2010.

**For next year the authority's funding from Government will increase by 1.6%**, this is a welcome change from the 11% average reduction we have seen every year since the government's austerity actions began in 2010.

This does not however mean that it has been easy to set a balanced budget. There are significant ongoing pressures in both adult and children's services with the greatest area of concern being the funding shortfall within the DSG High Needs Block and the lack of information from Government on what they intend to do about it.

The extra Adult Social Care Precept was due to end this year, but Government has extended it to 2020/21 – so this budget recommends to Council that a 2% Adult Social Care Precept is set to fund the valuable services we provide for older people and those with disabilities.

The Capital Programme, in line with the Capital Strategy, aims to strike a balance between an affordable programme and one that meets our needs. For 2020/21 the capital programme includes £26 million of new schemes. Despite this extra investment no additional external borrowing will be required to deliver the schemes.

Last year, and a number of times since, I have set out the huge uncertainty we faced over our future funding and I hoped not to have to do that again this year, but unfortunately that is not the case – one year on and we have no more clarity than we did a year ago, we don't yet have any indication about the long promised new four year settlement which allows us to better plan our services. If anything, we have more risks now, so the authority needs to have sufficient reserves and balances. Just one need is an offset for the cash spent on the projected deficit of the High Needs Block of the DSG because we don't know how the government is finally going to deal with the current underfunding. To ensure we can cope with this and unknown pressures the reserves are forecast to remain above £100 million. This level of reserves is broadly in line with other County Councils.

Both Children's and Adults care services are coping with huge pressures on their services and the **weather is no friend of our highway maintenance services.**

**Highways:**

I have been on my regular site visit around Gulworthy & Tavistock.

Significant drainage / Culvert workings have been done on the Crowndale Road. There had been flooding, pooling and hazardous conditions & the works have made a significant improvement.

Severe effects of running water has damaged **Brook Lane**. Gully jetting is going to be done by DCC plus patching and surface dressing. The Walreddon Estate plans to work on outfalls and ditches will be dug out.

**Tavistock Town Council** will be re-doing work on **Whitchurch Down** re-digging and directing new channels unfortunately previous work didn't prevent the water from Middlemoor going onto the highway. The local highway officer had to dig an emergency trench to track the water course off the road. If the water freezes it will be treacherous.

Many road signs will be replaced as some are in a dreadful state. Thank you, Tidy Tavy volunteers who cleaned the signs. Despite all the road signs on the Tavistock A386 & A390 being cleaned the algae is growing quickly and looks disgraceful. Good TT for rolling up their sleeves!

Numerous very severe **potholes** have formed in this atrocious weather which will be sorted ASAP.

I have been dealing with many cases relating to the highways. Thankyou to residents and councillors who use the DCC website <https://www.devon.gov.uk>

### **Health:**

I have attended meetings relating to future health care provision. With the combination of an aging population and ever-increasing & severe childhood obesity health care delivery is constantly under the microscope. Discovering ways to deliver care, to help people help themselves and prevent unpreventable illness.

**Public Health.** Which is under the control of Devon County Council works very closely with Health providers & commissioners & there is close dialogue. I am advised that Devon "is very much ahead of the game & other areas in the country look to us with great interest".

**Children:** I have had several meetings with Public Health senior officers, the **Children's Centre Advisory** Board plus our local Children's Centre officers.

I am pleased that my request to try & form a **Tavistock Children's Health & Wellbeing Alliance** is gaining momentum. The Adults Health & Wellbeing Alliance (which I was key is helping from the outset) is going well and I thank all the parties statutory and voluntary who give so much time into making it an arena which helps residents and GP practices with **social prescribing**. This is where a GP might offer advice to take up a hobby rather than prescribing pills & potions. Tavistock is doing well & we are "good practice" I am advised. This is down to our **community**.

**Greenlands Residents Association** grows from strength to strength. I am grateful for the amazing support given by **Livewest Alison Wright Community connector**.

Alison & I went walkabout around Torlands & Greenlands about a year ago with a view of supporting the estates to help themselves. Thanks too to **Joe Moorat** who chairs the Greenlands Association (plus other residents who are on the Committee). There have been some excellent events held on the estate with a view to holding more. Of bonus is the fact that two local mums from Torlands have volunteered to help and there are exciting plans for the summer holidays. There are plans for gardening, swap shops and lots more. Watch this

space. It is an ambition of mine to help all the estates in Tavistock who want to do this sort of thing too.

### **Library:**

I am really pleased that it looks as if the library will be re-opening on Wednesdays (if it hasn't already). **Jan Horrell** has recently been appointed as the new manager & she & I have had exciting conversations where we plan to work together for our Community. The library will be a key player with the Children's Health & Wellbeing Alliance.

### **Gulworthy:**

The very active and progressive **Gulworthy Parish Council** grows from strength to strength meeting each month. I am pleased to be working with them on issues relating to highways and school parking. There has been speed monitoring which showed maximum speeds North & South directions at 36mph in a 60-mph area.

School & village hall car parking is tricky at times & we are looking into this.

**Housing:** as **West Devon Borough Councillor** with portfolio for **Homes** I have been on site visits with officers looking at affordable housing, I have attended a housing seminar.

Teignbridge, South Hams & West Devon Borough Councils have secured funding of **£150,000** to continue outreach work for **rough sleepers**. This is essential support and the funding will help to continue the valuable work of three outreach workers helping vulnerable people who sleep rough or at risk of doing so.

WDBC & SHDC will be working in close partnership with local housing associations to provide self-contained flats for rough sleepers. The intention is for these properties to become their long-term homes after an initial period of support. The new tenants will be providing a strong commitment to working with support agencies so they can get the guidance, care and support they need to turn their lives around, directly from their new home rather than from off the street. They will also be provided with a rural transport allowance and a small personal budget to help them to get to important meetings with their support services.

### **Life in general:**

As we all know budget time is busy! As Vice chairman of Children's overview & scrutiny committee I have been working on a task group about school children's education relating to Relationships and Sexual relationships. LGBT issues. It is envisaged the report will be read by councillors, teachers, governors and MP's.

### **Fairtrade fortnight.**

We are in Fairtrade Fortnight and staff from Devon Norse are wearing their Fairtrade Tee shirts (& very smart they look too) Tavistock Road signs which have been lovingly cleaned by Tidy Tavy volunteers will soon have Fairtrade signs added. Thanks to all the Fairtrade group who have been fun to work with. I used £500 from my locality budget & Cllrs Hipsey, Bridgewater and I have contributed from our West Devon Borough Councillor Locality pot to help Fairtrade too. Thanks.

