

## **Report to Tavistock Town Council June 2025**

### **Devon CC Election**

West Devon Borough Council successfully organised and delivered the Devon County Council elections for four divisions—Tavistock, Okehampton Rural, Yelverton Rural, and Hatherleigh & Chagford—on 1 May 2025. The process was carried out to a high standard, and thanks are extended to the Returning Officer, the elections staff, and all candidates who participated.

### **Borough Council AGM & Committee Appointments**

At the Annual Meeting on 20 May, committee memberships for 2025–26 were agreed, along with representation on outside bodies.

Cllr Paul Vachon (Okehampton South) was elected Mayor of West Devon for the 2025–26 civic year, succeeding Cllr Debo Sellis. The Deputy Mayor is Cllr Chris Edmonds.

Key committee appointments include:

- **Hub Committee:** Chaired by Cllr Mandy Ewings
- **Audit & Governance Committee:** Chaired by Cllr George Dexter
- **Overview & Scrutiny Committee:** Chaired by Cllr Patrick Kimber
- **Development Management & Licensing Committee:** Chaired by Cllr Ric Cheadle

The Development Management & Licensing Committee continues to meet to consider planning decisions, most recently on 12 May, with the next meeting scheduled for 3 June.

### **Planning & Heritage Updates**

The Tavistock Neighbourhood Development Plan referendum (1 May) returned a strong 87.7% 'yes' vote (3,237 votes), and next steps are being progressed.

A joint presentation from West Devon Borough Council planning staff on 23 April detailed the Conservation Area Management Plan and the upcoming Joint Local Plan review. Committee discussions at the time reflect an intent for constructive engagement between the Borough and Town Councils as these planning matters develop.

### **Local Plan Review and Renewal**

New planning regulations were introduced by the Government in December 2024, including an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a national target to build 1.5 million homes during this

Parliament. As a result, West Devon's housing delivery target has risen from 160 to 443 homes per year.

Although the previous annual target was consistently met, this increase means that West Devon can no longer demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, which significantly increases the risk of speculative development applications across the borough.

To address this, officers are preparing to bring forward a recommendation to the Hub Committee to begin work on a revised Local Plan. This plan would establish a new vision, delivery strategy, and spatial priorities to reflect national requirements while responding to local needs.

### **Transport & Regional Projects**

West Devon Borough Council continues to support infrastructure investment in the borough, including the development of the **Okehampton Interchange**, which commenced earlier this year.

All parties continue to lobby for future reconnection of Tavistock to the national rail network via the Bere Alston link, a long-term aspiration for improving regional connectivity.