

We had a report given at our recent full council meeting from CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNITIES AND EQUALITY. I felt that this report is worth a read and which I would like to report upon

1. Decisions

VCSE Civic Agreement (July 2024 Cabinet)

Since Cabinet, introductions and meetings have been held between key officers and partners to develop shared understanding and to develop shared proposals and solutions on work across the Council.

Commissioning services to address Domestic Abuse in Devon (April 2024 Cabinet)

Agreement to seek to tender related services. Currently bids are being evaluated ahead of the implementation of a transformed offer from April 2025.

Public Health Annual Report 2023/24 (July Cabinet)

The report has been circulated to key partners to raise awareness of the reports content. Adults Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Master Class to be held in October focusing on the annual report.

Smokefree Generation: Local Stop Smoking Services and Support Grant (April Cabinet)

Since the approval of Cabinet to accept the additional grant allocation, work is underway to expand capacity in both the commissioned service, Stop for Life Devon and the internal team, to support greater numbers of Devon residents to quit smoking.

Internal recruitment will be complete in September, resulting in a skilled team who are urgently implementing the programme plan. The workstreams are varied, focussing on increasing the number of people being supported to quit using traditional approaches, as well as working creatively with a wide range of stakeholders on novel approaches to increase reach. The programme also includes working with Public Health Nursing to increase tobacco harm prevention activities.

The completion of the planned activities is projected to result in Devon surpassing the quit ambitions outlined in the grant agreement, by supporting over 4000 people to stop smoking each year, benefitting their health, wellbeing and financial circumstances.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Recommissioning (April Cabinet)

Since the approval of Cabinet to proceed with the joint re-procurement of the sexual health service with Torbay Council, officers conducted an engagement exercise with potential suppliers to gather views about the feasibility and suitability of the approach at the same time as reducing the overall cost. Devon and Torbay Local Authorities considered the feedback provided in finalising the specification. The tender was launched on the 15th of August, closing on the 14th October 2024.

Delegated decision in relation to the operational changes required at Household Waste Recycling Centres to comply with Environmental Agency requirements on accepting Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) under the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS) Regulations.

The law requires that POPs in waste are destroyed to prevent lasting environmental harm and impacts on the food chain. This means waste containing POPs must be incinerated and must not be re-used, recycled, or landfilled. Incineration of this material ensures that the persistent chemicals are destroyed.

The County Council, as the Waste Disposal Authority, currently provides a network of 19 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) for Devon residents to dispose of/recycle mainly bulky household and garden waste, including WUDs.

All residual waste from Devon's network of HWRCs is currently sent to the Devonport Combined Heat & Power Energy from Waste Facility for incineration where any POPs in WUDs are safely destroyed. Currently, WUDs are accepted and mixed with other residual waste at all HWRC sites for efficient transportation and safe disposal with all the loads being designated as POPS waste. This practice has been allowed to continue under the Environment Agency Regulatory Position Statement 266 Segregation of WUDS at HWRC sites. This expires in December 2024, and it will not be extended.

The Environment Agency are insisting that waste containing WUDS must be segregated/separated and transported separately from other HWRC residual waste by 1st December 2024. This is despite the waste being sent to the same incinerator where it is mixed back into the waste bunker with other residual waste. This requirement will have a financial impact and the size limitations of some HWRCs means some sites will not be able accommodate additional containers for segregated WUDS. This delegated decision means WUDs will only be accepting at only one HWRC site per District Council area. The selection of the site within each District area is based on:

- the sites ability/space to accommodate at least two additional roll-on-off containers to separately accept segregated WUDS
- limiting impact on other recycling streams/facilities at the site

- consideration of population sizes (i.e. facilities selected will serve the larger population centres where possible)
- Geographic spread of sites to ensure a reasonable coverage across the Devon area

Delegated decision in relation to Operational changes at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) to comply with new legislation on accepting a small amount of DIY waste free of charge.

New legislation (the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023) came into force on 31 December 2023.

The legislation required DCC to accept small amounts of DIY Waste from Householders free of charge at the HWRCs.

The delegated decision means that (in addition to the existing HWRC DIY Waste Charging Scheme):

- Devon Householders now have:
 - a ‘free allowance’ of up to two rubble bags (e.g. a proprietary ‘rubble’ bag that can be purchased from a DIY store and can be safely lifted by the depositor) per visit or
 - One larger item up to a maximum of 2000mm length per visit. Any excess material (or oversize material) is subject to the existing charging scheme and paid for in the normal way
- The ‘free allowance’ is only offered on the basis of up to four single visits per household in any four-week period. Any visits in excess of this is subject to the existing charging scheme and paid for in the normal way.
- Given the short timescale to implement this legislation, basic visual checks took place initially by site staff to ensure householders were complying with the conditions for free disposal. Taking into account how hard this is to manage on site, a Web-based IT ‘pre-authorisation’ system is being developed to effectively manage the free allocation per household, set out above, in any four-week period.

Delegated decision in relation to making no changes to the joining criteria for the Shared Savings Scheme for a District Council (Waste Collection Authority).

The Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee had requested that Cabinet review the joining criteria for the Shared Savings Scheme (SSS) such that any Waste Collection Authority (WCA) that had started to make a significant service change would be eligible to benefit within that year for any savings that it may have generated for the County Council.

The SSS is a legally binding document which sets out that a WCA will benefit from the savings that it helps to generate for the County Council by cheaper disposal options in the year following the full roll out of any significant service change and

this has been applied robustly to those 5 District Councils that have already benefited from the SSS. Government have also allocated capital funding to South Hams and Exeter City to support roll out of food waste collections & should be providing ongoing revenue support to them both from 2024/25.

The remaining 6 WCAs will not receive government revenue funding support for separate food waste collections until April 2026. Consequently, a decision was taken that no change be made to the joining criteria for the SSS. It should be noted that the SSS will end in March 2026, but government have indicated that they will be funding all household food waste collections by then through New Burdens.

2. Service Issues and Forthcoming Activities

Smokefree Generation

The Smokefree Generation Bill was stalled going through the parliamentary process due the general election. However, Labour has committed to support the Bill so while delayed, it is expected that the Bill will be passed in the coming months.

Oral Health Promotion

It has been confirmed that the Public Health Teams in local authorities within Devon will receive additional funding from the NHS underspend on Dental activity to expand the existing supervised toothbrushing scheme to cover all primary schools and nurseries.

Cryptosporidium outbreak management

Devon County Council Public Health, EPPR, Adult Social Care and communication teams worked in partnership with UKHSA, Torbay Council, South Hams Council, South West Water and the Drinking Water Inspectorate to manage and recover from an outbreak of Cryptosporidium affecting the water supply in the Brixham and Kingswear area of South Devon. Enhanced monitoring remains in place.

Planning for the next Pandemic

The UK Covid-19 inquiry recently published the outcomes of Module 1 (Resilience and Preparedness). The learning from the national inquiry is supporting the work of the Local Health Resilience Forum who are leading the development of a system-wide pandemic and High Consequence Infection Disease plan. Public Health Devon are inputting into the development of the plan.

Responding to the threat of emerging drugs

Public Health Devon is undertaking a programme of work aimed at responding to the threat posed by the proliferation of novel synthetic substances ('Nitazines') contributing to a national and local rise in drug related deaths. This work was presented to the Health and Wellbeing board in July 2024.

Youth Service Options

The service is currently reviewing potential options relating to the procurement of a new service from April 2025.

Household Support Fund

The fifth edition of this funding is due to end on 30 September, with UK Government direction of the position after this funding, currently unknown. The funding has positively impacted around 81,000 households to date, including the funding of school meal vouchers to over 25,000 children during holidays. The Leader has written to MPs seeking support for the continued funding on Household Support, beyond September.

Migration and Resettlement

The Council continues to work closely with Home Office around resettlement pathways supporting refugees to initially settle within the UK alongside wider work in supporting people seeking asylum. We are exploring employment opportunities for young people alongside a series of projects to improve mental health & wellbeing for refugees.

Schedule 3 of the Flood & Water Management Act

Under Schedule 3 of the Flood & Water Management 2010 (the Act) there is provision for each Lead Local Flood Authority to form a Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB). The implication of this is that DCC would no longer be just a statutory consultee on the surface water management proposals for Major development but would undertake a new role as the SAB to review, inspect adopt and maintain all new sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) serving 2 or more properties. Additional staff are likely to be required to fulfil these additional responsibilities. It is suggested that this would be self-funding through application fees and potential commuted sums, but no firm decisions have been made.

The implementation of Schedule 3 has been delayed since the Act was introduced, mainly due to the challenges of funding the ongoing process. The previous government had been working towards the implementation, however the consultation proposed for November 2023 was delayed until early 2024 and then further delayed by the general election.

It is possible that the proposed consultation will be released later this year, but no formal confirmation of this has been issued. DCC's Flood & Coastal Risk Management team are continuing to liaise with national colleagues through membership of the Association of Directors of Environment Planning and Transport (ADEPT) and the Association of SuDS Authorities (ASA).

Flooding Update

The flooding experienced in 2023 was the worst in Devon for over a decade with over 400 properties flooded internally. Significant events in January, May, June, September, November and December required the production of Section 19 Flood Investigation Reports, all of which can be viewed on our website: [Flood investigations, reports and studies - Flood Risk Management \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/investigations-reports-and-studies-flood-risk-management)

As a result of the flooding, we have had to reprioritise our investment, which is reflected in the Action Plan for 2024/25. Some of those worst affected areas are now being investigated in more detail include Newton Poppleford, Venn Ottery, Harberton, Kenton and Cullompton. This is alongside planned projects in Barnstaple, Colaton Raleigh, Broadhempston, South Pool and Exeter being delivered this year. A notable achievement is the, soon to be delivered, flood improvements in Venn Ottery, developed in-house by the Flood & Coastal Risk Management team, in close communication with the residents.

Waste Management forthcoming legislation & Government policy

Following the change of government clarity has yet to be provided on what impact there may be, if any, to implementing the planned Collection & Packaging Reforms set out under the previous government. These include:

- Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging from April 2025 – whereby producers should meet the full net cost of collection & recycling/disposal of household packaging managed by local authorities
- Simpler Recycling – whereby all councils will have to provide a consistent and comprehensive recycling service (including food waste) at the kerbside (by 31st March 2026, and plastic film by 31st March 2027) and businesses too will be obliged to recycle their waste (by 31st March 2025)
- Deposit Return Scheme by October 2027 – retailers to provide a deposit return scheme to enable consumers to return in scope drinks containers

The government has recently consulted on including energy from waste plants into the UK Emissions Trading Scheme to encourage decarbonisation of the waste sector. Monitoring could start from January 2026 with full inclusion within the scheme from January 2028. Carbon allowances would need to be purchased by waste plant operators for their fossil fuel emissions – the total amount is capped and reduced each year encouraging decarbonising as the price increases. The team are assessing the possible impact of this on Waste Disposal Authorities.

3. Performance and Partnerships

Since the launch of the Smokefree Generation programme, partners in the Smokefree Devon Alliance have been working even more collaboratively to ensure high quality stop smoking services reach increasing numbers of priority populations. As a result, the Devon County Council specialist stop smoking service Stop for Life Devon are ahead of their target to support 970 people to tackle their tobacco addiction this year, with an impressive 75% quit rate (expected quit rate is 35-70%).

Libraries

The strong performance of Devon libraries continues to outstrip pre-pandemic performance and national trends. Physical issues of materials saw an additional 107,000 issues in 2023/24, an increase of 5.2%; with digital issues for the same period seeing an additional 123,000 issues, an increase of 19.3%. Wi-Fi and PC sessions has seen an increase of 21.5%, an additional 31,660 sessions.

Various libraries continue to be upgraded/ modernised – Bideford library is the latest with the move from the Town Hall to the refurbished Arts Centre at a cost of £1.4million

Waste Update

Detailed design is progressing on the new Tavistock Household Waste Recycling Centre.

The current HWRC contract terminates on 31March 2026. A service review is currently being undertaken including future service delivery models and a report will be brought to Cabinet later this financial year.

The Devon authorities collaborate under the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee chaired by Cllr Croad. The draft 2023/24 performance statistics for Devon are encouraging with the recycling rate across Devon increasing to 54.5% with more than 190,000 tonnes of waste recycled. In 2022/23 DCC was 2nd in the league table of county councils and expects to be similarly placed this year. Only 1.4% of Devon's household waste is landfilled now. East Devon District Council exceeded the 60% mark with a recycling rate of 60.5%.

In the last year the Waste Team, through various contracts, engaged with 10,400 school children in schools, 38,000 householders through social media and 6110 on doorsteps, hosted 41 visits to the Energy from Waste facilities and supported more than 60 community groups, working with them to reduce, reuse and recycle. The UK wide Big Fix coordinated by DCC brought 163 repair cafes together who between them mended more than 3000 items over the month of May, saving around 100tCO2e.

Waste Management Food Rescue Project

The lottery funded Food Rescue Project is coming to an end in November. This three-year project has provided support to enable ten community fridges to be installed across the county, reducing food waste, providing a supplementary food source and enhancing a sense of community.

Clean Devon update

This multi-agency partnership, led by the county council, is making good progress with collaborative working to reduce litter and fly tipping. It shares best practice and is embarking on a programme of overt surveillance to discourage fly tipping.

Devon Food Partnership

The waste team sits on the steering committee of the Devon Food Partnership which has a wide remit including reducing food waste. An initiative is planned to assist the supply chain to reduce their food waste and to assist businesses with changes in the law requiring them to recycle.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Good progress made in meeting EDI objectives at Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee on 27 June 2024. Out of 80 actions in the Race Equality Action Plan, 69% were completed, with the remaining actions (including 14% in progress) transferred to a new EDI Action Plan, enabling us to take a more intersectional approach.

There have been a wide range of events and activities to build awareness of EDI issues, alongside 43% of the workforce completing their mandatory EDI training by July 2024. We have also opened new Prayer and Contemplation facilities at County Hall and Great Moor House for staff to use.

In research conducted by Penna for our Employer Value Proposition in March 2024, one of the top line trends demonstrated that DCC comes out on top, excelling in EDI, culture and balance compared to the five organisations benchmarked, followed closely by Exeter University.

In terms of incidents and complaints relating to harassment, discrimination or unacceptable behaviour, for 2023/24, there were:

- 19 specific and 25 unspecific (general comments) reports of unacceptable behaviour and discrimination from staff. Some of these involved incidents from service users
- 3 grievances and 3 disciplinaries relating to discrimination (racism and disability)
- 134 reports of violence or aggression (via OSHENS). Only one of these was discrimination related
- 34 customer complaints with a discrimination claim. 2 were resolved on receipt, 3 were upheld, 4 were partly upheld, and 25 were not upheld

The Equality Commission will be meeting regularly to drive progress with the plan, and we will provide updates to all Councillors on the work of the Commission at Full Council.

The County Council remains committed to a programme of work around EDI and recognises the need to demonstrate the cost effectiveness and impact of its work.

4. Celebrating Success / Any other headlines

Public Health Devon have delivered a number of 'Know Your Numbers' (blood pressure checks) events at St. James Park, building on the learning from a previous event at Exeter Chiefs. The events involved community pharmacists and medical students partnering with the Public Health team to encourage more than 150 people to have their blood pressure checked, with approximately 45% being identified as requiring onward referral for further investigation. More events are planned for the forthcoming Know Your Numbers campaign in September 2024.

100 Years of Devon libraries

In July 2024, Devon County Library Service celebrated its centenary with a special event at Exeter Library. Devon County Library Service was launched in 1924 with the aim of providing a single county-wide service giving all residents free access to books. Since 2016, Libraries Unlimited has shaped the libraries across Devon (and Torbay). Marking the centenary was a fantastic opportunity to reflect on the incredible steps that the charity has taken in addressing social inequality in Devon.

Serious Violence Strategy

Earlier this year the Council approved a multi-agency [Preventing Serious Violence Strategy](#). The Strategy has been developed in response to the [Serious Violence Duty](#), introduced in 2023, which requires specified authorities in local areas to 'work together to prevent and reduce serious violence'. In line with Duty requirements, Safer Devon partners, supported by the Council's Communities Team, have carried out a Needs Assessment to understand what serious violence is happening in Devon and its drivers.

Domestic Abuse Service

Cabinet took the decision in April to commission an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service for Devon. The new service, with an anticipated commencement date on April 1st 2025, will include improved access, prevention and early intervention, risk planning and advocacy, support for those in safe accommodation and in recovery, and will also work with those that harm to reduce risk, and prevent reoccurring victimisation. The new service will be trauma informed and person centred and will follow the life journey of victims/survivors and their families.

Community Funding

The Growing Communities Fund since 2022 has now deployed over £1m to 576 grants to voluntary & community groups; bolstering community resilience (capacity and capability) in the things that matter to them and which align to DCC's strategic plan.

Locality Budget in year deployment of £181k funding by members to 264 voluntary and & community groups as well as town & parish councils doing things that matter to their communities.