

# Parish report from your District Councillors

## February 5<sup>th</sup>

### Devolution Deal for Devon and Torbay



**Devolution for Devon and Torbay has taken a step nearer with the publication of Government proposals for a ground-breaking deal that could re-draw the future relationship between local government in Devon and Torbay, and Whitehall.**

The plans, announced by Levelling Up Minister Jacob Young at an event in Paignton on 25 January, would enable more decisions to be taken locally on issues such as building more affordable homes, investing in new quality jobs and skills, and improving public transport. The 40-page proposed Deal sets out in detail proposals that could see the transfer of a range of powers and funding to a Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), subject to public consultation. Under the proposals the new body would have direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030.

Through Local Skills Improvement Plans, the proposed CCA will work with business and education leaders to create a stronger, joined-up relationship between employers and schools, colleges and universities.. The Government is proposing to transfer over £16 million of new funding to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy.

The Government is offering a stronger partnership with Homes England, capitalising on the Affordable Housing Programme and Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people and reduce homelessness. The proposal includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and would facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.

On transport, the proposed Deal builds on Devon County Council and Torbay Councils' long history of working well together on local transport planning. The proposed Deal will strengthen this joined-up approach with Devon and Torbay working as equal partners on a CCA and improving the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for travellers and investment in services to provide greater access to public transport.

The Government is also offering to transfer responsibility for developing, designing and delivering the next stages of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2025.

The CCA would be responsible for working with Devon County Council, Torbay Council, District Councils and the business and education sectors to support high growth business sectors such as advanced marine engineering, defence, photonics and digital, and improve the look and feel of local communities with street and town centre enhancements.

The Government has chosen Devon and Torbay as one of only a small number of local authority areas in the country to form a Combined County Authority (CCA), that will not require an elected Mayor or changes to the current structure of local councils. The new powers would be devolved to a proposed CCA – a partnership comprising Councillors representing the councils of Devon and Torbay, including District Councils, and representatives from business and education.

Together, the partnership would deliver on a jointly agreed programme, working alongside a wide range of other local stakeholders, to tackle key local priorities.

#### ***What happens next?***

The next step will be a six-week public consultation on a draft proposal to establish the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DT CCA), beginning on 12 February. The results of the consultation will be considered by Devon County Council and Torbay Council in April, and subject to a decision by both authorities, followed by submission of a final Deal proposal to Government for approval.

If approved, the DT CCA would be established through secondary legislation introduced by Government.

Some critics see this deal as the first step on the road towards the abolition of District Councils in Devon and the creation of one or two Unitary authorities covering the whole county. Will this happen, and what is the timescale, who knows?

## **Executive approves Council Plan for 2024-5**



South Hams District Council's Executive has set out the Council's priorities for the next four years in response to the challenges and opportunities faced by communities across the District. The Executive Committee considered The Council Plan 2024-2028 and its supporting Year 1 delivery plan. It recommended that Council should adopt both plans

and approve the funding needed to deliver them. The Council Plan includes four key policy areas: to tackle the housing challenges, address climate change and biodiversity loss, support the economy and deliver good quality services to our communities.

The plan is funded by an investment of £4.59m. This is made up of £1m of money released from reserves and capital schemes that are no longer needed together with £3.59m from the realignment of core budgets and government grants such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. To complement the housing priorities in The Council Plan, The Executive also approved a specific action plan focused on Housing and Homelessness prevention. The focus for the next twelve months includes working with partners and communities to create good quality, genuinely affordable, energy efficient housing and making the best use of housing that already exists.

Another of the Council's key priorities is to do all it can to respond to Climate change and Biodiversity loss. It will do this through supporting changes to agricultural practices and decarbonisation of the marine economy. Another key project is to work

with the agriculture sector to develop a 'keep it local' scheme to promote local produce and reduce food miles.

Working with businesses and partner organisation will also be key to achieving the Council's ambition to support a thriving and resilient economy. The community services the Council Delivers is also a key priority. It has pledged in The Council Plan to deliver effective frontline services that address consider the environment and enhance the wellbeing of communities across South Hams.

These four priorities will be underpinned by providing good quality core council services. The Council will do this by working closer with our communities, improving customers access to services, making sure it is financially sustainable and putting the right governance in place.

## Grants for climate and ecology projects



District Councillors have been given a budget of £2,000 each to enable them to support a wide range of projects to help us tackle our Climate and Ecological Emergency Declarations. The project should meet one of the objectives in the South Hams Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. These are:

- Reducing carbon emissions from households, businesses or organisations, including community and voluntary groups
- Supporting behaviour change and sustainable living
- Projects which will result in removal of carbon from the atmosphere through nature-based solutions or supporting improvements in biodiversity
- Providing education and awareness of the Climate and Ecological emergency through direct engagement with hard to reach groups and individuals
- Projects which aim to help communities and species adapt to the effects of Climate Change
- Projects to help reduce organisational carbon footprints

Each Councillor has a budget of £2,000 to help not for private profit groups or organisations to deliver community projects that benefit their Ward or the wider local area.

## Garden waste service

South Hams residents can sign up to or renew their subscription for our garden waste collection service from 15 February. The fee is going up this year to cover costs, though we're offering a discount to those who sign up early. Anyone who signs up between 15 February and 1 April 2024 will pay a discounted fee of £52 for a year-long subscription running from April 2024 that covers collections for one brown wheelie bin.



There is a maximum of two subscriptions (which would cover two bins) per household. Anyone who signs up after 31 March will pay £55. This is an increase on last year's fee, but it is necessary to cover rising costs.

The quickest and easiest way for residents to sign up is on our website:

[www.southhams.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/gardenwaste) - the website is also full of information and useful FAQs on the service. Alternatively, residents can call us on 01803 861234, though we encourage everyone to use the website as it's easier and quicker.

For current subscribers who renew by 1 April, there will be no changes to their service, and they can continue to use their brown bin with no interruptions.

Subscriptions for the 2023/24 year close on 14 February. We will be promoting subscriptions to residents with social media, e-mail newsletters, print advertising and a press release

## Support for our care leavers

At the last meeting of the Executive, it was agreed to adopt our new Employment Policy for care leavers. If you know of a business or organisation who would like to support a care leaver, whether that be through employment, work experience or apprenticeships, please ask them to email [hr@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:hr@swdevon.gov.uk).



## Free IT and digital training courses

Our partners [Learn Devon](http://Learn Devon) have a range of free courses to choose from to help residents build on their digital skills.

They could help with things like accessing digital banking, connecting with loved ones online and accessing job and training opportunities.



Courses include help with the first steps to getting online, building computer confidence to gaining a nationally recognised 'Award in Digital Skills'.