

## **Devon County Report – October / November**

### **Financial monitoring and budgeting.**

Following the turbulent start to the year, especially with the situation in Ukraine have knock on effects on the worldwide energy supply and creating inflationary pressures, our July Cabinet meeting received an unprecedented report from the director of finance predicting the county council could overspend by more than £40 million in the current financial year if no action was taken.

The figure was made up of some £30 million resulting from spiralling demand for our services for vulnerable children and adults, big increases in contract prices for such services as school transport because of the soaring cost of fuel and the shortage of drivers and similarly rising costs in building and road projects because of the runaway cost of materials. A further £10 million was likely to be spent in extra costs from inflation, particularly wage costs.

Towards the middle of summer events dictated that our Cabinet was left with little choice but to take immediate and decisive action and although only a few months into the financial year.

A task force of senior officers from every department across the council was set up and asked them to go through the budget line and identify every possible area where we could generate extra income and make savings. This is ongoing work and has identified around £20m of additional income and savings or delayed spending we can do.

Aside from the immediacy of this work, there is a parallel channel of work that is looking at how we work as a Council, processes that must be improved and service changes, in order to put DCC on a sustainable footing going forward, with 2023/24 likely to be as challenging as the current year.

### **Chief Executive Recruitment**

Jan Spicer (formerly Shadbolt) is now in place as Interim Chief Executive and has made a strong start, being given the full operational backing, alongside the Cabinet's political backing, to change and transform our services.

The advertisement for the permanent Chief Executive will go live in early October, closing date is 20th October. Longlisting and shortlisting will take place in November, overseen by the Appointments Committee. Interviews will be in the week commencing 21st November.

As part of the process, we will also include a presentation from the shortlisted candidates to a cross section of Cllrs from across the Council.

We hope to appoint and have a new Chief Executive to start from the new financial year.

## **Scams awareness**

Our scams lead Janet Quinn spoke about rogue traders and doorstep crime on Radio Devon. She used the opportunity to promote 'Buy with Confidence' and raise awareness of emerging scams around the cost of living, investments and Government refunds.

"Fraud has grown hugely in recent years and now accounts for 39% of all crime. Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed there were 4.6 million fraud offences in the year ending March 2021. This compares to 3 million incidents of theft and 1.6 million incidents of violent crime. From March 2020 to March 2021, the volume of fraud incidents increased by almost a quarter (24%), in part due to a boom in Covid-related scams."

## **Made in Devon success**

Made in Devon now has 65 members. In August we received 24 requests to join the scheme, which is a great result for the usually quiet summer period. The new creative 'You'll be amazed what's made in Devon' features on billboards and posters on 30 bus stops around the region. Made in Devon members are now included on Devon County Council's employee discounts portal Devon Discounts to promote them to staff.