

Devon County Councillor report – December 2025

- **Children’s Services praised by Ofsted:** Ofsted inspectors commended significant progress in services for care leavers, noting “*greater clarity, greater effort, and a more consistent service.*” The Council’s leadership was recognised for overseeing a much-needed programme of improvements.
- **Libraries Consultation launched** A 12-week public consultation has begun to shape the future of Devon’s 50 libraries. Proposals include reducing and standardising opening hours, extending hours through volunteering and technology, and exploring community-managed libraries. Link to [public consultation](#)

Motions and decisions from full council 4 December:

Rights of Rivers in Devon

- Council acknowledged the intrinsic rights of rivers and their importance to ecology, heritage, and sustainability.
- Agreed to embed river rights in policies on planning, land use, water, and biodiversity.
- Urged collaboration among agencies (South West Water, Environment Agency, landowners, government).
- Supported local initiatives such as citizen science monitoring, riparian planting, and sustainable farming.
- Recognised the work of the new water quality portfolio reviewing data and practices.

Pavement Vegetation and Public Safety

- Council resolved to conduct an urgent audit of problem pavements and vegetation overgrowth.
- Funding sources (internal, external, community partnerships) will be explored for clearance programmes.
- Consideration of micro-funding/community-led schemes where council services cannot deliver quickly.
- A clear point of contact will be provided for ongoing footpath vegetation issues.
- An action plan with timelines will be reported back within 8 weeks.

ADHD Care Pathways

- Council called on NHS Devon to publish updated ADHD referral waiting times.
- Engagement with NHS Devon and Integrated Care Board representatives to improve clarity and consistency in care pathways.
- Requested the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to review national guidelines on ADHD shared care to ensure equitable access.

Pavement Parking Enforcement

- Pavement parking added to “report a problem” pages, with enforcement limited to restricted areas (e.g., double yellow lines).
- Public submissions (photos/videos) to be used to prioritise enforcement patrols, with Civil Enforcement Officers recording contraventions by direct observation.
- Police to be informed of reporting locations for appropriate action.
- Proposal to widen legislation to allow publicly submitted recordings for enforcement to be debated at the next meeting.

Armed Forces Covenant

- Council committed to achieving the **Employers Recognition Scheme Gold Award**, including consideration of extra leave for Cadet Force leaders.
- Re-establishment of a staff and elected members Armed Forces Covenant group to provide a confidential space for serving personnel and veterans.

Cost of Living in Rural and Coastal Communities

- Council formally declared the disproportionate impact of the cost of living crisis on rural Devon.
- Agreed to publish data on impacts such as fuel poverty, transport costs, and access to services.
- Will lobby government and business groups for targeted funding to support rural households.
- Pilot areas to be set up to explore innovative community solutions, including community-run transport schemes.

Cllr Steve Lodge

Tiverton West