

County Council Report – June 2026

Road Warden scheme

I'm delighted to report that all towns and parishes in my division have now either signed up to or are signing up to the Road Warden scheme. (Washfield possibly the only exception but discussions have been had). This will ensure we can take positive steps to improve our local roads - and more. It is my intention to bring together any or all of those involved for an in-person meeting to get to know each other and look at priority roads. A WhatsApp group may also be a useful tool, as we have a road network that affects the whole area. I will engage with Cllr Raleigh in Tiverton East to see what progress has been made there.

Spot a carer campaign

The '[Spot a Carer' campaign](#) that took place in Devon across Carers Week 8-14 June was incredibly positive, and by the end of Carers Week the local adverts had been seen over 159,000 times, and the series of short films viewed 6,193 times, with the 'alcohol & addiction' film receiving the most interaction. The campaign has been a real success in helping to boost awareness of carers services in the region.

Highways and parking improvement

I'm looking at a range of highways and parking improvements across the division. This includes early stage investigations into the potential for a formalised pedestrian crossing on Bolham Road, between Kennedy Way / Park Hill roundabout and Bolham Rd / Lea Road roundabout; changing the parking allocations on Gold Street to improve loading and waiting; and several other schemes in Tiverton and Bampton. These things, I have discovered, are not quick! But I welcome feedback on roads and arrangements that town and parish councillors believe could be improved.

Heatwave and roads

The extreme heat has had a direct impact on Devon's highways. Devon County Council has been using a process known as "dusting" on some roads, spreading a fine layer of stone to stop bitumen becoming soft and sticky. Road surface temperatures were expected to reach around 60°C during the June heatwave – with more to come. The treatment has been focused on major routes, although motorists have been advised to take additional care on rural and recently treated roads. If you've seen our road gritters out and about, you were not hallucinating from the heat! We swapped the grit for sand and used the same vehicles as we use in the winter.

The Council must increasingly plan for both extremes. The answer is not simply more reactive repair. We need better drainage, stronger road foundations, appropriate surface materials and preventative maintenance that reflects the conditions we are now experiencing. The additional highways investment agreed this year is welcome, but climate resilience must be built into how that money is spent. We are in the process of preparing the highways contract for tender next year, we will be opening up for bids to take on the £900 million contract for 5 years, to cover the creation of any new unitary authorities.

I continue to raise local defects with our Neighbourhood Highways Officer, particularly where drainage problems cause the same section of road to fail repeatedly. Town and parish councils are extremely helpful in identifying where water regularly collects, where drains and gullies are blocked, or where small defects are likely to become much more expensive failures. Please continue to report these through the online portal and send me details of persistent or especially serious problems.

Libraries

New Open Plus technology is being introduced in libraries across the county, but not Tiverton or Bampton just yet. 11 libraries will have the technology installed between July and March 2027: Kingsteignton, Axminster, Sidmouth, Kingskerswell, Holsworthy, Combe Martin, Crediton, Dawlish, Honiton, Teignmouth and Budleigh Salterton.

The installations follow a successful trial at Cullompton library earlier this year. Open Plus allows registered library members to access their library outside normal staffed hours. It means people can visit earlier in the morning, later in the evening and at weekends, using simple self-service systems. This is alongside maintaining current staffed opening hours; investing in books and digital resources; removing overdue fines from October to reduce barriers to access; and strengthen partnerships with local councils, health services, voluntary organisations and community groups.