

Devon County Councillor report

October 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

You will know that the Government put a pause on Local Government reorganisation, but the long-term outcome is still unclear.

Devon County Council has now started judicial review proceedings to challenge the Government's Local Government Reorganisation decision. This was agreed by cabinet.

The claim was lodged with the Administrative Court w/c 21 September and has been processed. DCC expects to receive the official documents shortly and will formally serve them on the Government and other relevant parties next week.

This is a protective step to preserve the Council's legal position whilst the Government's review continues. There are strict time limits for bringing such challenges. Importantly, starting these proceedings does not prevent us from continuing to engage constructively with the Government and partner councils.

At full council in September we delegated authority to the Leader, consulting group leaders, to appoint members to joint committees overseeing the transition to the new unitary authority. The committees will remain while the pause is in place.

Brexit and the economy

In September Council accepted the Cabinet recommendation on the economic consequences of Brexit and the Single Market, seconded by Cllr Lodge. The council agreed noting the evidence of Brexit's economic impacts, agreeing for the Leader to write to government ministers and MPs about the importance of strong trading relationships with European markets, and supporting continued partnership working to strengthen Devon's international economic relationships. An amendment seeking to include Reform's perspective was defeated.

Tourist Tax

Also in September Council debated a notice of motion on protecting Devon's visitor economy and rejecting a tourist tax. The recommendation noted that Devon County Council does not currently have the powers to introduce an Overnight Visitor Levy, reaffirmed the council's support for the visitor economy, and stated that any future consideration of visitor levy arrangements should be evidence-led and developed in partnership with the tourism sector.

Pension investments and genocide

Council accepted a recommendation for the Investment and Pension Fund Committee to discuss potential divestment from companies based in countries found guilty of genocide at

the partner fund's strategic forum. Cllr Lodge moved the Investment and Pension Fund Committee's recommendation that officers seek to place the issue on the Partner Fund Strategic Forum agenda. During debate, concerns were raised about Israel and whether the proposal was political or antisemitic. Lodge rejected this characterisation, stressing that the motion concerned countries' behaviour and the ICJ's position, not antisemitism. The recommendation was carried.

Caring in Devon

A new Caring in Devon Service launches on 1st October, essentially replacing Devon Carers Carers assessments and reviews alongside a dedicated Carers Helpline now sit in-house at DCC. Preventative services continue to be commissioned through third sector partners and a Peer support Service goes live 1st November.

New adult education courses in Devon

Learn Devon has launched its new 2026/27 adult education programme, with around 200 free courses available.

Courses cover English, Maths, ESOL, digital skills and job-specific training, helping adults gain qualifications, build skills and improve career prospects. Please share this opportunity with friends and family who may benefit.

Find out more [here](#).

Devon's Best Start Family Hubs & Best Start in Life programme

Devon County Council has secured £6.028m of government funding (2026–2029) to expand its Best Start Family Hubs & Best Start in Life programme, designed to improve early childhood development and school readiness. The programme supports families from pregnancy to age 19 (25 for SEND) and aims to ensure every Devon family can access joined-up, early help through a “hub without walls” model that reaches rural and isolated communities.

The funding will strengthen parenting support, home learning, SEND pathways, and partnership working across health, education and community organisations. Devon County Council leads delivery through Public Health, with councillors asked to promote Family Hubs locally and help identify emerging needs.

For families, this means earlier support, better access to services, stronger parent-child relationships, and more consistent help regardless of where they live — ultimately improving children's development and reducing inequalities across Devon.

Devon Youth Council

Devon Youth Council has advanced its Places to Go, Things to Do campaign while driving major action on bus affordability and access. Their feedback to Devon County Council and national leaders helped shape a forthcoming national under-15 bus scheme and secured £500k of DCC investment **for** 16–19-year-olds not in education or employment. They also presented proposals to improve rural transport at the Devon Community Transport Day, suggesting local day trips and regular minibuses links to train stations. Discussions on rural solutions continue, aiming to improve access and opportunities for young people across Devon.