Devon County Councillor report

Late October 2026

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.

Budget Setting 2027/28

Work is progressing on target service budgets for 2027/28. The Council is currently within £3.5 million of a balanced position – an exceptionally strong starting point given budget

pressures. Service budgets will proceed through the usual consultation and governance process, concluding at Full Council in November/December.

Rural Support and Wellbeing Programme

Cabinet has approved £180,000 over three years to reinstate the Rural Support and Wellbeing Programme. Bluetongue has taken a devastating toll on farming families. This funding will help farmers access mental health support, practical business advice and connections with others who understand farming life – getting help to people early, before pressures become a crisis.

County Farms Estate Vision

Cabinet has approved a new vision for Devon's County Farms Estate, placing food production and the next generation of farmers at its centre.

Key priorities include stronger routes into farming for young people, supporting farm businesses to diversify, exploring opportunities for locally grown food in school meals, and improving flood resilience alongside productive farming. Work will now progress to turn these ambitions into practical proposals.

Highways Investment

Cabinet has approved a further £4.5 million investment in roads ahead of winter, delivering:

- Three major resurfacing schemes on vital diversion routes
- Additional funding for Rapid Response Teams
- Four additional drainage teams to clear blocked gullies

This builds on this year's commitment of over £100 million in capital investment for preventative highways maintenance and over £36 million for highways maintenance.

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 £6.028 million of government funding (2026–2029) to expand its Best Start Family Hubs & Best Start in Life programme.

The programme supports families from pregnancy to age 19 (25 for SEND), ensuring every Devon family can access joined-up, early help through a "hub without walls" model reaching rural and isolated communities. Funding will strengthen parenting support, home learning, SEND pathways and partnership working across health, education and community organisations. For families, this means earlier support, better access to services and improved children's development regardless of where they live.

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 minibus links to train stations. Discussions on rural solutions continue, aiming to improve access and opportunities for young people across Devon.

Cost of living support

Devon County Council provides help and advice for residents struggling with bills, housing costs, food, debt, benefits or running a business.

Support available includes:

- Crisis and Resilience Fund – emergency financial support for those eligible
- Winter warmth – help with heating costs
- Food and essentials – support for those struggling with food costs
- Housing costs – help with rent, Council Tax and other housing costs
- Money and debt advice – support to manage finances and deal with debt

Local support is also available through district councils, libraries, Family Hubs and Citizens Advice Devon. Residents can use a benefits calculator to check eligibility for additional support.

https://www.devon.gov.uk/cost-of-living/

Free Cybercrime Awareness Presentations

Devon and Cornwall Police are offering free face-to-face Cybercrime Awareness presentations to businesses, charities, councils, community groups and other organisations.

The sessions raise awareness of common online threats and provide practical advice to help reduce the risk of becoming a victim. Bookings are now being taken for 2027.

Contact: cyberprotect@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk