

# Hatherleigh & Chagford Division

## Annual Report March 2021

The Annual Hatherleigh & Chagford Division report.

### **COVID 19**

This has been a year like no other that we will remember for the rest of our lives. I have been very busy working from home online through Microsoft Teams, Lifesize and Zoom. It has been amazing how we have adjusted to working from home. But we must remember many have been working on the front line of the pandemic, and not just NHS staff and Care Workers, who have done a wonderful job. There are Teachers, Police, Refuse Collectors, Supermarket Staff, Bus Drivers, Highway Staff, Delivery Drivers, and many more that have kept life moving in our area. We have been fortunate in Devon that COVID has not been so intense as some parts of the country. That is partly down to you, as residents in Devon have followed the restrictions and guidance.

The COVID 19 vaccine rollout has gone very well, and the take-up has been very high. I sit on the Local Outbreak Engagement Board which oversees the pandemic in Devon. It is humbling to see and hear about the dedication and passion of so many people, working together. Half the adult population have now been vaccinated in Devon.

### **Budget 21/22**

Despite the pandemic, Devon County Council has continued to operate and deliver services. We have worked closely with West Devon Borough Council and other partners to support the most vulnerable through this crisis.

The net budget for 2021/22 is £545.505 million, a 6.6% increase on 2020/21. We have had to take the difficult decision to increase council tax by 4.99%. 3% of this will go to Adult Social Care, which will see an 8.3% increase overall. Children's Services has an 7.8% increase. Extra funding will be put into Highways, and funding to help the District Councils support the most affected by the pandemic. The gap between losing your job and getting Job Seekers Allowance is very difficult for some.

### **Children's Services**

I continue to be Cabinet Member for Children's Services & Schools. Melissa Caslake is settling in as our new Chief Officer for Children's Services and Schools. Melissa is having meetings online with groups of staff and partners. We are having interviews for the Head of Child Social Care at the end of March. The number of children in care has stabilised at 817.

The Commissioner, Elenor Brazil, who was appointed by the Department for Education to help Devon improve its Children's Services, has said Devon has responded well to the pandemic, and key services have improved. It is likely that Elenor will stand down at the end of March 2021

Early Help has seen a sharp rise in demand through the pandemic and we have added extra resources through COVID 19 funding. We have also seen a rise in problems with child mental health and have secured extra funding for the next two years.

### **Virtual School**

Wendy Ohlson has been appointed the new Head of the Virtual School. Wendy is a former teacher and has been working in the Virtual School in Devon for a couple of years. The Virtual School works with children who are in care and goes into schools to make sure they get the best out of their education.

### **Schools**

Full return started on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March



	Devon	National
All schools	95%	89%%
All schools eligible Children only	96%	
Primary schools	97%	95%
Secondary schools	95%	89%
Special schools	91%	83%
EHCPs	89%	84%
Social Worker	88%	82%
Children in Care	91%	

Primary Schools had full return. Secondary Schools had a phased return because of COVID 19 testing.

Teachers and school staff have been wonderful through the pandemic, adapting to the latest COVID guidance and teaching in the classroom and online.

Government has provided various funding streams to help schools with education catch-up, following the pandemic. This is important, but we must not overload students. Children have suffered from isolation from their friends and wider family through the pandemic. We must give them time to adjust to all being back in school and making those connections again. The summer holidays should be fun and rejuvenating ready for school in September.

We have rolled out the Holiday Activity and Food Program, a government initiative for 5 to 16 year olds who are on free school meals. This is activity with food in the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays. We also have the food voucher scheme through school holidays.

Cabinet has taken the decision to bring Education & Inclusion Services back in-house. Services are currently delivered by Babcock. The world has changed, and with the SEND reforms in 2014 we must make our services more joined up and easily accessible to children and families.

### **Highways**

This winter has seen colder weather, and, with rain and frost, we have had potholes. The quickest way to get these filled is to use this link:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/>

There are several road improvement works across the division and roads are having temporary closures. Please use the diversion signs and remember that, while the highway diversion is inconvenient, this work is necessary and improving the highway.

### **Dartmoor National Park**

I continue to be a Member of DNPA and we have met virtually in the last year. The Local Plan is going through the formal inspection process and it has been very intensive work, being all online.

### **Locality Budget**

It has been a busy year for the Locality Budget. I have helped support:

Highampton Traffic Calming, Chagford Swimming Pool, Sticklepath Two Museum Way, Memoirs of Hatherleigh Through COVID, Sampford Courtenay Village Hall, Hatherleigh Primary School Equipment, Drewsteignton Toilet Block, North Tawton Youth Club, Proper Job, Beaworthy Hall Chairs, Chagford Rec Trust and some across Devon projects: Youth Work Support, Young Carers and Mobile Libraries.

The Locality Budget is closed for this financial year and will open again at the end of May 2021.

### **Climate Change**

Devon has declared a Climate Emergency and a wide range of partners have been working on a Carbon Plan. There is plenty of information at the link below:

[Devon Climate Emergency – Creating a resilient, net-zero carbon Devon – where people and nature thrive.](#)

Always happy to discuss any issues and help where I can

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