

West Down Parish Council

County Councillors report

August 2022

Retirement of Chief Executive

Devon County Council's long-serving chief executive, Phil Norrey, has announced his retirement.

Dr Norrey has held the post since 2006 and is the longest-serving chief executive in the council's history.

He joined the authority in 1998 as deputy director of education before being promoted to director of education.

Dr Norrey, who will be 60 next year, said it was the right time for him to leave and hand over to his successor as a new senior management team takes shape at County Hall.

DCC Finance

Devon County Council is facing an unprecedented black hole in our finances caused by the cost of living crisis and spiralling demand for help for vulnerable children and adults.

The Director of Finance, Angie Sinclair predicts that we could overspend by more than £40 million in the current financial year. And she says urgent action must be taken by every council department to rein in spending.

A panel of senior officers is already looking at options for councillors to consider including spending cuts, remodelling services to save money and cancelling or delaying building projects. Unlike central government, local councils are required by law to balance their books every year.

There was last week a report to Cabinet.

The council has never before faced a combination of demand growth and price shock pressures of this scale. The pandemic and geopolitical situation has created huge financial pressures nationally and the county council is not immune from that.

The current forecast is unprecedented and immediate action must be taken to safeguard the financial stability of the authority.

A financial stability programme has been created comprising senior officers from each service who are examining every option to save money.

The report details the financial pressures facing us with children's services forecasting an overspend of £17.9 million with a big increase in demand and the rising cost of placing children in care.

It includes a £7.7 million overspend in education with the bulk of that taken up by transporting children to school because of spiralling fuel and wages.

Adult care services are forecasting an overspend of £6 million.

There is also a risk that inflationary pressures could result in costs, in addition to this overspend, of more than £10 million this year.

National pay negotiations are at a very early stage but indications are that increases to the National Living Wage coupled with the cost of living crisis will result in a higher than expected pay claim this year. The estimated cost of this has been included within the forecast overspend.

Although It is very early in the financial year and much will, of course, change as the year progresses. However immediate action must be taken to safeguard the financial stability of the authority.

Devon is not alone in dealing with these pressures. Most councils are facing the same problems, according to the Local Government Association. In addition the County Council Network is highlighting the particular cost pressures on county authorities because of the nature of delivering services in large, sparsely-populated rural areas.

Martinhoe Bridge

The bridge, located near the Hunters Inn on Exmoor, was built in 1953. Our routine inspections this week have found serious defects with the structure and it has had to be completely closed this afternoon for safety reasons. The reason for letting you know is I am aware that it is a popular walking destination for many of us.

Concerns have been raised over the internal steel tensioning system of the bridge, which is integral to the structure.

We are urgently exploring the possibility of locating a temporary bridge which would allow the road to be re-opened. At this stage it is unknown how long the road will need to be closed.

It is essential that this bridge is closed in order to keep people safe. The findings of the recent survey were very unexpected but our teams have acted swiftly in the light of those safety concerns with the structure. Hopefully a temporary bridge can be found and installed as soon as possible.

Concrete barriers are placed at either end of the bridge and a signed diversion is in place.



Reminder of how to report a Highway issue;

[Report a problem - Roads and transport \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport)

[0345 155 1004](tel:03451551004)

Live chat is available on the Highways website Monday to Friday 9.30 am to 12 pm and 2 pm to 4.30 pm (4 pm on Fridays). To report a problem with road maintenance, traffic management and parking, streetlights and signs and public rights of way

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