

West Down Parish Council

County Councillors report

March 2024

Devon County Council Budget 24-25

We have have agreed a 4.99 per cent increase in council tax for the coming financial year.

It comprises 2.99 per cent for general services with an extra two per cent for adult care.

It means an extra £1.56 a week for the average Band D householder.

There will be increases of 10.4 per cent in spending on children's services, six per cent on adult services and 4.7 per cent on climate change, environment and transport.

Councillors also agreed an extra £1.5 million to boost regular road drainage since the target budget was set last month to tackle the increase in potholes caused by this winter's heavy rainfall.

There will also be £716,000 extra to bring the homelessness budget back up to £1.45 million to support the work of district councils and homeless organisations for another year.

Devon's revenue spending on services will increase from just under £700 million to £743 million in 2024/25. That's an overall rise of 6.3 per cent in spending.

In addition, councillors approved a capital budget of over £155 million for investment in infrastructure such as schools and roads.

The council tax for an average Band D home will rise by £81.54 to £1,715.67 – an extra £1.56 a week.

This budget also recognises the concerns that people have about the increase in potholes caused by the very wet winter.

Public Consultation on Devon and Torbay devolution deal

A six-week public consultation has been launched on Monday 12 February on the **draft** proposal to create a Combined County Authority (CCA) for Devon and Torbay to oversee new powers and funding transferred from Government.

The ground-breaking devolution deal announced by Levelling Up Minister Jacob Young last month, proposes to create the CCA, which would be a formal partnership of elected members drawn from the councils of Devon and Torbay, including district councils, together with representatives from business and education.

People are being invited to have their say on how the CCA would work, the powers that it would have and the functions it would be responsible for. These include investment in local economic growth, delivering affordable housing, improving public transport, and meeting net zero ambitions.

Further information about the joint consultation with Torbay Council and details of how to respond are available at www.devontorbaydeal.org.uk

Establishing the CCA would not mean removing or merging local councils and does not require a Mayor for Devon and Torbay. All councils would continue to exist and would still be responsible for public services in their area.

Among the Devon and Torbay devolution deal proposals are:

- The new body would have direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030. Through Local Skills Improvement Plans, the proposed CCA will work with business and education leaders to create a stronger, joined-up relationship between employers and schools, colleges and universities to provide the skilled workforce the local economy needs for the future.
- Over £16 million of new funding would be invested in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth to accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy, capitalising on the area's world-leading expertise in green science and technology.
- There would also be a stronger partnership with Homes England, working closely with district councils in Devon to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people as well as reducing homelessness. The proposal includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and would facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.
- The joined up local transport planning by Devon County Council and Torbay Council will be strengthened to improve the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is also an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for public transport passengers.
- From 2025 the Government is also offering to transfer responsibility for planning and delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to Devon and Torbay, engaging with Devon's district councils, to support high growth business sectors as well as funding town centre

Highways update

This winter season has been relatively kind to the highway network with only 24 days where the temperature has dipped below zero and a low of minus 7.3°. At the same point in 2023 there had been 38 days and a minimum temperature of minus 9.4°. This has led to a reduction in gritting treatments which has been below the 5-year average for November, December and January.

Following the very difficult winter last year the Asset Management and the Network Response teams have worked very closely together through late summer and autumn to prepare for the winter season. As a result of this hard work and the milder winter, the service has recorded 5,500 safety defect potholes in January, while this is slightly below the 7 year average (5,926) it compares well to the 7,500 in 2023.

The significant reduction in the gritting operations mentioned above in turn frees up resources to continue the planned patching operations, again helping to reduce safety defect potholes across the county.

The gully cleaning operations have slipped behind programme due to the high number of extreme weather events the Service has responded to this year and a series of unexpected equipment breakdowns. Milestone (the contractor) have worked hard to get this workstream back on programme and are confident that all programmed gullies will have been attended by the end of March.

A lot of work has been put into addressing drainage referrals raised by the cleaning gangs. Over 14,000 gully issues have been resolved this financial year, however, the backlog remains high with new issues identified as quickly as the old ones are being tackled.

The joint trial with Devon's Flood team to place gully sensors in selected streets in Devon is in now live. The data recorded will provide insight into whether technology can be used to inform policy or reaction for cyclical gully cleaning. The trial intends to run for an 18-month period.

Grit bins and information about gritting routes

With the colder weather we can expect to be using the grit bins, if you find a bin which needs filling there is an easy to use grit bin map on the website, just click on the icon and ask for it to be filled, damaged bins can also be reported here.

There is a map of the gritting routes in Devon but I would advise that when out driving in icy conditions to treat all roads as if they haven't been gritted as it needs friction for the grit to work.

[Grit Bins map – Road and Transport \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-transport/gritting-routes)

Highway defects

Changes have been made to the front end of the 'report a problem' website. The additional information will help provide data to inform future enhancements and hopes to highlight that members of the public can add themselves to existing reports rather than enter duplicate reports.

Following the recent cold weather we can expect an increase in potholes, please would you report any you come across at [Report a pothole - Devon County Council](https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-transport/report-a-problem)

Drainage issues; [Report standing water, flooding or blocked drains - Roads and transport \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-transport/report-a-problem)

You will see on the website there are other highway categories such as fallen trees etc.

Highway emergency number is :0345 155 1004 (If you are reporting an emergency that is very likely to present an imminent threat to life or serious injury or serious damage to property)

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