

West Down Parish Council

County Councillors report

March 2026

Last Tuesday the budget meeting of Devon County Council approved spending plans for 2026/27 and agreed a 4.99 per cent increase on the County Councils council tax share.

This amounts to £89.91 a year (£1.73 a week) for a Band D property for the county council's share (precept).

This would result in a council tax requirement for the authority of just over £610 million for 26/27.

To balance the position, the authority has to deliver £38.98 million of savings, alternative funding or additional income.

The budget explains how the council will continue to support local services at a time when costs are rising and demand for help is increasing.

The council will spend £839.2 million on day-to-day services next year. This is £33.2 million more (4.1 per cent) than in 2025/26.

Councillors also agreed a £770.6 million capital investment programme covering the five years from 2026/27 to 2030/31.

This money will be used for major projects such as road repairs, new school places, support for children with special educational needs, and improvements to council buildings across Devon.

The two biggest spend areas which account for 79% of DCC's expenditure;

1. Children and families

The Children and families budget will see the largest increase in funding across the council.

Spending will rise to £268 million in 2026/27, an increase of £19.1 million. This reflects growing pressure on children's social care, early help for families, and support for children who cannot live at home.

Children and families – capital investment

A total of £76.5 million will be invested over five years in children's homes, school expansions and specialist education provision.

Over the next five years, £25.8 million will be spent on new and expanded specialist schools to create more places for children who need extra support.

2. Adult social care

Adult social care continues to be the council's biggest area of spending.

The budget for adult social care will rise to £395.9 million in 2026/27, an increase of £9.9 million, or 2.6 per cent. This helps cover rising costs, including higher wages for care staff.

Roads and transport

Spending on highways maintenance will rise to £32.4 million in 2026/27, an increase of £2 million.

Full Council also agreed an additional £4 million investment for highways maintenance over the next financial year.

Public health, communities and libraries

The council will receive £37.7 million to support public health services, including help with drug and alcohol misuse and stop-smoking services.

Spending on community services and libraries will total £14.4 million in 2026/27.

Full council also agreed additional funding of £225,000 to restore the book fund to £500,000 and an extra £425,000 to support general library delivery during transition.

Together, these total £650,000, and reverses the proposed efficiency saving within the original libraries budget resulting in a libraries budget of more than £7 million.

In addition, a £1 million reserve for Libraries and Rural Hubs will be established to support genuine transformation and community led improvement.

Additional funding

The council also approved targeted funding which reflects priorities that have arisen through meetings of the council's scrutiny committees, community feedback and consultations with businesses and voluntary organisations.

These include an additional £600,000 to improve the speed in which Education Health Care Plans are delivered; £300,000 additional foster care support; £106,000 to strengthen domestic abuse provision; increase of each councillor's locality budget to £10,000.

There is also an additional £500,000 for post-16 and foster care transport.

Exmoor National Park Housing need survey

Raising awareness and a gentle reminder to promote please! The Parish Council have been sent the information.

Highways Update following the recent storms

Background

- Through January and into February, Devon has been impacted by 3 named storms
- These storms alongside the previously reported freeze/thaw weather pattern is incredibly damaging for the carriageways and has led to severe structural damage and a significant increase in pothole numbers.

Response

Whilst DCC have recovered access to all communities, it is becoming more aware of the significant impact of the 3 named storms on the minor network. This is becoming more evident as flood water recedes and the team continue to widen their inspections of the network and we receive more information and feedback from the public and local communities. There are currently 2,900 safety defect potholes outstanding with a further 1,600 reports received this week which we are endeavouring to inspect and repair at the earliest opportunity.

We are currently assessing more than 600 reports a day.

The impact of the most recent storm on the A379 Slapton Line has been particularly significant with a loss of sea defence and road structure. We are currently working with South Hams DC, the EA and Natural England to understand and assess the impact and consider short term and longer term recovery options. To ensure we can react as swiftly and effectively as possible we have paused programmed works.

This has made available 5 jetters and 6 gully emptiers across the county which will be working into the weekend and through the next week to address reported drainage issues.

There are 50 gangs committed to the support of the recovery operation who have been working around the clock, not only to clear the impact of the storm but to also undertake winter service treatments to ensure the safety of road users when temperatures have dropped significantly. Many of these teams continue to work additional hours on Saturdays and Sundays to keep the network as safe as possible.

Please continue to report defects on the highway.

With the winter now very much upon us, it is more likely there will be defects in the highway network, this includes streetlights and signs.

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

The DCC website is very useful for reporting problems and the reports go straight to the contractor. Alternatively the highway contact number is 0345 155 1004

If it's a river flooding the environment agency can be contacted on 0345 988 1

Local Government Reorganisation

Summary

The Ministry of Housing, Local Government and Communities (MHCLG) has launched a formal consultation to restructure Devon's local government. The current "two-tier" system (County and District councils) is proposed to be replaced by a Unitary model—a single-tier authority designed to be more efficient and sustainable.

As your representative, my sole priority is ensuring that any change protects the Combe Martin Rural Division. Our remote area relies on a delicate balance of agriculture, hospitality, and transport connectivity, and our voice must not be lost in this transition.

The 5 proposals in this consultation were made by the following councils on 28 November 2025:

1. Devon County Council proposed 3 unitary councils These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Devon Unitary Council:** East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge and West Devon
- **Plymouth** to remain unchanged
- **Torbay** to remain unchanged

2. South Hams District Council, Teignbridge Borough Council, West Devon Borough Council proposed 3 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Exeter and Northern Devon Unitary:** East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge
- **Plymouth** to remain unchanged
- **Torbay and Southern Devon Unitary:** South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon

3. East Devon Borough Council, Mid Devon District Council, North Devon Council, Torridge District Council proposed 3 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Exeter and Northern Devon Unitary:** East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon, and Torridge
- **Plymouth Expanded:** parts of the parishes of Bickleigh, Brixton, Shaugh Prior and Sparkwell from the neighbouring district of South Hams

- **Torbay and Southern Devon Unitary:** South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon

4. Exeter City Council and Plymouth City Council proposed 4 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Devon Coast and Countryside:** The rest of Devon
- **Exeter:** plus 15 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council, 28 parishes from within East Devon District Council and 6 parishes from within Mid-Devon District Council.
- **Plymouth:** plus 13 parishes from South Hams
- **Torbay:** plus 22 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council and South Hams District Council.

5. Torbay Council proposed 4 unitary councils. This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Exeter Council:** plus 15 parishes from within Teignbridge District Council, 28 parishes from within East Devon District Council and 6 parishes from within Mid Devon District Council
- **Plymouth Council:** plus 13 parishes from South Hams
- **Rural Devon Coast and Countryside Council:** The rest of Devon
- **Torbay Council** to remain unchanged

You can find all five proposals listed above at: www.devonlgr.co.uk.

Why Your Feedback is Vital- my take on this!

Living in a remote, rural area, we face unique challenges. We must ask:

1. Will our voice be heard? Will a single large council respond to a blocked lane in Combe Martin as quickly as it would to a city street? That in reality is no different to how the current system operates. ***I will always ensure our voice is heard!***
2. Will our economy be supported? How will these models protect our seasonal hospitality and farming sectors?
3. Are the savings real? Will the £28m in savings be reinvested into rural infrastructure and transport?

How to Participate

The consultation closes at 11:59 pm on Thursday, 26 March 2026.

- Online: Submit your views via the [MHCLG Consultation Portal](#).

- Review the Cases: Detailed business cases are available at Combe Martin Library (after 13th Feb) or online at www.devonlgr.co.uk.

Government is interested in whether each model:

- ? Is based on sensible geographies and economic areas
- ? Will deliver the outcomes described in the proposals
- ? Is the right size to be efficient, improve capacity, and withstand financial shocks
- ? Will enable stronger community engagement and support devolution
- ? Will deliver high-quality, sustainable public services that meet local needs

There is a free text box under each option where you can talk about anything that matters to you. They have told us that AI will be used to analyse the results, so hopefully any strong themes will be visible to Government when they look at the output of the consultation.

Please do get in touch if you think I can help with anything; Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk

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