

County Councillor Report – October 2025

Dear Parish Councillors,

As autumn deepens, I want to thank you once again for your continued support and for keeping me informed about local issues. It has been another month of full council work, scrutiny, and community casework, alongside some important developments in how Devon County Council is being inspected and reorganised.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection – Adult Social Care

At the end of September the Care Quality Commission (CQC) began its formal inspection of Devon County Council's adult social care services. This follows two years of preparation by officers and members. As Vice-Chair of the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee, I have been closely involved in the build up to this inspection and have seen first-hand the dedication of staff.

Inspectors are examining whether the council is meeting its Care Act 2014 duties and are looking at both the data and the lived experiences of people receiving care. They have already interviewed senior leaders, frontline staff, partners and councillors. Importantly, part of the inspection involves site visits, including Sherborne House in Newton Abbot, so that the CQC can see integrated services in action.

The role of the scrutiny committee in this process has been to provide constructive challenge and assurance. We have raised concerns about risks, highlighted examples of good practice, and ensured that the voices of service users and carers are reflected alongside statistics. This is the first time councils are being inspected in this way, so the results will matter not only for Devon but also nationally.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Our position on Local Government Reorganisation has not changed. We remain resistant because the legislation represents nothing but bad news for Devon if imposed without local support. Originally there was a proposal known as 145 which would have created two smaller unitary authorities. However, the financial viability assessments have shown that this is not achievable.

The preferred option now being taken forward is known as One-Devon. This would create a single large unitary council covering the whole of Devon, with Plymouth and Torbay continuing as separate unitaries. The proposal includes creating locality committees which, in theory, would preserve and even strengthen local democracy by involving more councillors in local decision making. More detail on these committees will follow in the next few months, we have a number of other councils nationally to learn from – some good and some not-so-good examples.

Deputy Leader Cllr Paul Arnott has confirmed that this process will go to an advisory meeting of Full Council in mid-November, followed by a meeting of Cabinet later in the month. A letter will then be sent to government by 28th November and government ministers are expected to respond early in the new year. While officers have worked hard to engage communities and gather evidence across the county, I remain clear that any change must be judged on whether it delivers better services and stronger accountability. On that test, I remain deeply sceptical about the benefits of LGR for Devon.

Highways - New Pothole Repair Trial

Devon County Council has launched a seven-week pilot of a new pothole repair approach which began in mid-September in selected areas including parts of Barnstaple, Hatherleigh, Chagford and North Tawton. Under the trial, when a highway inspector visits a reported pothole they will also log other defects within 500 metres or up to the nearest junction. These additional defects, even if they are not yet classified as safety defects, are then grouped and prioritised for repair.

Repair teams are therefore able to fix multiple potholes and minor defects in one visit, which saves time and reduces the need for repeat road closures and traffic management. The aim is to move away from a reactive model of repairing only the single worst pothole and instead take a proactive approach that keeps whole stretches of road in better condition. The worry about this model is the possibility of a safety defect causing an accident elsewhere in the county whilst the teams are busy repairing a non-safety defect.

Feedback so far has been encouraging and the trial is showing promise. I would welcome views from parish councils and residents on how well the trial is working in your areas, as this evidence will help press for the scheme to be extended if it continues to prove effective.

Changing Culture at County Hall

One of the most encouraging developments since May has been the shift in culture across Devon County Council. Members and residents are beginning to notice a move away from the old “computer says no” mentality towards a more constructive and solution-focused approach. Our new way of running the administration is making itself felt across services.

Residents are reporting that staff are more willing to listen and find ways forward, and council officers themselves are saying that the working culture feels more open and positive. This matters because the way a council responds day-to-day shapes people’s trust in local government. The change will not happen overnight, but the early signs are that this more collaborative approach is embedding itself and is being welcomed across

the county. I am very proud of the hard work and ethos of the majority of our council officers, they care deeply about our communities and share our frustrations at delays and needless bureaucracy.

Locality Budget – Supporting Local Projects

This summer I have been pleased to award grants from my County Councillor Locality Budget to a number of community organisations. These small grants can have a big impact, supporting projects that bring people together and strengthen village life:

- **North Devon Agricultural Society** – towards a shuttle bus for the North Devon Show.
- **Burrington Parish Council** – for new goals and nets for the multi-use games area.
- **Kings Nympton Primary School** – for the creation of a dedicated outdoor learning space.
- **Landkey Carols (Landkey Sings)** – for marquee hire for a Wassail community event.
- **North Devon Voluntary Services Ltd** – for new Devon Connect landing pages for North Devon and Torridge.
- **Chulmleigh Parish Church** – towards the costs of holiday club sessions.
- **Sunrise Diversity** – helping this vital resource keep its doors open.

If your parish or community group has a project that would benefit from a small grant, please do get in touch.

Looking Ahead

In the coming weeks I will be:

- Continuing to engage with the CQC inspection and pressing for a continued improvement in adult services.
- Preparing for the Full Council debate and Cabinet decision on Local Government Reorganisation.
- Continuing scrutiny of SEND improvement plans through the Children's Scrutiny Committee.
- Working with local groups to address a recent rise in anti-social and discriminatory public behaviour. National rhetoric is having an unfortunate impact on our communities.

- Working with residents and officers to address highways and drainage issues across the division.

Thank you as always for the work you do in your communities. By sharing concerns, ideas and feedback, we can ensure that rural voices are heard and that Devon County Council delivers for all its residents.

With best wishes,
Cllr Ed Tyldesley