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West Devon  
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Please reply to: Darryl White  
Service: Support Services  
Direct Dial: (01803) 861247  
E-mail address: Darryl.White@swdevon.gov.uk

Dear Councillor

## WEST DEVON COUNCIL - TUESDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2020

I refer to the agenda for the above meeting and attach papers in connection with the following item(s).

### Agenda No    Item

- a)    Hub Committee (Pages 1 - 6)
  - Meeting held on 15 September 2020
- 6.    **Amended Budget 2020/21** (Pages 7 - 32)
- 8.    **Fusion Support & Alternative Options** (Pages 33 - 106)
- 9.    **Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy** (Pages 107 - 136)

Yours sincerely

Darryl White  
Senior Specialist – Democratic Services

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# Agenda Item 5a

At a Meeting of the **HUB COMMITTEE** held via Skype on **TUESDAY** the **15<sup>th</sup>** day of **September 2020** at **2:00 pm**

**Present:**

Cllr N Jory – Chairman  
Cllr L Samuel – Vice Chairman

Cllr C Edmonds	Cllr A F Leech
Cllr J Moody	Cllr C Mott
Cllr T G Pearce	Cllr D K A Sellis

**In attendance:**

Chief Executive  
Director of Place and Enterprise  
Section 151 Officer  
Director of Governance & Assurance  
Head of Democratic Services  
Head of Commissioning and Contracts  
Senior Specialist, Waste Strategy & Commissioning  
Senior Specialist, Natural Resources & Green Infrastructure  
Senior Specialist, Revenues  
Head of Housing, Revenues and Benefits  
Head of Strategy and Projects  
Specialist Democratic Services

**Other Members in attendance:**

Cllrs Bridgewater, Crozier, Daniel, Ewings, Heyworth, Hipsey, Kemp, Kimber, Moyse, Musgrave, Ratcliffe, Renders, Southcott, Wood and Yelland

**\*HC 10**

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr R. Cheadle

**\*HC 11**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and none were made.

**\*HC 12**

**MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 28 July 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

**\*HC 13**

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions submitted by the Public

**\*HC 14**

**HUB COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan setting out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months.

## **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RECOVERY AND RENEWAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The Leader gave an update on the draft Recovery Plan and noted the update from the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020. It was confirmed that, if the recommendation was approved by the Hub Committee, then the next stage would be for a further update to be presented to the O&S Committee meeting on 10 November 2020, then the Plan would return to the Hub Committee meeting on 1 December. Members were thanked for their input.

The Leader outlined some of his thoughts and priorities on the plan moving forward and the importance of the overarching themes of climate change, biodiversity and well-being. These were summarised as follows:

- Firstly, developing a virtual/hybrid council which would potentially allow the reuse of Kilworthy Park to support additional community activities;
- Secondly, ensuring total Broadband connectivity for the whole Borough; and
- Thirdly, fully supporting Tavistock as a gateway to the World Heritage site and thus promoting the Borough's economy and businesses – linking heritage and cultural nodes in the Borough via green transport, eg long distance walkways, cycling routes with cycle hire hubs, and electric charging points.

It was intended that the Council would be setting out real and achievable goals in housing, including affordable housing.

These emerging themes were likely to inform the future strategic direction of the Council and would enable officers to begin working on a new Corporate Strategy, which would then be taken to Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

The Chief Executive relayed the thoughts of the Leader of the Opposition Group, who was unable to attend, which were:

- i) bringing services out into the Community by evolving the virtual aspect of the pandemic, with Formal Council meetings hosted across the Borough, thereby utilising Kilworthy Park as a site which would benefit the wider community, whilst retaining a Council presence in Tavistock and Okehampton Town Centres as a gateway to the Council;
- ii) enabling Broadband across the whole area to promote online transactions as the norm and giving connectivity to the community, helping to support the vulnerable;
- iii) active travel with cycling and walking linking the outstanding natural environment and tourism. He suggested that it is time to 'park' the rail link and focus on delivering a sustainable alternative which could be a legacy for this administration.

The Leader moved the recommendations and Cllr Samuel seconded.

It was then **AGREED** that the Hub Committee:

1. Note the Council's continuing response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic;

2. Note the outputs arising from the recent Member Workshops (as set out in Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report);
3. Note the progress on the development of the Recovery and Renewal Action Plan ('the Plan') as detailed in Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report;
4. Delegate authority to the Group Leaders, in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to nominate Members to serve on the Task and Finish Groups (as outlined at Appendix 1 of the presented agenda report);
5. Take into account the conclusions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Plan;
6. Request that a further update on progress against the development and delivery of the Plan be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting to be held on 10 November 2020; and

That, in light of the discussions at the Meeting:

7. Officers start working on the development of a new Corporate Strategy with a view to it being presented to the Annual Council Meeting on 25 May 2021 for adoption.

#### **HC 16 AMENDED DRAFT BUDGET 2020/21**

Members were presented with a report that outlined the amended draft budget for 2020/21. It was noted that discussions at the workshop and the feedback from the online survey had been fulsome.

The Leader moved the recommendations that were then seconded by Cllr Samuel (and carried by a Unanimous vote).

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council:-

- 1) The five options set out in 5.2 of the presented agenda report (totalling £501,000), in order to produce an Amended Revenue Budget for 2020-21;
- 2) To note the future capacity of reserves set out in 5.8 and 5.9 of the presented agenda report which may have to be called upon to meet any future financial challenges and/or additional requirements;
- 3) To use £70,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve, to fund the Town Centre support initiative set out in Section 6 of the presented agenda report; and
- 4) To approve Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (as attached at Appendix 2 to the presented agenda report), to confirm that in accordance with the Government guidance, Town and Parish Councils are able to apply to the scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria (as Section 11 in the presented agenda report refers).

#### **\*HC 17 WRITE OFF REPORT FOR QUARTER FOUR 2019/20**

The Lead Member for Resources and Performance gave a report on the Council's write offs for quarter four and year end. Officers confirmed that the Council collection rate of 97.71% for 2019/20 was above the national average for Council Tax collection in year 2019/20 and would circulate figures for Quarter One 2020/21.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Edmonds and seconded by Cllr Mott.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. It be noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the S151 Officer has authorised the write-off of individual West Devon Borough Council debts totalling £71,500.75 as detailed in Tables 1 and 2 of the presented agenda report; and
2. That the write off of individual debts in excess of £5,000 (totalling £149,949.80) be approved as detailed in Table 3 of the presented agenda report.

## **HC 18**

### **EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM**

Members were presented with a report that requested raising the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to the maximum allowed by regulations. This increase was sought to encourage owners of long-term empty property to take action to bring these houses back into use.

Cllr Sellis moved the recommendations, which were seconded by Cllr Leech.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council:

- (a) An increase in the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium from the current 50% to the relevant maximums set out in the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018
- (b) That, from 1st April 2021 onwards, to increase the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to 100% for properties that have been empty for 2 years or more\*
- (c) That, from 1st April 2021 onwards, to increase the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to 200% for properties that have been empty for 5 years or more\*
- (d) That, from 1st April 2021 onwards to increase the Council Tax long-term empty property Premium to 300% for properties that have been empty for 10 years or more\*

(\* Any period not exceeding six weeks, where the property is not empty, shall be disregarded for the purposes of calculating the two, five or ten year empty period).

## **\*HC 19**

### **THREE WEEKLY WASTE UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report that updated on the trial of 1,000 households who had moved onto three weekly residual collections and enhanced recycling service. It was acknowledged that the figures had been skewed due to increased waste and recycling during the pandemic.

Cllr Mott proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Cllr Moody.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee:

1. Approves the continuation of the trial of three weekly refuse collections to around 1,000 households in the Borough until March 2021 to allow a full year of data to be analysed.
2. Receives an outcome report in March 2021 that will include an officer appraisal over whether or not the Committee should recommend to Council that a three weekly refuse collection should be implemented for all households in the Borough with a potential start date of Autumn 2021.
3. Notes the success of the enhanced recycling service.

**\*HC 20**

**COASTAL CONCORDAT**

The Lead Member for Environment introduced the Coastal Concordat report which was an agreement between the main regulatory bodies and coastal Local Planning Authorities which provides streamlined processes for applicants or users. It was noted that the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had encouraged all Local Authorities to sign up to this Concordat.

Cllr Mott proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Cllr Sellis

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee agrees to sign up to the Coastal Concordat with immediate effect

(The meeting terminated at 15:22 pm)

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Chairman

***(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 16 AND HC 18 WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2020, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2020 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).***

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Report to: **Council**

Date: **22 September 2020**

Title: **Amended Budget 2020/21**

Portfolio Area: **Budget Setting Process – Cllr Neil Jory**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **22 September 2020**

Author: **Lisa Buckle** Role: **Corporate Director for Strategic Finance (S151 Officer)**

Contact: [lisa.buckle@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.buckle@swdevon.gov.uk)

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## **Recommendations:**

**It is RECOMMENDED to Council to:-**

- 1) approve the five options set out in 5.2 totalling £501,000, in order to produce an Amended Revenue Budget for 2020-21;**
- 2) note the future capacity of reserves set out in 5.8 and 5.9 which may have to be called upon to meet any future financial challenges and/or additional requirements;**
- 3) use £70,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve, to fund the Town Centre support initiative set out in Section 6; and**
- 4) approve Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (attached in Appendix 2), to confirm that in accordance with the Government guidance, Town and Parish Councils are able to apply to the scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria (as Section 11).**

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 Covid 19 has caused financial strain for all Councils up and down the country where Councils find themselves being caught in a 'perfect storm'. Councils have to manage both the increased costs of coping with Covid19 and supporting vulnerable people in the community and

the loss of key income streams such as car parking income and council tax income.

- 1.2 The factors affecting the Council's finances are issues affecting the whole Local Government sector. The Council is well-placed to meet the financial challenges arising from Covid19, due to its prudent financial management over previous years.
- 1.3 Due to the rapidly changing financial position, the Council is now undertaking monthly revenue budget monitoring reports (as opposed to quarterly). The latest revenue budget monitoring report for Month 3 (end of June) predicts a budget shortfall of £0.501 million for 2020/21. This equates to 6.9% of the overall budget set of £7.212 million. The options set out in 5.2 are being proposed, in order to produce an Amended Budget for 2020-21. The options were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 and were supported. The minute from the meeting is in Section 5.10 of this report. The options were also considered by the Hub Committee and were supported. The minute from the Hub Committee meeting is in Section 5.11 of this report.
- 1.4 This figure will change throughout the financial year as more information comes to light on items such as the collectability of outstanding debt and arrears and how income streams have been affected by the pandemic.
- 1.5 This position is after taking into account the £0.585 million Government grant already received for Covid-19 and the estimated £0.453 million Government funding that the Council is anticipating towards income losses on sales, fees and charges (the Government 'income guarantee scheme'). More detail on this is in section 3.10.
- 1.6 This forecast shortfall is based on a range of assumptions which have been made as to how much the income streams of the Council could be affected by Covid19. Projections could improve and it is difficult to predict as we don't know how quickly things will bounce back. We will be monitoring our finances on a monthly basis and as actual figures emerge, we will refine these figures and our assumptions.
- 1.7 Financial Stability is one of the themes within the Recovery and Renewal Plan which is a separate agenda item on this Committee agenda. The action plan, setting out the areas being progressed and the timescales within which this will take place, is set out in Appendix 1 of the Recovery Plan. Following consideration of the Renewal and Recovery Plan in the Summer, the Action Plan for the Financial Stability Theme was updated and agreed by the Financial Stability Review Group (FSRG) on 18 August 2020.
- 1.8 On 4th August, the Government issued new guidance on the Discretionary Business Grants scheme which stated that Town and

Parish Councils were eligible to apply to the scheme if they met the eligibility criteria. The deadline for applications was 28<sup>th</sup> August.

- 1.9 Two applications from Tavistock Town Council and Okehampton Town Council have been received. The maximum grant allocation is £25,000 and only one grant per Town or Parish Council can be awarded. It is proposed that the Council approve Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (set out in Appendix 2). Tranche 4 is specifically just for Town and Parish Councils. Approval of Tranche 4 would allow payments for eligible grant applications (two applications have been received) to be made to Town and Parish Councils by the end of September.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 On 18 February 2020, the Council approved the Revenue Budget for 2020-21 of £7.21 million. During March 2020, the Covid 19 pandemic started to affect the finances of Councils up and down the country. Income Losses in April, May and June totalled £474,000 from areas such as car parking income, planning income, rental income and the business rates pooling gain.
- 2.2 Prudent financial management in the past has meant that the Council was in a relatively healthy position financially before the pandemic hit. Since 2010, we have had to redesign our services to balance the books. We have done this by sharing a single workforce with South Hams District Council, generating an ongoing annual saving of £2.2 million for West Devon and by reducing our staffing levels by 30% through our Transformation Programme.

## **3 LATEST REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING POSITION**

- 3.1 The latest revenue budget monitoring report for Month 3 (end of June) predicts a budget shortfall of £0.501 million for 2020/21. This equates to 6.9% of the overall budget set of £7.212 million. In this report, assumptions have been made as to how much the income streams of the Council could be affected by Covid19. For example for car parking losses, the report assumes a 40% drop in income levels from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020. Projections could improve and it is difficult to predict as we don't know how quickly things will bounce back. We will be monitoring our finances on a monthly basis and as actual figures emerge, we will refine these figures and our assumptions.
- 3.2 The shortfall predicted will change throughout the financial year as more information comes to light on items such as the collectability of outstanding debt and arrears and how income streams have been affected by the pandemic.
- 3.3 The unprecedented nature and scale of the Covid19 pandemic has resulted in severe financial pressure on every Local Authority. Councils are still under a legal obligation to manage their finances to

ensure that they provide best value whilst not operating with an overall budget deficit.

- 3.4 Section 30(6) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires precepting authorities to set a balanced budget on an annual basis. A Council's budget must be "balanced", meaning that Councils must ensure that their planned spending can be met by taxation, grants and other income raised in the year, or by the use of their reserves.
- 3.5 Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council's Chief Finance Officer (known as the S151 Officer), to report to Full Council on the robustness of the Council's budget and the overall adequacy of its reserves.
- 3.6 Balancing the Council's Budget has become more challenging over the years as the demand for services and the reduction in government grant funding via the austerity programme has reduced the financial flexibility of Councils.
- 3.7 Each month, Councils complete a national return that informs the Government of how much COVID-19 is affecting the finances of Councils. The point has been made that these income losses have had a much bigger impact (in proportion to Net Budgets) on District Councils, than they have on County Councils and Unitaries.
- 3.8 A lobbying letter from South West Councils was sent to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government). This letter set out that the latest Government returns to MHCLG showed a financial challenge to South West Councils of over £1 billion across the region.
- 3.9 The Society of District Council Treasurers (SDCT) has engaged Local Government Futures (who are specialists in the field of Local Government Finance), to put together evidence to show the losses experienced by District Councils. This will then be used for the purpose of lobbying the Government for further funding for District Councils. In a letter from the Chairman of the District Councils' Network to the Chancellor, the financial needs of District Councils were set out, as well as stating that no part of the public sector is better placed than District Councils to catalyse and lead the recovery and that we will rise to the challenge.
- 3.10 ***On 2<sup>nd</sup> July, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP announced a new comprehensive package of support for Councils, to address spending pressures and losses in income streams. There were three central pillars of support announced:-***
  - A new scheme to compensate Councils for losses of income, though not in their entirety (an 'income guarantee' scheme). Councils have to meet the first 5% of losses of all budgeted sales, fees and charges and only some categories of income are allowable under the scheme. For the categories allowed,

once the 5% is deducted, the Government will reimburse 75pence in every £1.

- An extra £500million to cover extra COVID19 expenditure costs (the Borough Council's allocation of this funding has been announced at £89,686)
- To allow council tax and business rate losses in income to be repaid over the next 3 years of budget cycles, instead of just the next one year

3.11 We are very pleased that our lobbying has been successful but there is still further work to do on this. The main element of the announcement is that the Government will compensate Councils for their income losses above the first 5% of their budgeted income from sales, fees and charges. Income losses above the first 5% will be compensated by the Government paying for 75 pence in every pound of the losses thereafter. This is only the income losses from sales, fees and charges and excludes any rental income and investment income.

3.12 This has been estimated at £453,000 for the Council based on the income shortfalls to date. Detailed guidance from the Government is awaited on this. The Government announcement is below:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/comprehensive-new-funding-package-for-councils-to-help-address-coronavirus-pressures-and-cover-lost-income-during-the-pandemic>

3.13 On 19 March 2020, £1.6bn emergency funding was announced to help local authorities respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 18 April 2020, a further £1.6bn funding for local authorities was announced. On 2 July 2020, a further £500m funding for local authorities was announced as part of a new funding package for councils to address coronavirus pressures. West Devon Borough Council has received £674,444 from this £3.7bn of funding (being £585,000 from the first two tranches and £89,686 from the 3<sup>rd</sup> tranche).

3.14 It is recognised that Town and Parish Councils have also similarly had their finances adversely affected by the pandemic. The Council is lobbying alongside NALC (National Association of Local Councils) for a separate financial package of support for Town and Parish Councils.

#### **4 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)**

4.1 Whilst looking to set an Amended Budget for 2020-21, the longer term position for the medium term will be borne in mind. The last Medium Term Financial Strategy in February 2020 showed an anticipated Budget Gap for 2021/22 of £0.4million. The aggregated Budget Gap by 2024/25 was £1.6 million.

4.2 The key variables will be items such as New Homes Bonus, negative RSG, business rates and council tax collection rates and previous income assumptions around the leisure contract. In the next MTFS (being presented in October), various scenarios and modelling

around these key variables will be shown and we are pressing the Government for some early announcements on things like negative RSG and NHB (or its replacement) to inform our MTFS which we are currently modelling.

- 4.3 It should be noted that the financial landscape for Councils is ever-changing and there is still a great deal of uncertainty that Councils are working with in planning their finances for the longer term, in particular the items listed in 4.2
- 4.4 Negative RSG provides a 'cliff-edge' for many Councils and it would be an untenable position to introduce this in 2021-22, when there is a need to provide stability for Councils in the current financial climate. It is accepted that this would cost the Government over £150million but it would also benefit over 160 Councils. (In 2019-20 negative RSG totalled £152.9m and affected 168 Councils).
- 4.5 Sparsely populated rural Councils also need the certainty that Rural Services Delivery Grant will be continued for 2021-22, at least at its present value of £81 million in total.

## **5 Options to address the Budget Shortfall in 2020-21**

- 5.1 A Member Budget Workshop took place on 25<sup>th</sup> August, to explore all options with Members on their preferred approach to addressing the Budget Shortfall identified for 2020-21 of £0.5million. Nineteen responses were received from Members on the SurveyMonkey tool used to capture Members' views on the options.
- 5.2 Each of the below options were supported by the substantial majority of Members who expressed a view:

<b>COVID impact on the Revenue Budget</b>		<b>£</b>
<i>Budget shortfall identified for 2020-21 from the Month 3 Revenue Budget Monitoring report to the Hub Committee on 28 July 2020</i>		<b>501,000</b>
<b>Options to address the budget shortfall</b>		<b>£</b>
As per 5.3	Use the 3 <sup>rd</sup> tranche of COVID funding received from the Government (WDBC share £89,686)	89,000
As per 5.4	Use the New Burdens Government grant funding received for the administration of the Business Rates Grants	130,000
As per 5.5	Utilise the 2019-20 Statement of Accounts underspend	133,000
As per 5.6	Allocate the uncommitted New Homes Bonus from 2020-21 to further fund the Revenue Base Budget	69,000
As per 5.7	Reduce the capital budget for the remedial works to the Tavistock Viaduct from £100,000 to £20,000 (This capital budget	80,000

	was being funded by NHB which is revenue funding).	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>501,000</b>

- 5.3 The Council has received a 3<sup>rd</sup> tranche allocation of COVID Government funding totalling **£89,686**. The funding was the Council's allocation from the £500 million of un-ring fenced grant funding from the Government, to respond to spending pressures.
- 5.4 The Council has paid out over £16 million in Business Grants and the **£130,000** is a New Burdens funding grant (un-ringfenced) from the Government to compensate Councils for the cost of administering the Business Grants on behalf of the Government.
- 5.5 The Statement of Accounts for 2019-20 were presented to the Audit Committee in July 2020 and these showed that the final outturn was an underspend against the budget for 2019-20 of **£133,000**. This underspend on last year's budget could be used to finance part of the budget shortfall in 2020-21.
- 5.6 The report to Council on 18th February 2020 setting out the Revenue Budget Proposals for 2020-21, stated that the Council's New Homes Bonus allocation for 2020-21 was £347,000 and recommended that £228,000 of this was used to fund the Revenue Base Budget for 2020-21 and £50,000 was used to fund the 2020-21 Capital Programme for affordable housing. This left an amount of **£69,000** currently unallocated. This would increase the amount of NHB used to fund the revenue base budget in 2020- 21 to £297,000.
- 5.7 Officers have reviewed the Capital Programme to identify projects that could be reduced in scope or deferred. Further professional advice was sought on the level of maintenance work required to the Tavistock Viaduct. The outcome is that the capital budget can be limited to further vegetation clearance and some drainage improvements and the budget is able to be similarly reduced to £20,000 (a reduction of **£80,000**). This capital budget was being funded by New Homes Bonus funding, which is a revenue source of funding.
- 5.8 The sixth option that was supported in the priority ranking was to use the uncommitted balance of £116,000 from the Budget Surplus Contingency Earmarked Reserve. This Earmarked Reserve has a balance of £196,000, with commitments relating to the Capital Programme (£50,000), future IT procurement (£18,000) and community housing staffing (£12,000), leaving an uncommitted balance of £116,000. This reserve was originally created in 2016/17 when the Transformation Programme (T18) yielded a surplus, which was built into the base budget in future years. Although this amount is not needed to fund the Amended Budget at this point in time, it does provide an element of 'headroom' for the future if further funding should be required. It is acknowledged that the budget

shortfall will be carefully monitored and will continually change as we move through the financial year.

5.9 The next two options that were supported in the priority ranking were to reduce Unearmarked Reserves and/or to make use of a portion of the unallocated funding in the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve. Any decision that Members subsequently take at Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> September in relation to additional funding for leisure, please see section 7 below, would potentially require a call on these further options. All such decisions would require difficult choices to be made.

5.10 On 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Amended Budget for 2020-21. Minute O & S 18 on the Amended Budget 2020/21 is as below:-

**O&S 18 AMENDED BUDGET 2020/21**

A report was considered that sought to recommend to the Hub Committee five options (as set out below) in order to produce an Amended Revenue Budget for 2020-21:

- To use the 3<sup>rd</sup> tranche of COVID-19 funding that had been received from Central Government (£89,000);
- To use the New Burdens Government Grant funding received for the administration of the Business Rates Grants (£130,000);
- To utilise the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts underspend (£133,000);
- To allocate the uncommitted New Homes Bonus from 2020/21 to further fund the Revenue Base Budget (£69,000); and
- To reduce the Capital Budget for the remedial works to the Tavistock Viaduct from £100,000 to £20,000 (£80,000).

In discussion, particular reference was made to:-

(a) the effectiveness of the recent Member Budget Setting Workshop. A number of Members thanked officers for arranging the recent Workshop and felt that it had been an excellent session;

(b) the remedial works to the Tavistock Viaduct. When questioned, the Section 151 Officer confirmed that, following a Condition Survey being undertaken on the Viaduct, the initially proposed extensive repair works would not now be required during 2020/21 and the capital budget can be limited to further vegetation clearance and some drainage improvements

(c) the Town Centre support initiative. With regard to the initiative, the meeting acknowledged that there was a need to



consult with all of the town councils (including Chagford) that were located within the Borough.

It was then:

**RECOMMENDED**

That the Committee **RECOMMEND** that the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

1. the five options totalling £501,000 (as summarised in the detailed minutes above) be approved in order to produce an Amended Revenue Budget for 2020-21;
2. it be noted that the future capacity of Reserves (as set out in Sections 5.8 and 5.9 of the presented agenda report) may have to be called upon to meet any future financial challenges and/or additional requirements; and
3. £70,000 be used from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve to fund the Town Centre Support Initiative that is set out in Section 6 of the presented agenda report.

5.11 On 15th September 2020, the Hub Committee considered a report on the Amended Budget for 2020-21.

Minute HC07 on the Amended Budget 2020/21 is as below:-

**HC 07      AMENDED DRAFT BUDGET 2020/21**

Members were presented with a report that outlined the amended draft budget for 2020/21. It was noted that discussions at the workshop and online had been fulsome.

The Leader moved to recommendations which were seconded by Cllr Samuel.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Hub Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council:-

- 1) The five options set out in 5.2 totalling £501,000, in order to produce an Amended Revenue Budget for 2020-21
- 2) To note the future capacity of reserves set out in 5.8 and 5.9 which may have to be called upon to meet any future financial challenges and/or additional requirements
- 3) To use £70,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve, to fund the Town Centre support initiative set out in Section 6.
- 4) To approve Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (attached in Appendix 2), to confirm that in accordance with the Government guidance, Town and Parish Councils are

able to apply to the scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria (as Section 11).

The Hub Committee recommendation was carried by a unanimous vote.

5.12 A national pay award has just been reached which equates to a 2.75% increase from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The Council had budgeted for 2% within its budget and therefore the extra 0.75% would cost an extra £33,750. This will be shown within the next revenue budget monitoring report for 2020/21 and will be reflected within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and incorporated within the budget setting process for 2021/22. This will form part of the year end outturn reported in the Council's Accounts for 2020-21.

## **6. TOWN CENTRE SUPPORT INITIATIVE**

6.1 Working in partnership with the Borough's Town Councils, Chambers of Commerce and Business Improvement District (BID), West Devon Borough Council is developing a support package for the Town Centres, with an additional £70,000 of funding.

6.2 This money is being provided on top of £20,000 of funding already made available by the Borough Council, with the aim of supporting and enabling the great work the Town Councils and BID are doing to get their town centres back on their feet.

6.3 To help boost the local economy, the Borough Councils is looking at a number of proposals to support the local economy.

6.4 These areas include:

- A Town Centre Boost Grant
- Business training, advice and support
- Marketing campaigns for the area
- Local events
- Amending some car park and toilet provision to encourage shoppers and visitors to shop on our high streets

6.5 It is recommended that the £70,000 additional funding is funded from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve. The £70,000 does not increase the £501,000 budget shortfall which has been addressed above.

## **7. Leisure provision**

7.1 Leisure is one of the hardest hit sectors of industry from the lockdown restrictions of the pandemic. Government mandated the closure of leisure centres in March 2020 and they had to remain closed until the announcement of an opening date of 25<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

7.2 The current Government guidance now allows Leisure Centres to reopen with restrictions in place which limit the capacity of the

facilities and key guidelines around operating practices to ensure social distancing, enhancing cleaning regimes and changes in ventilation of facilities.

- 7.3 The Covid19 pandemic and a lack of central Government support have created very challenging conditions for Fusion. At a Special Council meeting on 29 July 2020, Council agreed to provide interim financial support of £97,000 to Fusion to secure positive health and wellbeing outcomes in the Borough, which were the re-opening of the Okehampton Leisure Centre (both wet and dryside) in August and the mothballing costs for the Tavistock Leisure Centre. The cost of mothballing both centres in April, May and June has also been funded by the Council at a cost of £15.3K per month. An amount of £45,900 was approved by Council to be funded from the Leisure Services Earmarked Reserve. Therefore financial support to date for Fusion has totalled £142,900.
- 7.4 At the 22<sup>nd</sup> September Council meeting, the Council will be taking a strategic decision on leisure provision for the months of October 2020 onwards, alongside the decision on the Amended Budget 2020-21 Proposals set out in this report.
- 7.5 The costs of further interim support to Fusion for the months of October 2020 to March 2021 will be set out within the 22<sup>nd</sup> September Council report and these costs are not included within the £501,000 budget shortfall identified within the recent revenue budget monitoring report and would be in addition to this. Options as to how any further support to Fusion could be financed will be set out within this Council report.
- 7.6 The Council is continuing to lobby alongside South West Councils and through the Local Government Association for a specific package of Government support for the provision of leisure facilities. The Department for Culture and Media has also put a specific request for funding to the Treasury and there may be future Government support targeted at the leisure sector but we await announcements on this.
- 7.7 Members will be aware from the previous report that decisions about the operation of the Borough's leisure centres from October 2020 to March 2021 include a range of potential additional costs from £92,000 to £292,000. These decisions will be a matter for Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.

## **8 The Collection Fund - Council Tax and Business Rates Income**

- 8.1 The Collection Fund holds all payments in and out relating to Council Tax and Business Rates. As such any losses incurred will be suffered by the Collection Fund in the year and then distributed to the Council and Precepting Authorities in future years. A large part of the reductions in income will affect the

Council's financial position in 2021/22 onwards, although it does affect the cashflow position of the Council in 2020/21.

- 8.2 **Council Tax: The net collectable debt for Council Tax is £43m for 2020/21.** By June 2020, WDBC collected 28.4% of the yearly total (compares against 29.06% in 2019/20) – the 0.66% drop equates to £282,000 (WDBC share £33,800). This is how much council tax income is down by in June 2020, compared against June 2019. Collection Fund losses for Council Tax could total £1.5m for the full year 2020-21 (WDBC share £180,000).  
(The collection rate was 97.71% for Council Tax in 2019-20 – the national average was 96.8%)
- 8.3 **Business Rates: The net collectable debt for Business Rates is £4.86 million for 2020/21.** (Prior to the pandemic, this was predicted to be £10.6million and the additional NNDR reliefs for the total value of the expanded retail discount and nursery discount for 2020-21 total £6.087million).
- 8.4 By June 2020, WDBC has collected over 34% of the yearly total (compared to 31% in 2019/20). The higher collection rate is due to the impacts of the reliefs being given for retail, hospitality and leisure and timing differences of some larger payments. Business rates losses could total between £0.3million to £0.5 million and the Council's share would be 40%. No pooling gain for Business Rates has been assumed for 2020/21.  
(The collection rate was 97.62% for NNDR in 2019-20 – the national average was 98%)
- 8.5 Council Tax and Business Rates form a large share of the funding for the Council's budget and therefore these income streams are funding the essential services being delivered.
- 8.6 In the next Spending Review the Government will also determine what support Councils will need, to help them meet the pressures of income losses from council tax and business rates. The Government has said that they are bringing in changes to allow Councils to spread their Collection Fund losses (for losses in Council Tax and Business Rates income) over the next three years instead of over the next one year. So this will allow council tax and business rate losses in income, to be repaid over the next 3 years of budget cycles, instead of just the next one year. The Government will also agree an apportionment of irrecoverable council tax and business rate losses, between central and local Government for 2020 to 2021. More details are awaited on this from the Spending Review, to be able to understand the detail of how Councils will be supported by this.
- 9. Review of Earmarked Reserves and General Fund Reserves**
- 9.1 As part of the Budget Workshop on 25<sup>th</sup> August, the Council also undertook a review of its Earmarked Reserves through reviewing the commitments against the Earmarked Reserves, its unallocated

balance and the contributions to/from Earmarked Reserves for 2020/21 also.

- 9.2 A schedule of Earmarked Reserves is attached at Appendix 1, which shows Earmarked Reserves have a balance of £4.984 million at 31.3.2020. Reserve levels will be kept under constant review.
- 9.3 The Council's level of Unearmarked Reserves currently stands at £1.1 million. As part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Members have set a minimum balance for Unearmarked Reserves of £900,000, based on a risk assessment basis.
- 9.4 Legislation does not prescribe how much the minimum level of reserves should be. The Section 151 officer is tasked with recommending the minimum level of reserves required as part of the budget setting process having regard to elements of risk in the Council's finances. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the S151 officer to report on the adequacy of the Council's financial resources on an annual basis.
- 9.5 As part of the Members' Budget Workshop, an option was discussed regarding whether Members would support using up to £200,000 of Unearmarked Reserves to contribute to the 2020/21 budget shortfall and then consider a plan to replenish these funds in future years. This was supported to an extent, in that some Members said if Unearmarked Reserves are reduced, they would support reducing them at a much lower level such as £50,000 to £100,000.

## **10. Spending Review and Business Rates Retention**

- 10.1 The Government has also confirmed that the Review of Relative Needs and Resource and 75% business rates retention will no longer be implemented in 2021-22. This was to enable Councils to focus on meeting the immediate public health challenge posed by the pandemic.
- 10.2 The Chancellor has confirmed that the 2020 Spending Review will be finalised this Autumn and will cover the years 2021/22 to 2023/24.
- 10.3 Auditing regulations for the Council's accounts has also been changed. There have been amendments to the statutory audit deadlines for 2019/20 for all Local Authorities, meaning that the deadline for final, audited accounts has been extended to 30 November 2020.

## **11. Discretionary Business Grants Policy**

- 11.1 On 4th August, the Government issued new guidance on the Discretionary Business Grants scheme which stated that Town and Parish Councils were eligible to apply to the scheme if they met the eligibility criteria. The deadline for applications was 28<sup>th</sup> August. Two

applications from Tavistock Town Council and Okehampton Town Council have been received.

- 11.2 It is proposed that the Council approve Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (set out in Appendix 2). Tranche 4 is specifically just for Town and Parish Councils. Approval of Tranche 4 would allow payments for eligible grant applications (two applications have been received) to be made to Town and Parish Councils by the end of September.
- 11.3 The maximum grant allocation is £25,000 and only one grant per Town or Parish Council can be awarded. The eligibility criteria are set out in Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (Appendix 2).
- 11.4 So far the Council has paid £635,500 to 160 businesses under the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (Tranches 1 to 3). The Council's Government grant allocation (budget) is £870,500. Final payments will be made by the end of September, in accordance with the Government guidance.
- 11.5 The Discretionary Business Grants Policy was developed in response to an announcement made by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 which set out the circumstances whereby a grant payment may be made by the Council to a business who has not previously qualified for a direct business grant and is suffering a significant fall in income due to the COVID19 crisis.

## **12. Options available and consideration of risk**

- 12.1 The financial forecasts are based on a number of assumptions including the level of income losses and support from the Government. In addition there are a number of uncertainties that could affect the financial position either now or in the future. These include whether there is a second wave and additional restrictions imposed.

## **13. Proposed Way Forward**

- 13.1 Members are recommended to approve the options outlined in Section 5.2 for balancing the Council's Amended Budget for 2020-21.

## 14. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Local Government Finance Act 1992 places a legal requirement on Council to approve not only the budget but also any changes to the budget proposed during the year. Council has a legal duty to ensure that the budget is balanced and that any changes to the budget are fully funded.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>The budget monitoring report identifies an overall <b>predicted shortfall of £0.501 million</b> which is 6.9% of the overall budget set for 2020/21 of £7.212 million, due to the current pressures on the Council's income targets due to the Covid 19 situation and extra expenditure incurred.</p> <p>Following a Members' Budget Workshop on options for setting an Amended Budget for 2020-21, it is proposed to Council to approve the options set out in 5.2 totalling £501,000, in order to produce an Amended Revenue Budget for 2020-21,</p> <p>It is also proposed as part of this report, to use £70,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve, to fund the Town Centre support initiative set out in Section 6.</p> <p>It is also proposed to approve Tranche 4 of the Discretionary Business Grants Policy (attached in Appendix 2), to confirm that in accordance with the Government guidance, Town and Parish Councils are able to apply to the scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria. The maximum grant allocation is £25,000 and only one grant per Town or Parish Council can be awarded. The deadline for applications was 28<sup>th</sup> August. Further information is set out in Section 11.</p>
Risk	Y	See 12.1
Supporting Corporate Strategy		The budget monitoring process supports all six of the Corporate Strategy Themes of Council, Homes,

		Enterprise, Communities, Environment and Wellbeing.
Climate Change – Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		None directly arising from this report.
<i>Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications</i>		
Equality and Diversity		None directly arising from this report.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None directly arising from this report.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

### **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – Schedule of Earmarked Reserves

Appendix 2 – Discretionary Business Grant Scheme (Tranche 4)

#### **Background Papers:**

Hub Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 – Amended Budget 2020/21

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 – Amended Budget for 2020/21

Hub Committee – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020 - Month 3 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/2021

Special Council – 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 – Fusion Interim Support



West Devon Earmarked Reserve Balances (totalling £4,984,000)

APPENDIX 1

	31.3.2018	31.3.2019	31.3.2020	Annual Reserve Contribution originally budgeted for 20/21	Notes
	£000	£000	£000	£000	
16/17 Budget Surplus Contingency	434	375	196		This is the Budget Surplus from 2016/17 which was put into an Earmarked Reserve. Commitments in 2020/21 totalling £80k relate to the Capital Programme £50k, Future IT Procurement £18k and Community Housing Staffing £12k
Business Rates Retention Scheme	509	492	904		This relates to a timing issue on the accounting adjustments required for the localisation of business rates. This reserve also deals with any volatility in Business Rate income e.g. due to appeals. Proposal to use £70,000 to fund the Town Centre support initiative set out in Section 6 of the report.
Cannons Meadow	13	11	8		This reserve contains a commuted sum to be written down to revenue annually over 10 years (£2.7k per annum)
Car Parking Maintenance	386	417	464		The commitments relate to Brook Street Car Park, Council Owned Asset Investment & Development £20k (minute ref HC4) and Grounds Maintenance £30k (Hub 10/9/19)
CLG - Assets Community Value	8	0	0		Balance reallocated to ICT Development Reserve as part of the review of earmarked reserves by the Financial Stability Review Group in October 2018
Community Housing Fund	243	152	0		This reserve was fully utilised in 2019/20
Elections	24	24	0	20	This reserve was fully utilised in 2019/20 to fund the cost of District Elections. £20K a year is contributed to this reserve.
Environmental Health Initiatives	20	20	20		£2,000 has been committed in 2020/21
Financial Stability	0	267	454		This reserve was created in 2018/19 from the Business Rates Pilot funding. This funding was set aside to assist to smooth out future years' funding variations or reductions, in particular any changes from the Fair Funding Review.
Flood Works	15	15	15		Nil commitments
Grounds Maintenance	49	0	0		Balance reallocated to ICT Development Reserve as part of the review of earmarked reserves by the Financial Stability Review Group in October 2018
Habitats	10	8	3		An annual commitment of £2,500 relates to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre.
Homelessness	95	115	115		This reserve has been created following underspends on Homelessness Prevention Costs in previous years.
ICT Development	30	76	66	25	The commitments in 2020/21 totalling £75k mainly relate to the New IT Procurement, Hub Cttee Jan 20 Min Ref HC73 (£65k). £25K a year is contributed to this reserve.
Innovation Fund (Invest to Earn)	724	453	432		Commitments totalling £187k mainly relate to the upgrading of Hayedown Depot
Invest to Save	27	12	12		£7.5k is committed in 2020/21 for Council Owned Asset Investment and Development
Joint Local Plan	0	30	20		This is a new reserve for Joint Local Plan Funding, there are commitments to fund staffing costs.
JSG Future Options	11	5	5		Nil commitments
Landscape Maintenance	5	0	18		Balance reallocated to ICT Development Reserve as part of the review of earmarked reserves by the Financial Stability Review Group in October 2018
Leisure Services	231	231	204		The reserve is all fully committed. Commitments include Capital Programme Funding and Fusion leisure monthly support (for April, May and June) of £45,900 and Fusion leisure monthly support (for July, August and September) of £97,000.
Localism Support	5	5	14		This reserve includes an underspend of £9.4k from the Members Sustainable Communities Locality Fund in 2019/20. No commitments have been identified to date
Maintenance Fund	223	196	170		Maintenance Fund for all assets.
Maintenance, Management & Risk Mitigation	0	88	190		This is a new reserve set up to manage the ongoing maintenance costs of the Council's Commercial Property Portfolio. The contributions to the reserve equate to 10% of the rental income, this is anticipated to be a further £119k in 2020/21.
Millwood Homes Reserve	15	0	0		Balance reallocated to ICT Development Reserve as part of the review of earmarked reserves by the Financial Stability Review Group in October 2018
Neighbourhood Planning Grants	47	42	16		This reserve funds Neighbourhood Planning Specialists

New Burdens CLG	3	0	0		Balance reallocated to ICT Development Reserve as part of the review of earmarked reserves by the Financial Stability Review Group in October 2018
New Homes Bonus	225	291	401		£347k will be received in NHB grant in 2020/21. Commitments include a £228k contribution to the base revenue budget and funding of the Capital Programme
Outdoor Sports & Recreation	18	18	18		Nil commitments
Planning Enforcement	5	5	5		Nil commitments
Planning Policy & Major Developments	44	104	122	25	This reserve is for all planning matters and is also to meet appeal costs. £25K a year is contributed to this reserve.
Public Health	6	6	6		This reserve balance is committed to fund the cost of an Environmental Health Student (12 month post)
Revenue Grants	220	422	508	-32.5	This reserve comprises of government grants received for specific initiatives or new burdens and are held in the reserve for accounting purposes. The annual contribution of £32,500 from this reserve relates to the funding of three housing posts which were made permanent in the 2020/21 budget process and are funded from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.
S106 Monitoring	19	8	0		This reserve funds the cost of an officer to oversee the administration of S106 deposits and how they are spent. It was fully utilised in 2019/20.
Strategic Change	287	234	67		Commitments totalling £60,000 relate to £50,000 for the capital requirement of the Public Toilets pay on entry review (HC.19) and £10,000 for Kilworthy Park marketing.
Support Services Trading	8	8	8		Nil commitments
Town Teams & Economic Grant Initiatives	23	23	23		A commitment of £14k in 2020/21 mainly relates to the Reopening High Street Grants - COVID 19 (£10k)
Vehicles Replacement	0	0	396	50	This is a new reserve set up in 2019/20 to fund the Council's vehicle replacement programme for the waste fleet. This reserve is fully committed. £50K a year is contributed to this reserve.
Waste & Cleansing Options Review	28	163	104		A commitment of £14k in 2020/21 relates to three weekly collection trial costs (Hub 4 June 2019)
World Heritage Key Site	5	0	0		Balance reallocated to ICT Development Reserve as part of the review of earmarked reserves by the Financial Stability Review Group in October 2018
	<b>4,015</b>	<b>4,316</b>	<b>4,984</b>	<b>87.5</b>	TOTAL



**West Devon  
Borough  
Council**

# **West Devon Borough Council Discretionary Business Grant Scheme Tranche 4 2020/21**

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## 1.0 Purpose of the scheme

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to determine eligibility for a payment under the Council's Discretionary Business Grants Scheme.
- 1.2 The new Discretionary Business Grant Scheme has been developed in response to an announcement made by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy made on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 which sets out circumstances whereby a grant payment **may** be made by the Council to a business who has not previously qualified for a direct business grant and is suffering a significant fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis.
- 1.3 This document sets out the criteria for the final tranche (Tranche 4) of the scheme. This final tranche has been developed in response to a Government announcement on 4<sup>th</sup> August from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) which stated that Town and Parish councils are also eligible for Discretionary Grant Funds if they meet all the scheme criteria.
- 1.4 This scheme is in addition to the previous policy which covered tranches 1, 2 and 3 and which applied more widely to both national and locally set priority businesses.

## 2.0 Funding

- 2.1 Central Government has provided the Council with a sum of £870,500 which represented 5% of the projected allocation for the Direct Business Grants. The funding level is finite and therefore the Council, although keen to ensure that grants are given to the maximum number of businesses, is conscious that its expenditure cannot exceed that amount.
- 2.2 The Council will limit the total awards to the level of funding available from Central Government.

## 3.0 Eligibility criteria for Tranche 4 only.

- 3.1 Paragraph 3.2 outlines the criteria that will need to be met in respect of **all** Tranche 4 applications. Any business failing to meet the criteria or failing to provide the Council with sufficient information to determine whether they meet the criteria, will not be awarded a Discretionary Business Grant.
- 3.2 Assistance *may* be given to businesses that meet the following criteria:
  - Businesses that have been provided by Town Council and Parish Councils (as defined by the Local Government Finance Act 1988);
  - Businesses with relatively high ongoing fixed property-related costs;
  - Businesses which can demonstrate that they have suffered a fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis; and
  - Businesses must have been trading on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

3.3 In addition, businesses which are **eligible** for any of the following are **ineligible for any Discretionary Business Grant**:

- Small Business Grant Fund;
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant;
- The Fisheries Response Fund;
- Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme (DSSS);
- The Zoos Support Fund;
- The Dairy Hardship Fund;

## 4.0 Definitions - Eligibility Criteria (Tranche 4 only)

4.1 For the sake of clarity the following definitions are provided in respect of the criteria set out in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3:

- **Businesses that have been provided by Town Councils as defined by the Local Government Act 1972**
  - This current tranche, (Tranche 4) has been designed for all businesses which are the responsibility and run by either a Town or Parish Council as defined within Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972;
  - Grants will only be paid in respect of premises which are occupied **not** unoccupied.
- **Businesses must have relatively high ongoing fixed premises related costs** – for the purpose of this scheme, the Council determines fixed premises-related costs to be;
  - Payments of mortgage, lease, rent or licence for business premises or mooring charges and fees;
  - The payments must represent a high proportion of expenses in relation to the overall income of the business; and
  - The payments are unavoidable and are ongoing.
- **Businesses must demonstrate that they have suffered a fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis** – the Council has determined that applicants certify that there has been a fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis and not a general failure of business;
- **Businesses must be trading on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020** – the Council will require the business to certify that the it was trading on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and was not dormant, subject to a winding up order, in administration or subject to striking off;

- **Eligible to a grant under the Small Business Grant Scheme or the Retail Hospitality or Leisure Scheme<sup>1</sup>** – where the business is either eligible to receive or has received a grant under either of the two schemes administered by the Council, no Discretionary Business Grant shall be awarded;
- **Eligible to assistance under the Fisheries Response Fund** – as administered by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and funded by HM Treasury and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Where the business or person is eligible to assistance under this fund, no Discretionary Business Grant shall be awarded;
- **Eligible to assistance under the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme (DSSS)** as administered by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and funded by HM Treasury and the Maritime and Fisheries Fund. Where the business or person is eligible to assistance under this fund, no Discretionary Business Grant shall be awarded;
- **Eligible to assistance under the Zoos Support Fund** as administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Where the business or person is eligible to assistance under this fund, no Discretionary Business Grant shall be awarded;
- **Eligible to assistance under the Dairy Hardship Fund** as administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Where the business or person is eligible to assistance under this fund, no Discretionary Business Grant shall be awarded;

## 5.0 How will grants be provided to businesses?

- 5.1 The Council is fully aware of the importance of grants to assist businesses and support the local community and economy.
- 5.2 In all cases, a simple application form **is** required, and this can be completed on-line at the Council's website:  
<https://westdevon.gov.uk/discretionarygrants>  
 Supplementary information may be required.
- 5.3 An application for a Discretionary Business Grant is deemed to have been made when a duly completed application form is received via the Council's online procedure.

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<sup>1</sup> **Eligibility Criteria for either the Small Business Grant or Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant** as determined by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and administered by the Council;

## **6.0 How much grant will be payable**

- 6.1 Central Government has determined that there shall be a 'cap' on grants of £25,000 per business and that the next level of grant shall be £10,000. However, the Council under Central Government guidance, has the following discretion:
- (a) Whether to award grants at the £25,000 or £10,000 level; and
  - (b) To determine whether grants of less than £10,000 should be awarded.
- 6.2 Only **one** Discretionary Business Grant will be awarded per Town Council or Parish Council and the Council will determine the amount of the grant awarded for each on a case by case basis taking into account the following factors:
- the fall in business income due to the COVID-19 crisis;
  - the amount of fixed on-going premises costs; and
  - the number of employees.
- 6.3 In deciding the level of grant, the Council will look at all the businesses affected which are run by individual Town or Parish Councils and will consider the cumulative effect of the crisis.

## **7.0 Limitation of funds and applications**

- 7.1 All monies paid through the Discretionary Business Grant scheme will be funded by Central Government and paid to the Council under S31 of the Local Government Act 2003. However, as mentioned in paragraph 2, the funds are limited and, as such, the Council is not able to award a grant where funds are no longer available.
- 7.2 All applications must be made online by midnight 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020 in line with Central Government guidelines. No applications will be accepted after this date.
- 7.3 Claims are available on the Council's website as shown in paragraph 5.2. All claims will be made online and this will also include the provision of such evidence as required by the Council.
- 7.4 As there is potentially insufficient funds available for all grant applicants, not all applicants will be successful, and some businesses will be left disappointed.

## **8.0 EU State Aid requirements**

- 8.1 Any Discretionary Business Grant is given as aid under the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak published on 19 March 2020. This means that businesses receiving support under these provisions can receive up to €800,000 in aid over three years (being the current and the previous two years).



- 8.2 Any grant awarded is required to comply with the EU law on State Aid.<sup>2</sup> This will involve the applicant declaring to the Council if they have received any other de minimis State aid or aid provided under the EU Commission Covid-19 Temporary Framework.
- 8.3 If the applicant has not received any other de minimis State aid, they are not required to make that declaration to the Council or to complete any declaration statement.

## **9.0 Scheme of delegation**

- 9.1 The policy has been approved under Part 3(a) of the Council Constitution: Scheme of Delegation. The Head of Paid Service used delegated authority in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.
- 9.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Corporate Director for Strategic Finance and the Director – Place and Enterprise are authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it meets the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Central Government guidance.

## **10.0 Notification of decisions**

- 10.1 The policy has been approved under Part 3(a) of the Council Constitution: Scheme of Delegation. The Head of Paid Service used delegated authority in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.
- 10.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Corporate Director for Strategic Finance and the Director – Place and Enterprise are authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it meets the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Central Government guidance.

## **11.0 Reviews of decisions**

- 11.1 All grants will be approved by the S151 Officer, Director of Place and Enterprise and Head of Customer Improvement. This decision will be final and there will be no appeal process.

## **12.0 Complaints**

- 12.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Councils website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

## **13.0 Other scheme conditions**

- 13.1 The Council has been informed by Treasury that all grants are taxable. Applicants should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position or liability.

## **14.0 Managing the risk of fraud**

- 14.1 Neither the Council, nor the Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain grant money or failing to declare entitlement to any of the specified grants will face prosecution and any funding issued will be recovered from them.
- 14.2 Applicants should note that, where a grant is paid by the Council, details of each individual grant may be passed to Government.
- 14.3 The Council reserves the right to reclaim any grant paid in error.

## **15.0 Data Protection**

- 15.1 All information and data provided by businesses shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.
- 15.2 The Council will not make available lists of businesses that have applied or that have been successful for grant payment.

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Report to: **Council**

Date: **22 September 2020**

Title: **Fusion Support & Alternative Options**

Portfolio Area: **Health and Wellbeing / Finance**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Council decision at this meeting

Author: **Chris Brook** Role: **Director of Place and Enterprise**

**Lisa Buckle** **Director of Strategic Finance (S151 Officer)**

Contact: [Chris.Brook@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.Brook@swdevon.gov.uk)

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **That the Council:**

- 1. Agree to continue with the Fusion Contract as set out in section 3 - strategic options appraisal, as being the most appropriate means of supporting health and wellbeing objectives within the Borough.**
- 2. Subject to Recommendation 1 above being approved, provide further financial support to Fusion through to March 2021 of £92,000, to cover the minimum level of support to Fusion (this is the amount to mothball both leisure centres), to be funded from the Budget Surplus Contingency Earmarked Reserve**
- 3. Consideration be given to extending the minimum level of financial support so as to deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes, as follows:**
  - 3a. Keeping Parklands (Okehampton) open as is currently the case and continuing to mothball Meadowlands (Tavistock), at a cost of an extra £101,000 above the mothballing cost of £92,000 – a total of £193,000.**

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**3b. Opening Meadowlands (Tavistock) as well as Parklands. To have both Leisure Centres fully open would cost an extra £200,000 as well as the £92,000 – a total of £292,000.**

**Any extension of financial support from the minimum level is recommended to be funded from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve.**

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### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. The Covid-19 pandemic and a lack of central Government support have created very challenging conditions for all leisure providers.
- 1.2. This report sets out those challenges, considers the alternative management options for the Council and provides a series of options for Members to consider over the long term future for the Leisure Centre provision.
- 1.3. The analysis concludes that the preferred long term delivery solution is to support Fusion, having given consideration to the financial, legal and reputational risk and health and wellbeing benefits.
- 1.4. The report also considers the short term options available to the Council and their relative merits and concludes that the minimum position should be that of providing financial support to mothball leisure centres. It then goes on to suggest that the Council may wish to consider providing further support than that position, so as to be able to deliver health and wellbeing benefits in the area, subject to certain conditions.
- 1.5. It notes that improved communication between Fusion, its members and the Council should be a prerequisite of further financial support. It highlights the agreement reached on pricing structures, including a reduction in casual swim price from £8 to £6, concession price from £5.60 to £4.80 and all other casual activity prices remaining at pre-lockdown rates until April 2021 or earlier based upon normal price increase arrangements.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1. The background to the current leisure position is set out in the appendix and in the previous report to Council in July 2020.
- 2.2. The cost of mothballing both centres in April, May and June has been funded by the Council at a cost of £15.3k per month. The total of £45,900 was approved by Council (Minute Reference CM87) to be funded from the Leisure Services Earmarked Reserve.
- 2.3. The Council provided further support to Fusion for the reopening of Parklands Leisure Centre in Okehampton. The cost of this was £97,000 funded from the Leisure Earmarked Reserve (Minute reference CM5).
- 2.4. The interim financial support provided by the Council enabled some services to reopen and provided time for the Council to consider its strategic options for the longer term delivery of the health and wellbeing services in the Borough.
- 2.5. There are two issues for Council to consider. The first is a fundamental one, which is: What is the best delivery option for Health and Wellbeing in the Borough in the long term, which includes in-house delivery, alternative structures, suppliers as well as ceasing

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to deliver Health and Wellbeing at all. The risks and benefits of each of these options is set out in Section 3.

- 2.6. The second, is subject to the first. Should that outcome be to continue with the current provider, Fusion, to what extent should the Council make additional funds available, for what outcomes and on what terms. In doing so, the Council must consider the following; its own financial position, the value of delivering Health and Wellbeing to the Borough, the extent of delivery across the Borough, the Council's reputation and the legal requirements of the Contract. These issues are discussed in Section 4.

### **3. Strategic Options Appraisal for Health and Wellbeing Delivery**

- 3.1. In preparing this report, officers have undertaken the following:
- 3.1.1. Commissioned legal advice on the Contract.
  - 3.1.2. Engaged through Local Partnerships with all of Fusion's clients.
  - 3.1.3. Engaged direct with most of Fusion's clients.
  - 3.1.4. Appointed a consultant to advise on the current state of the market and alternative delivery options.
  - 3.1.5. Engaged with Fusion throughout the period culminating in this strategic report.
- 3.2. There are four options available to the Council for the delivery of Health and Wellbeing as follows:
- 3.2.1. Continue with services outsourced to the current provider (Fusion)
  - 3.2.2. Bring the delivery of leisure services back in House
  - 3.2.3. Outsourced to an alternative provider
  - 3.2.4. Not at all (cease to provide health and wellbeing services)

#### **Ending the current contract**

- 3.3. A pre-requisite of choosing an option 2, 3 or 4 above is that the 25 year contract between the Council and Fusion would need to end. This can happen one of three ways. The Council could trigger the contractual breakclause after April 2021 (serving at least 6 months' notice), the Council forfeit the contract or Fusion ends the contract (in this case, presumably by going in to administration).
- 3.4. Should the Council wish to end the contract with Fusion through either option set out above, it would face significant costs, as it would be obliged to pay Fusion:
- any amounts properly due and invoiced; and
  - the Profit Payment (which if terminated within the first 10 years of the Contract is Fusion's modelled loss of profit for the first ten years of the Contract); **less**

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- any amounts the Councils are entitled to set off.
- 3.5. These costs are set out in Appendix A, Table 1.1. and in the case of forfeiting the contract, could potentially be greater as the issue could be settled in court.
- 3.6. Should the contract end through default on the part of Fusion, then this issue ceases to exist, but the Council is then faced with the need to run or close its leisure centres, TUPED staff and redundancy costs.
- 3.7. With that in mind, the Council should consider the delivery mechanisms to do that, were that to be the case.

### **In house Delivery**

- 3.8. The option to run services in house, is very expensive when compared with any outsourced alternative for one primary reason, the buildings become liable for business rates. In this case, the business rates cost is £156K per year for both centres, and £3.3m over the remaining life of the contract (The current provider receives rate relief due to being a charity). It may be possible to set up a Council wholly owned company to mitigate this issue.
- 3.9. Running services in house also requires a skill set which the Council does not currently have and would take time to build up, so it would inevitably cause disruption. Once established, there are examples of in house operation that do get close to the market position in terms of efficiency. The Council ruled out in house operation of leisure services when it went through its procurement in 2015 and all the reasons set out in Appendix A - Section 3, as to why it did not make sense, including the cost and disruption, were as valid then as they are now.

### **Outsourced delivery**

- 3.10. Providing leisure services through an outsourced structure mitigates the issue of business rates, which makes the option considerably more attractive financially speaking. It also has the advantage of being an off the peg solution with minimal disruption, scale and efficiency, whilst recognising that it requires a lengthy procurement process to set up initially (C. 12 -18 months). Appendix A – Section 3 considers the benefits and risks of this option in more detail.

### **Ending health and wellbeing provision**

- 3.11. Ceasing to operate Health and Wellbeing (specifically leisure centres) has some considerable challenges for the Council and goes against its current adopted strategic priorities, however it must be recognised that the delivery of Health and Wellbeing is a discretionary service.
- 3.12. The first is that the Council has borrowed to invest in its leisure centres to modernise them and improve the quality of the experience, notably in Meadowlands. The Council has borrowed £1.5m over the remaining life of the contract. The borrowing has interest and principle repayments that the Council needs to meet. For example in 2020/21

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the annual repayments are £26,000 for interest repayments and £57,000 for the capital repayment (MRP – minimum revenue provision). The Council has budgeted to use the management fee from the contract to repay the borrowing. The borrowing has a fixed term interest rate of 1.95% and ends in 2040/41 (the contract end date). Of the borrowing £1.5m, an amount of £1.39m will remain outstanding at the end of March 2021.

- 3.13. Should the Council have no leisure centres and therefore no management fee for running them, it would have to rely on other sources of revenue to repay the debt.
- 3.14. Perhaps more fundamentally, there are obligations on the Council should it choose to close its leisure centres which would be very expensive – further information can be found in Appendix D.

### **Summary**

- 3.15. Whilst there is much more detail on these options set out in Appendix A – Section 3, the summary position is that the Council is best placed to work with its current leisure provider until such time as this is no longer an option for reasons outside of the Council's control.
- 3.16. In doing so, it will:
  - 3.16.1. Significantly reduce its financial exposure.
  - 3.16.2. Reduce disruption to Health and Wellbeing delivery, as every other option has a number of months of considerable disruption and a number of years of "bedding in".

## **4. Supporting Fusion – Issues for Consideration**

### **Legal**

- 4.1. Officers have taken legal advice on the impact of the Government's decision to close leisure centres (and now allow them to re-open but with certain new guidance and restrictions in place) has on the contract and therefore the Council.
- 4.2. The contract contains a change in law clause which has been triggered by the Government's actions and as such, it is a requirement under the contract for the Council to provide support during the forced closure period. The Council has provided this support.
- 4.3. Now that centres are allowed to re-open, the impact of the government's restrictions on Fusion's ability to operate the leisure centres is also a burden that falls to the Council. However, both parties are free to mitigate those costs by mothballing leisure centres.
- 4.4. Furthermore, it is a requirement of the Council prior to providing additional support above and beyond the cost of mothballing to



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ensure that Fusion are a going concern. This consideration is assessed through Fusion's business case, which is included in Appendix B.

### **Finance**

- 4.5. Councillors will have debated the current budget position and be well versed on the financial position of the Council. The latest revenue budget monitoring report for Month 3 (end of June) predicts a budget shortfall of £0.501 million for 2020/21. Members are considering options to set an Amended Budget for 2020/21 as part of this Council agenda. The Council is therefore able to take a balanced view on the affordability of supporting Fusion. It is the case that the Council could use its reserves to support Fusion as detailed in the report.
- 4.6. The Council would not want to be in a position of having to pay for services that can't be delivered in the event that Fusion go in to administration (even if leisure centres are mothballed) and therefore the Council must adopt an approach of "pay as you go" or more accurately payments made in arrears on a monthly basis. This builds in a layer of protection for the Council.
- 4.7. The Council would ideally wish to see its financial support paid back, in the form of a loan. This should apply to any costs over and above the cost of mothballing centres. This position has successfully been negotiated with Fusion by officers.
- 4.8. Financial support of above that of mothballing costs paid by the Council can be paid back through a surplus share clause in the contract. It should be noted that this therefore does not guarantee re-payment, but makes it possible.
- 4.9. Furthermore, the management fee owed by Fusion up to March 2021 has been agreed to be rolled up and re-paid in-line with the existing contractual re-payment profile (linear) – i.e. deferred. This creates a short term cash flow pressure. It is however a preferable position to waiving the management fee, which is the position a number of other Councils are in with respect to their leisure contracts.
- 4.10. In a letter from Alex Skinner (Local Government Finance Directorate of MHCLG) it was stated that if authorities are making additional payments to their leisure provider to a) ensure the wider sustainability of providers and/or b) to support the extra costs of providing leisure services in a Covid-19 compliant way, that these cost pressures would not be within the scope of the Government's support scheme.
- 4.11. In contrast, where leisure services are delivered in-house and a Council had budgeted to collect the income from the leisure centre through customer charges, such income would be within the scope of the Government's income guarantee scheme. The Government has acknowledged that the support Councils receive will depend on how an Authority's leisure services are delivered. The Council will be

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lobbying the Government on this inconsistency through the South West Councils network and the point will be made that our leisure services were outsourced in order to achieve value for money for residents.

- 4.12. In the event of government funding being directed to Fusion we have agreed they will repay any additional costs already incurred and proposed to be incurred to the end of the financial year.
- 4.13. In summary, the terms of support that have been discussed with Fusion are reasonable, when set in the context of the legal advice and the rest of the market. The quantum of that support is the issue in hand as set out in Section 5 – Centre re-opening options.

### **Actual Costs to Date**

- 4.14. As agreed by Council the support to date has been on an open book basis, with actual costs being paid, not forecast costs. Appendix C sets out actual costs up to and including August.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

- 4.15. It is not the case that the Council's leisure centres are the only services available in the area. However they are the biggest and most complete in the offer that they provide. This includes, swimming (casual, club and swim school), gym & personal training and group fitness classes.
- 4.16. One of the Council's adopted strategic priorities is Health and Wellbeing and it has a history of providing these services, which is why it has entered into a long term contract to do so. It should of course, only strive to continue to do so when it does not put the Council or its other services at risk.
- 4.17. The geographical spread of the Council's leisure centres is relevant when considering which if any centres the Council would like to keep open. Average travel times to centres are ~20mins in usual times, much longer than that and customers usually seek an alternative option if it is available. Of course, these are not usual times.
- 4.18. The capacity of certain important functions delivered through leisure centres is impacted by the number (if any) of centres open. Swim school should be seen as a good example of this.

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4.19. The swim school membership as of February 2020, prior to lock down is as follows, highlighting the number of children who learn to swim through Council run centres:

<b>Centre</b>	<b>Swim School Members</b>
Meadowlands Leisure Pool	384
Parklands Leisure Centre	269

<b>Total</b>	<b>653</b>
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4.20. We know from the number of swim school memberships that are frozen but able to be re-activated when swim school re-starts, that there is an approximate 70% interest in swim school at the current time.

4.21. Links between physical and mental health have long been proven. As we enter the autumn and winter, alternative exercise options outside may cease to become attractive to many.

4.22. There are a small but very important minority of people that rely on the Council's leisure services for specific exercise and health needs. These are some of our more vulnerable residents and whilst they are small in number they should be high in our priority.

4.23. Last year 154 GP referrals were received in Parklands and a new scheme was started in Meadowlands, although only about 15 had used the service up to Feb 2020. This service can only function if centres are open.

### **Reputation**

4.24. The Council has received a significant amount of contact from members of the public who wish to see leisure services re-opened fully and furthermore, the Council's reputation has been adversely impacted by poor communication and pricing strategy of Fusion.

4.25. The reputation of Fusion and the Council is central to ensuring the long term success of the leisure services, as Fusion's members will vote with their feet. Officers have been working hard to bring this to the attention of Fusion and to have it addressed. It must improve going forward as part any package of support.

4.26. The reputation of the Council would be enhanced through the reopening of the centres; supporting services in the Borough, health and wellbeing, jobs and leisure.

4.27. However, this should be put in context. The population of WD receiving frontline services from the Council is 55,000 (2018 figures). The number of visits to the leisure centres in total last year was 170,000. If we assume that each person who visits does so once a week on average, then this represents 3,270 individuals.

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4.28. It is right and proper that those who have a view on this Council decision should make those views known, and this has been seen to be the case. The Council's role is to consider them as part of the overall position, not in isolation.

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### **Employment**

- 4.29. It is known that Fusion are in the middle of a programme of redundancies following their need to re-structure delivery to meet the new levels of demand and introduce operational efficiencies.
- 4.30. That process is independent of the Council's decision on which centres to provide financial support to open. However, if the Council takes a decision not to provide financial support for re-opening for any centres, the staff at those centres will be put on notice of redundancy. Redundancy costs sit with Fusion whilst they continue to operate as a business.
- 4.31. The employment position is set out below. NB. These figures are estimates as the process is yet to be complete.

West Devon Staff Restructure Estimate			
Site	Employee Count*	Redundancy estimate no. of staff	Remaining Staff**
Devon Contract Management****	58	51	7
Meadowlands Leisure Centre	32	13	19
Parklands Leisure Centre	23	12	11
	<u>103</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>37</u>
<i>* pre-crisis number of employees</i>			
<i>** assumes site continues to operate</i>			
<i>**** includes casual work employees &amp; is across SH&amp;WD</i>			

- 4.32. Should the contract with Fusion end for any reason, redundancies costs could fall on the Council. These costs could be up to £100k.

### **Fusion's Other Clients**

- 4.33. The actions of all of Fusion's clients are intertwined and have a bearing on the long term viability of Fusion as a business. Whilst the Council must take its own decision on the level of support it feels is appropriate, it should also consider the position of Fusion's other Clients.
- 4.34. The following update has been provided by Fusion:
- 4.35. Remobilisation plans are agreed with 16 out of 18 local authorities. In 2 of the 16 cases the agreed plan is to end the contract. The remaining 2 mobilisation plans not yet agreed are expected to be finalised before the end of next week.
- 4.36. In the 16 cases where it is relevant the clients have signalled their support for Fusion's CBILS funding (Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme). The formal acknowledgement of this support will be documented in an exchange of letters before the end of this month.

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### **Fusion Current Business Viability**

- 4.37. Fusion have an approval in principle for a CBILS (Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme) loan. This is provided by NatWest and is 80% backed by government.
- 4.38. A final decision on this loan is due after the publication of this report and an update can be provided at the Council meeting.
- 4.39. The process of getting a CBILS loan is as robust as getting any corporate financing as whilst it is 80% backed by government, all of the burden of debt recovery (100%) sits with the bank. Furthermore, the bank's own money is at risk.
- 4.40. A summary of the business plan supporting the loan application for Fusion as an entire business is included in Appendix B.
- 4.41. Section 2 of Appendix A also sets out the current credit rating of the company.
- 4.42. Referring back to para 4.4 of this report, it can be concluded that, subject to the granting of the CBILS loan, Fusion are a going concern.

### **Communication Strategy**

- 4.43. This has been an area of concern for the Council and Fusion's members.
- 4.44. A much stronger join up of communications is needed between Fusion and the Council, through its Communications Team. This has been implemented as of w/c 14<sup>th</sup> September and it should be a condition precedent of any financial support that Fusion deliver a better standard of communications within the contract.

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### **Usage in August**

4.45. The interim support package that the Council had agreed for August and September has allowed limited re-opening of centres. The uptake of these services compared with the forecast uptake is of interest.

4.46. So as to give the widest possible market intel, both SH and WD info is included below.

Centre usage for August and 1<sup>st</sup> week September, 2-8<sup>th</sup>;

Activity:	Ivybridge – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug open	Quayside – 10 <sup>th</sup> Aug open	Parklands – 17 <sup>th</sup> Aug open	Totnes – 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept open
Group Exercise – classes	1706	896	506	163
Gym – health & fitness	1554	1257	518	180
Swimming - general	3596	n/a	853	157
Total	6856	2153	1877	500

4.47. The table below indicates how much spare capacity the centre has remaining:

Parklands			
Weekly Gym and Class Bookings	Capacity	Weekly Attendance	% of max occupancy
		2nd Sept - 8th Sept	
Gym	3024	147	4.86%
Classes	268	137	51.12%
Swimming	656	298	45.43%

4.48. Key points to highlight from usage:

- Group exercise classes are the most popular as these take place in the large sports halls with plenty of space for users.
- Swimming is the next most popular activity and this has included family swims to take place.
- Gym usage has seen lower take up levels, lower than anticipated.
- On memberships, those paying monthly, retention of members has been good with approximately 60% of members returning, which is above the UK Active projections of 40% for the sector.
- Swim school will start from the w/c 21<sup>st</sup> September.

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4.49. This usage reflects that the core offer and current management arrangements are as follows:

- Opening hours reduced to 8am-8pm during the week and 8am-4pm at the weekends. These hours to be reviewed to consider usage data.
- Re-configuration of public and operational areas to allow social distancing measures, safety of staff and customers.
- Initial activities on offer will include group exercise, gym and swimming. All sessions to be pre-booked and paid in advance and capacity to be determined by size and mix of the centre.
- Sports and Community Development, including health referrals, is currently being reviewed and staff will be brought back shortly.

### **Fusion pricing structure**

4.50. There have been a number of pricing issues (linked to the section above) that have caused concern to Fusion's members and the Council.

4.51. Most noticeably is the increase in casual swim charge to £8 from £4.50. Whilst this is an operational matter for Fusion under the contract to review its charging regime, and indeed may be preferable, so as to ensure it remains a viable entity able to deliver high quality services, it is hard to reconcile a price rise whilst also seeking public financial support.

4.52. This issue is somewhat complicated by the legal position placing an obligation on Fusion to minimise the level of financial support it requires from the Council, something which this action seeks to achieve.

4.53. Negotiations over this point have concluded that as part of the next phase of re-openings Fusion will revise casual pricing and it has been confirmed that:

- Swimming standard: Will be moved from £8 to £6
- Swimming concession: Will be moved from £5.60 to £4.80
- These prices will be reviewed in March 2021 or earlier subject to how the centres operate as per our ongoing discussions
- All other casual activity prices will remain at pre-lockdown rates until April 2021 or earlier based upon normal price increase arrangements
- All swimming club hire rates will remain the same but will be reviewed and increased in line with local SLA agreements in place with clubs. This is similar for dry side clubs as well.



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### **Other centres in the area**

4.54. The provision across Councils in Devon and Cornwall is highlighted below:

<b>Council</b>	<b>Operator</b>	<b>Service Status</b>
Teignbridge	In House	All 3 Centres open
Mid Devon	In House	All 3 Centre open
East Devon	Local Trust – Leisure East Devon	6 Centres open, 2 Centres remain closed
North Devon	Contractor – Parkwood Leisure	Both Centres have re-opened.
Exeter	Return In House	Centres currently closed, looking to re-open during end Sept and October, service to return in house from Contractor – Parkwood Leisure.
Torrige	Contractor – 1610 Leisure Trust	All 3 Centres remain closed.
Torbay	Contractor – Parkwood Leisure	Torbay Leisure Centre is now open wet and dry. Separate community pools at Brixham and Torquay to re-open during Sept.
Plymouth	Contractor – Everyone Active	Life Centre – to be closed until April 2021 due to urgent repair works. Other sites have re-opened including indoor pools and outdoor lidos.
Cornwall	GLL	Partial re-opening of centres. 5 centres still remain closed.

### **Other considerations**

4.55. Whilst it is hoped that Fusion remain a viable going concern into the future, we are not operating in a normal market and future government restrictions, consumer habits and Covid risks may well work against the leisure sector.

4.56. For this reason, officers will work on a contingency planning for Health and Wellbeing delivery in the event that Fusion should go into administration. This report sets out clear benefits for long term delivery through an outsourced Health and Wellbeing provision, so the focus of this work will be to look at ways of minimising disruption

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in the short term whilst a re-procurement is undertaken – all of which would be subject of a further Council decision.

- 4.57. IT must also be considered that a second lock down or Government mandate of the closure of leisure services may occur. Were that to be the case, the Council would revert back to paying mothball costs as set out in Section 5.
- 4.58. A further issue that must be considered by the Council is the long term impact of temporary closures on the customer numbers and therefore the contract viability and performance.
- 4.59. There is an opportunity to capitalise on market share by having centres open, for example from Plymouth Life Centre which is shut. Conversely, closures of centres until April 2021 will invariably push customers who choose to continue to use leisure services away to other providers and may not return.
- 4.60. This is quite hard to quantify, but is a very significant issue, given the business model of investing in the centres through our capital programme to promote growth in usage.
- 4.61. Having an active and engaged customer base is very important for the Council irrelevant of the delivery model it uses in the long term to offer Health and Wellbeing services.

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### **5. Centre Re-opening Options**

The costs of the options for each of the Leisure Centres, Tavistock and Okehampton are shown below.

<b>Meadowlands Leisure Centre, Tavistock</b>	<b>Total cost from 1.10.2020 to 31.3.2021 (6 month period)</b>
<b>OPTIONS for Tavistock</b>	
i) Cost of continuing to mothball the site for 6 months	£48,000
ii) Cost of re-opening both the wetside (the pool) and the dryside (the gym) for 6 months	£147,000
iii) Cost of re-opening only the dryside (the gym) for 6 months	£116,000

<b>Parklands Leisure Centre, Okehampton</b>	<b>Total cost from 1.10.2020 to 31.3.2021 (6 month period)</b>
<b>OPTIONS for Okehampton</b>	
i) Cost of mothballing the site for 6 months	£44,000
ii) Cost of continuing to have both the wetside (the pool) and the dryside (the gym) open for 6 months	£130,000
iii) Cost of having the dryside (the gym) only open for the next 6 months	£86,000

<b>Contract Management Cost</b>	<b>Total cost from 1.10.2020 to 31.3.2021 (6 month period)</b>
Both Leisure Centres are mothballed	Nil cost
One or both of the Centres are fully opened	£15,000

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<b>Summary of Options for both sites</b>	<b>Total cost from 1.10.2020 to 31.3.2021 (6 month period)</b>
<b>Option 1- (Minimum Level of Support)</b> Mothball both Leisure Centres for the next six months	£92,000
<b>Option 2 (Maintain the current position for another 6 months) -</b> Continue with the current position, being that the Okehampton Leisure Centre is fully open and the Tavistock Leisure Centre continues to be mothballed for the next six months	£193,000
<b>Option 3</b> – Continue with the Okehampton Leisure Centre being fully open and open just the dryside (the gym) facilities at the Tavistock Leisure Centre	£262,000
<b>Option 4</b> – Fully open both Leisure Centres (the pool and the gym) for the next six months	£292,000
<b>Option 5</b> – any combination of options for each Centre can be added together to give a total cost to WDBC	As detailed in the Tables above.

- 5.1. It is the recommendation from Officers that the minimum position that should be adopted from the options table above is to mothball the centres (the minimum level of support of £92,000), when considering the legal and contractual issues set out above.
- 5.2. To continue with the current position, being that the Okehampton Leisure Centre is fully open and the Tavistock Leisure Centre continues to be mothballed for the next six months, would cost an additional £101,000 on top of the minimum level of support (being £193,000 in total).
- 5.3. To open both sites fully (the pool and the gym) would cost an additional £200,000 on top of the minimum level of support (being £292,000 in total).
- 5.4. Fusion have not indicated that they would need any Council support (through extra funding) after March 2021.
- 5.5. Any financial support above and beyond the costs of mothballing are to be on an interest free loan basis, repaid over the life of the contract, triggered by the surplus share clause, which will be varied by a deed of variation under the contract. It will also be subject to strong communications performance.

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### **6. Proposed Way Forward**

- 6.1. It is proposed that the Council consider and approve the recommendation to support Fusion up until March 2021, as a minimum to mothball the centres. In doing this, the Council will be mitigating its financial risk, but accepting the risks of non-delivery of Health and Wellbeing as set out above.
- 6.2. The Council may wish to consider going beyond this and recommending a further package of support from the tables in Section 5, ranging from the status quo which does offer at least some Health and Wellbeing services across the area, to a full re-opening.
- 6.3. It is suggested that any further support package should be linked to improved joint communication between the Council and Fusion and a re-consideration of the pricing structure as set out in Section 4.
- 6.4. Whichever option Members decide to pursue would be based on the following principles
  - 6.4.1. Management fees due will be deferred and received from April 2021 onwards in an agreed payment schedule
  - 6.4.2. Actual costs only will be paid up to a capped limit, paid monthly in arrears and assessed on an open book approach
  - 6.4.3. The costs incurred by the Council would have the potential to be recovered as they are on the basis of a loan, recovered through an amended surplus share agreement in favour of the Council until costs have been recovered.
  - 6.4.4. Any government funding received (either by Fusion or the Council) will directly set off the costs incurred first
- 6.5. This approach would enable the Council to continue to deliver Health and Wellbeing services whilst putting in place a structure to seek to recover costs as the business returns to normal.

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**7. Implications**

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>A combination of powers enable the Council to provide the interim financial support that is proposed. Section 19 of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 allows a local authority to provide either indoor or outdoor recreational facilities as it thinks fit including the power to provide assistance of any kind. In conferring the power to provide leisure facilities on the Council, Parliament also conferred the power to contract with another person for their provision (see section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997). Subject to compliance with the rules on State-Aid, the provision of the interim financial support may be seen as something that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to the provision of the Council's recreational facilities (see section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972).</p> <p>The Appendices to this report are exempt from publication because it contains information about financial and business affairs of the Council and third parties as defined in Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The public interest test has been applied and it is considered that the public interest lies in not disclosing this report at this time because it contains financial and commercially sensitive information which could prejudice the third party if such information was disclosed at this time.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		<p>Financial support of £92,000 to Fusion to cover the cost of mothballing is the minimum recommended position, to be funded from the Budget Surplus Contingency Earmarked Reserve. This has an uncommitted balance of £116,000.</p> <p>Consideration be given to extending the minimum level of financial support so as to deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes, which may include keeping Parklands (Okehampton) open and opening Meadowlands (Tavistock) as well.</p>

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		<p>Any extension of financial support from the minimum level is recommended to be funded from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve. This reserve has an uncommitted balance of £400,000. There is also a proposal as part of the Amended Budget report for 2020/21 to use £70,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve to fund the Town Centre support initiative.</p> <p>(N.B to keep Parklands open and Meadowlands closed would cost an extra £101,000 aswell as the £92,000 – a total of £193,000)</p> <p>(To have both Leisure Centres fully open would cost an extra £200,000 aswell as the £92,000 – a total of £292,000)</p> <p>Fusion’s financial status and its business plan is included in Appendix B.</p>
Risk		See Section 4
Climate Change		No operational impact
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Health and wellbeing
Equality and Diversity		Whilst private sector facilities are available within the Borough, opportunities for equality and diversity are improved through the re-opening of public sector leisure centres.
Safeguarding		N/A
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		N/A
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		This package of financial support would see the best health and wellbeing outcomes.
Other implications		

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**Supporting Information**

Exempt Appendices:

Appendix A – Fusion Options Report

Appendix B – Fusion Business Plan

Appendix C – Actual Costs up to and including August

Appendix D – Information regarding ceasing to operate leisure centres.



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Report to: **Council**  
Date: **22 September 2020**  
Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy**  
Portfolio Area: **Council – Cllr Neil Jory (Leader)**  
Wards Affected: **All**  
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Immediately following this meeting

Author: Drew Powell                      Role: **Director of Governance and Assurance**  
Adam Williams                              **Climate Change Specialist**

Contact: **Drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**That the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group RECOMMENDED to Council that the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy as detailed at Appendix 1 be adopted.**

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Council declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency on 23 July 2019 and committed to develop an Action Plan ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The draft Plan was subsequently adopted on 17 December 2019 and the Council also resolved to develop a Strategy Framework.
- 1.3 The Draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy, detailed at Appendix 1, has been developed by the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group (CC&BWG) and the adopted Action Plan updated.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Member Working Group have met on a number of occasions and have worked with officers to refine the Action Plan whilst developing a strategic framework that sets out the background and context of the declaration and the aims that have been set.
- 2.2 It is also important to highlight the correlation between the Council's emerging Recovery and Renewal Plans and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. These areas of work have continued to evolve and will converge over time, both locally and nationally, as part of a wider 'green recovery'.

## **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1 The Council recognises the need to reduce its carbon footprint, and to respond to the challenges of climate change and loss of biodiversity in the interests of local, national and global well-being.
- 3.2 This report sets out a summary of the Council's progress and recommends the adoption of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy.

## **4. A Strategic Framework for Delivering against the Councils adopted Aims**

- 4.1 Whilst recognising that the development of a draft Action Plan and the establishment of the Council's first Greenhouse Gas inventory (Carbon footprint) were positive steps forward, the need for a strategic framework setting out evidence, aims and objectives was recognised by Members.
- 4.2 Appendix 1 sets out the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. This document has been put together by the Councils new Climate Change Officer, Adam Williams formerly a Planning Specialist for the Council.
- 4.3 The Actions within the Strategy have been refined following discussions between officers and the CC&BWG and represent a culmination of key priorities that the Council should focus on in order to assist the Borough, and the County, to become net-zero by 2050.
- 4.4 Members will note that the majority of actions proposed are high level, capitalising on the Councils position as an influencer, partner and facilitator between residents, business, stakeholders and elected members.
- 4.5 Clearly, where a proposal requires potential expenditure, a cost-benefit analysis will be undertaken and will be considered through the normal decision-making process.

- 4.6 It is also important to highlight that setting targets for reducing carbon emissions is notoriously difficult. A key factor is the level of control over which, in this case, the Council have in securing the necessary reductions.
- 4.7 Whilst the Council can influence, promote and support change it has very limited direct control other than over its own activities. The Strategy proposes to continue to monitor yearly carbon emissions data but to continue to engage and work with the Devon Carbon Plan, utilising expertise involved with that process.
- 4.8 As highlighted in 2.2 above, how this strategy sits with the emerging Recovery and Renewal plan has been refined and relevant actions which are found within the emerging Recovery and Renewal plan have been carried across into the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan where relevant.
- 4.9 The Council continues to play a key role, alongside partners, in responding to the short, medium and long term impacts of the pandemic and at this stage all plans need to remain flexible. At the time of writing this report additional 'lockdown' measure have been applied nationally and infection rates are increasing.
- 4.10 The progress on the Devon Carbon Plan has been delayed in part because of the pandemic, with consultation now expected to take place in December 2020. Furthermore, the Councils Recovery and Renewal Plan is yet to be formally adopted.

## 5 Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That Council adopt the first version of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and continue to implement the adopted, amended Action Plan.

## 6 Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 the Council has a duty to plan and prepare a response to an emergency or provide support to those who do.  Devon County Council, a Category 1 responder, declared a Climate Emergency on 21 February 2019.

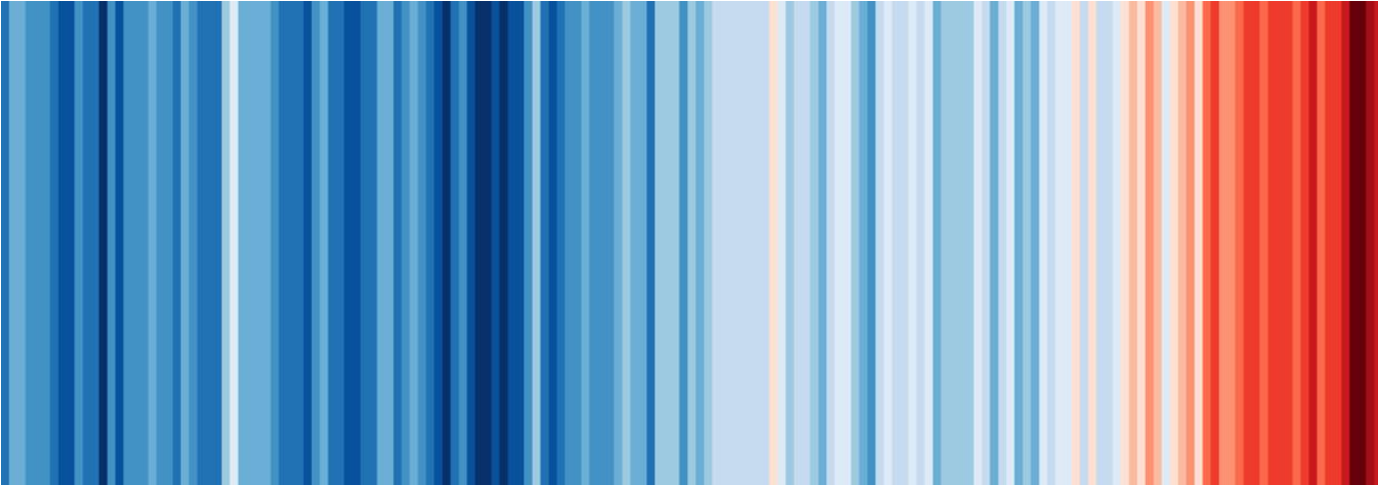
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	The Council declared a climate change and biodiversity emergency on 23rd July 2019 and the potential for this to have significant financial implications for the Council was highlighted. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report and it is not possible to estimate costs with regard to future implementation of the actions within the draft plan at this stage.
Risk		<p>A number risks need to be highlighted; Based on the evidence put forward failing to respond to the declared emergency is likely to have long term impacts on the council and the community it serves.</p> <p>Acting in a disproportionate manner and directing resources away from other key areas may have adverse impacts in a number of areas including delivery of statutory services, customer satisfaction, vulnerable people and the financial sustainability of the organisation.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic may have significant implications on the Council's finance moving forward and the ability to deliver against previously adopted aims and objectives will have to be assessed as part of the Recovery and Renewal plans.</p> <p>Implementing new policies without full consideration of their impacts may directly impact on business, economic growth and delivery against the Joint Local Plan housing targets</p>

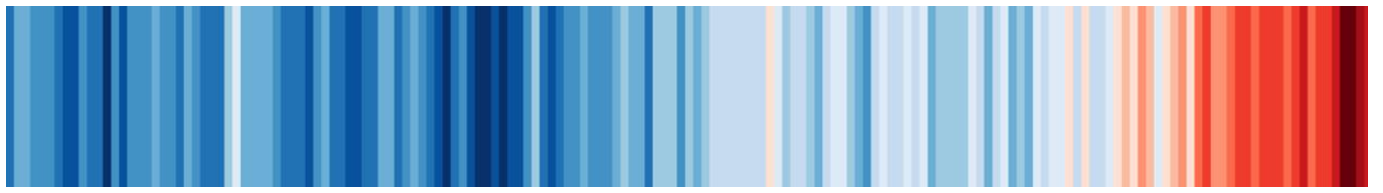
## Appendix 1

### Draft Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy



# West Devon Borough Council Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy





*(‘Warming Stripes – Global’ Ed Hawkins, National Centre for Atmospheric Science, University of Reading)*

## Contents

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## Executive Summary

We are facing an unprecedented challenge in dealing with Climate Change, anthropogenic emissions has resulted in runaway heating of our atmosphere, illustrated by the ‘warming stripes’. These emissions, coupled with rapid biodiversity and ecosystem loss, is combining to create a mass extinction event that threatens all life on our planet. In West Devon, people will likely experience rising sea levels, more frequent flooding, stronger storms and more frequent heat waves as a direct result of Climate Change. This will also adversely affect our wildlife and their habitats. In response to this West Devon Borough Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019, and have been working with partners to develop a set of aims and an action plan.

This strategy was developed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic where it demonstrated just how quickly we can all adapt to new ways of working, living and thinking. During this time we saw how unmanaged verges and natural space can burst with life, providing a much needed boost to local wildlife, we saw the biggest work from home experiment the nation has ever seen and we saw what a world would look like with less traffic and more people taking up cycling as well as spending time walking in their local areas for exercise, to list just a few examples. This didn’t come without its challenges and we will emerge into a very different economic landscape that will have direct impacts on the community that we serve. However, and we must now take some of these lessons to drive a more environmentally friendly recovery and renewal, this strategy will sit alongside the emerging Recovery and Renewal Plan where the environmental impact of recovery/renewal is assessed and managed with resulting actions taken in line with delivery of the actions within this Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy.

### Forward by **Cllr Neil Jory, Leader of West Devon Borough Council**

*"It is important for us to stay focused and break this down into manageable pieces of work. We have decided to break our challenge into two parts, we have the Council's internal carbon footprint, the CO2 emissions that we are responsible for and then we have those of the Borough, some of which are within our control but most of which are not.*

*"In the short time since we agreed to create a plan, we have brought together a set of ideas that will point us as an organisation in the right direction. Our aim is to be carbon neutral organisation by 2030 and to have improved the habitats in our green and wooded open spaces by up to 10% by 2025.*

*"For those things that are outside of our direct control, we have joined forces with the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group to support the creation of a Devon-wide plan, with the aim of Devon becoming carbon neutral by 2050.*

*"There is already a call for evidence, asking the public to make comments and add suggestions and we have supported the group with the themed discussions that have already taken place."*

*West Devon Borough Council remain fully committed to working with communities and stakeholders, to share knowledge, experience and ideas, and have made a commitment to working with partners.*

**Mike Davies, Chair of West Devon Borough Council's Climate Change Working Group said:** *"This is our planet and we are in this together. We know that we cannot solve this on our own, but by working together and helping each other we can make a difference.*

*"As your Borough Council we have multiple roles in this, I have already talked about doing what we can for our own footprint and supporting the Devon-wide plan, but we also have a role in supporting and signposting you, our residents and businesses, to the latest information and enabling you to do all that you can.*

## **PART ONE**

### **1. Introduction - A Global Issue and a Local Challenge**

We are facing an unprecedented challenge in dealing with Climate Change, anthropogenic (originating from human activity) emissions has resulted in runaway heating of our atmosphere, illustrated by the 'warming stripes'. These emissions, coupled with rapid biodiversity and ecosystem loss, is combining to create a mass extinction event that threatens or severely impacts all life on our planet.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius was published in October 2018 and describes the enormous harm that a 2 degrees Celsius is likely to cause compared to a rise of 1.5 degrees. The report went on to say that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) stated that around 25% of the world's species are now at threat of extinction due to habitat loss and the effects of climate change. The Committee on Climate Change recently reported that for the UK to reach 'carbon net zero' by 2050, there will have to be a quadrupling of low carbon electricity, major scale carbon capture and storage.

It is estimated that, globally, humans need to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub>eq (carbon equivalent) emissions from the current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible. This will need ambitious action from national and sub national authorities, civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities. Current local and global plans and policies are not going to meet this target.

Organisations and local Councils around the world are responding to this by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and committing to address this emergency. After Devon County Council declared a Climate Emergency on 21 February 2019, the Devon Emergency Response Group was formed, which will facilitate effective action across a broad partnership. West Devon Borough Council declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency in 2019.

During the opening statement at COP25, the Secretary-General António Guterres had a stark warning: "The point of no return is no longer over the horizon. It is in sight and is hurtling towards us."

We recognise the brevity of this this challenge and whilst this all may seem daunting we still have time to limit catastrophe and even at a local level we can do our bit to help meet this aim. It cannot be underestimated what the scale of the challenge means, it is not clear if the goal is achievable, however the Council is committed to pursuing this the best it can.

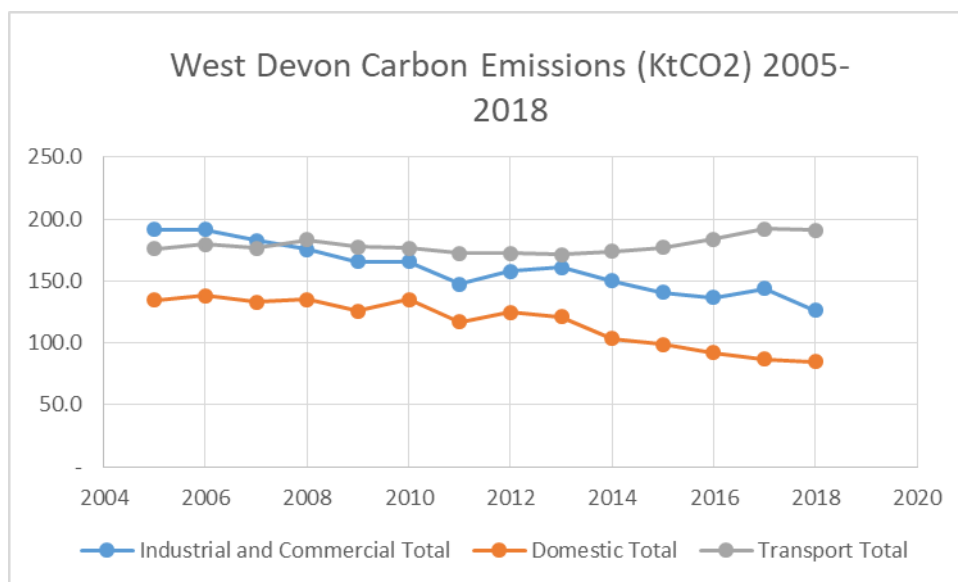
The Council does not have all the answers or have the means to provide all the solutions, the response to climate change demands a linked up approach across sectors, agencies, government, business and local residents. The Councils do recognise however that our position in leadership can prove invaluable in galvanising a collective approach and facilitating effective partnership working across Devon.

## 2. The Local Picture

In developing a Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan for how we can become net zero by 2030, we must first understand broadly where our emissions come in order to direct plan actions more efficiently. West Devon covers an area of 1,161 km<sup>2</sup> sq.km, our area contains a number of towns, villages and hamlets which provide homes for 55,528 people. West Devon is one of the most sparsely populated local authority areas in England ranking 316th out of 326 with a population density of 47 people/km<sup>2</sup>.

A key issue impacting on the economy of West Devon and is the relatively low wage rates of those who work within the area, contrasting with higher resident wage rates and high skills levels amongst people who live in the area. Consequently, our area experiences significant levels of out-commuting to work and below national average employment levels. This raises a significant challenge in responding to Climate Change in our administrative area, connectivity and transportation is a leading contributor to carbon emissions.

The Council already produces an annual monitoring report (AMR) as part of our obligations to review the effectiveness of our planning policies which provide a useful basis for some of our delivery work. Whilst this is heavily directed towards housing and employment figures, the Plymouth and South West Joint Local Plan set a policy objective to half 2005 carbon emissions levels by 2034 (this is the life of the development plan rather than linked to net 0 ambitions). The 2018-2019 AMR contains a breakdown of the carbon emissions levels for West Devon which is derived from data from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, new data was published by the Government in June 2020 to contain 2018 estimates, graph 1 and Figure 1 below illustrates this data



(Graph 1: sector emissions for West Devon between 2005 and 2017, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2017 estimates, 2019)

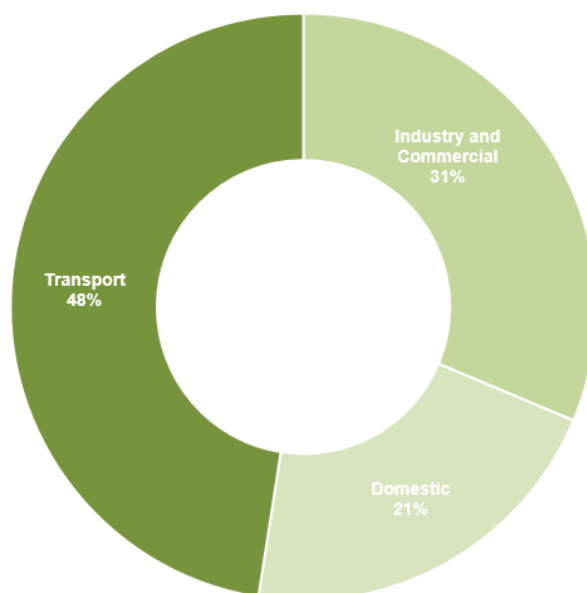


Figure 1 – Sources of CO2 in West Devon (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2018 estimates, 2020)

In West Devon whilst the trend has continued to decline there was a rise between 2016 and 2017 resulting from an increase in road transport on both A road and minor roads and also Industry and commercial electricity and transportation. The most polluting sectors continue to be **Industry and commercial electricity and transportation**.

Both data sets show that whilst carbon emissions continue to decline, there remains a challenge with tackling transportation and industry in the area. Clearly then, the Council will need to help facilitate, and create the conditions which will enable business and residents to reduce their carbon emissions, this can be achieved through regulatory systems such as planning, as well as through engagement and collaborative working.

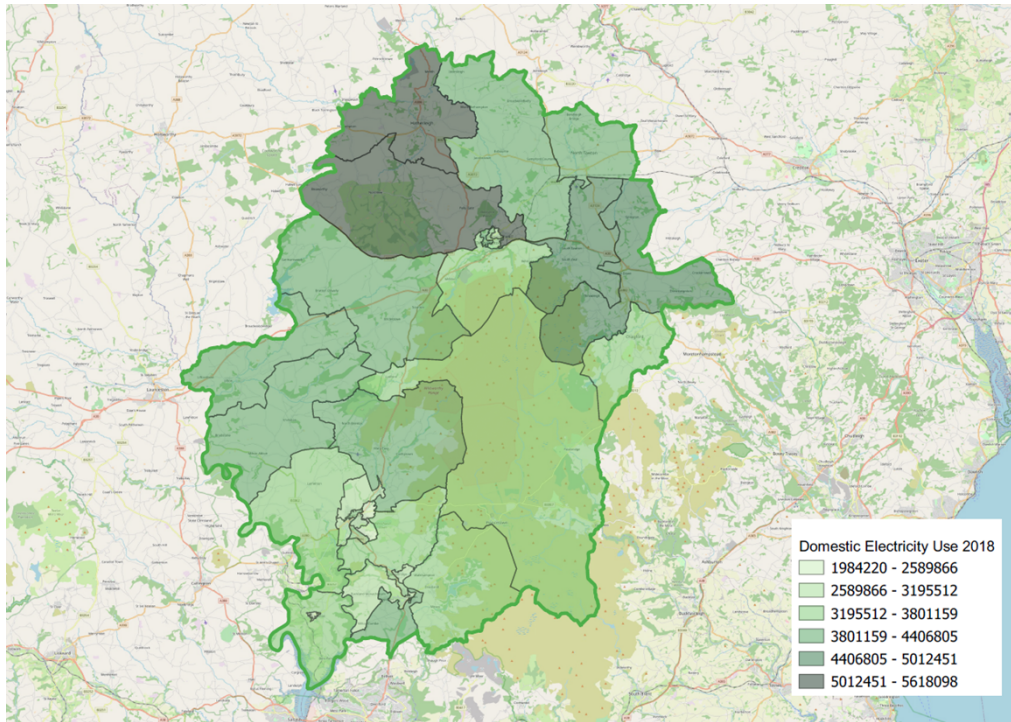
Since the IPCC 2010 (1.5°C report) baseline West Devon has reduced its emissions by 23.15% (0.17 MtCO2e). To achieve the IPCC’s global target of keeping emissions below 1.5

In relation to domestic emissions, whilst showing a downward trend, it continues to decline slowly. Data was obtained from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in order to ascertain the spatial distribution of energy use in the Borough. The data is captured at lower super output area (LSOA) which aims to capture a similar number of domestic properties in each area, the areas were created in 2011 however, the data was published on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020<sup>1</sup>. There are some caveats regarding how this data is captured, primarily that Meters that have not successfully been assigned to a geography due to insufficient address information are counted in the 'Unallocated' category, this is further explained within a government methodology<sup>2</sup>

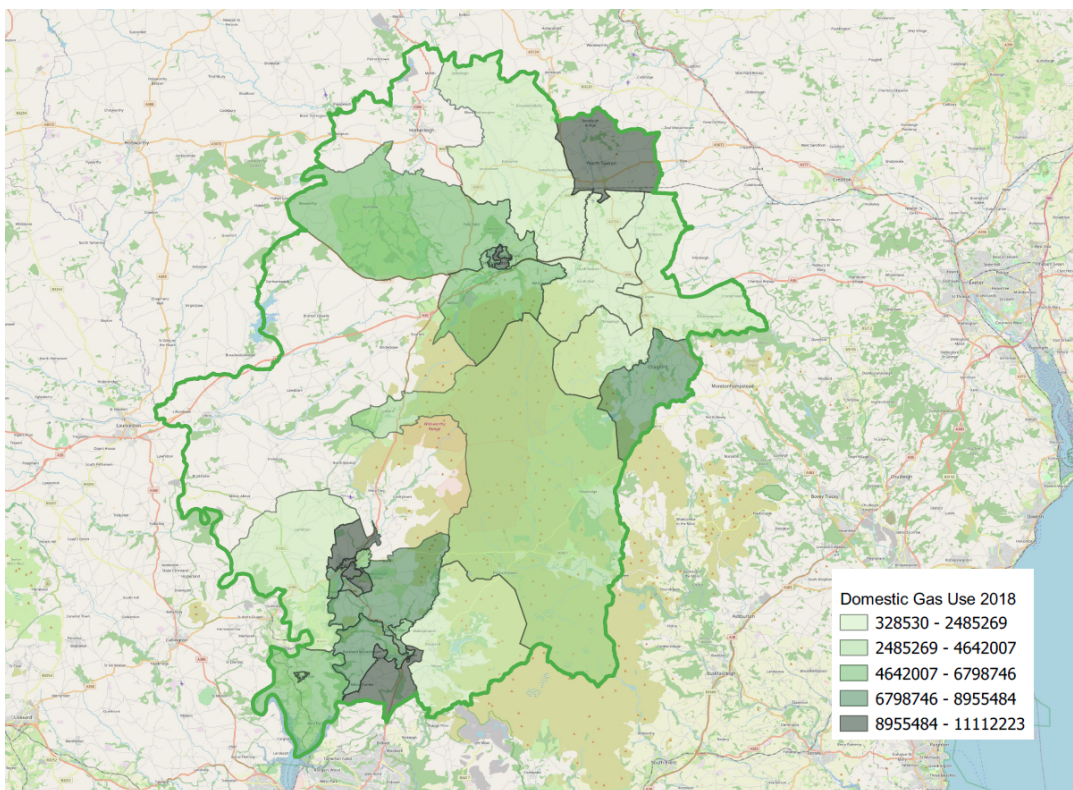
Nonetheless, the data provides a useful illustration of electricity and gas consumption. In terms of electricity use the most energy appears to be used in the north of the borough. The map below shows the 2018 electricity usage by LSOA and each band of energy use is equally distributed to show a band of kWh

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/lower-and-middle-super-output-areas-electricity-consumption>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regional-energy-data-guidance-note>



The gas usage on the other hand appears to be low aside from areas around Tavistock and Oakhampton. Two LSOA's in the area had no data recorded for it, this could be explained with by the dataset note which explains that meters with poor address information is unallocated. Of further note, the number gas meters recorded in each LSOA often much lower than those recorded for electricity. This indicates that a number of domestic properties are not connected to mains gas and when comparing with the spatial distribution of electricity use, indicates that home heating and cooking in the north easterns areas may be done by electricity.



What these two data sets can tell us is perhaps areas where renewable electricity efforts could be directed in order to continue reduced gas usage but equally be able to heat their homes in a much more sustainable way, whether this is through future retro fit schemes or Borough energy provision. For instance Research by the Energy Saving

Trust<sup>3</sup> suggests that with the current (at the time) grid electricity emissions factor, heat pumps are most suitable for well insulated properties off the gas grid or in new developments with high performance building fabric. Of course, the more the electricity grid is decarbonised, the lower carbon impact these will have on properties off the gas grid but equally, bigger uptake of heat pumps will also put more pressure on the grid, so a combination of lower grid emissions factors and on site renewable electricity could deliver the best outcome in these areas.

In terms of our natural assets, West Devon is home to a rich tapestry of heritage landscapes, key wildlife and habitat sites and important marine environments.

### **Existing Designations and Green Infrastructure Assets**

- Western half of Dartmoor National Park, part of Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape WHS and part of Tamar Valley AONB.
- Part of UNESCO North Devon Biosphere Reserve and part of Northern Devon Nature Improvement Area.
- Part of Tamar Estuary Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).
- Part of four Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), (including part of one Inshore SAC with a marine component) and part of a Special Protection Area (SPA) with a marine component.
- Whole of twenty-seven and part of four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) for biodiversity and geological conservation
- Two National Nature Reserves (NNRs), four Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and numerous County Wildlife Sites (CWSs), Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGSs), Other Sites of Wildlife Interest (OSWIs) and Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWSs).
- River corridors including the Tamar and its tributaries, the Thrushel, the Lyd and the Lew; the Tavy and its tributary the Walkham; the West and East Dart, meeting at Dartmeet; the West and East Okement Rivers meeting in Okehampton; the River Taw; and the River Lew, a tributary of the Torridge.
- 2,408 hectares (ha) of ancient woodland (2.07% land cover compared with a Great Britain average of 2.4%).
- Large number of ancient, veteran and notable trees, approximately 500 of which are protected under Tree Preservation Orders.
- Two Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) Reserves
- Greater Horseshoe Bat maternity roost near the Tamar Trails Centre and associated sustenance zone (feeding area).
- Identified Strategic Nature Areas.

Maps of these key sites can be found here

<https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/WestDevonGreenInfrastructureFrameworkAppendix1.pdf>

### **What issues is the Borough likely to face?**

West Devon has a number of flood risk zones along its waterways and coastal areas, particularly in the North and around Tavistock. Although it's more difficult to quantify, it's generally accepted that in the UK, Climate Change will bring about more frequent and heavy rain, combined with tidal surges associated with increased storm activity and rising sea levels, many of our residents will experience more frequent flood events.

The consequences of climate change extend beyond physical impacts to the environment it also has health impacts to the population, poor air quality can lead to numerous cardiovascular diseases, increasing temperatures can lead to heat related mortality, and rising energy prices can result in increased fuel poverty. These health impacts can also become mentally harmful, those directly affected by flooding can have their lives upended, and needing months sometimes years to recover<sup>4</sup> and many people are already feeling anxiety, fear and grief due to the changes that are happening now across the world and psychologists are seeing a rise in 'Eco-anxiety'<sup>5</sup>

West Devon is also spatially disconnected with many people relying on private transport to get around, this is reflected in the carbon emissions associated with transportation.

The loss of habitats and wildlife reduces the opportunity to commune with nature; a benefits of this to the health and well-being to society is well documented. The WWF report of September 2020, states that over two thirds of wildlife has been lost globally since 1970.

The changes to the seasons and local temperatures due to climate change is impacting on the ability for wildlife species to thrive as this disruption affects feeding and breeding and their ability to thrive and survive.

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<sup>3</sup> Exeter University, 2011, A Review Of Renewable Energy Resource Assessment And Targets For Devon

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prepare-for-flooding-to-reduce-impacts-on-mental-health>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(20\)30081-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30081-4/fulltext)

Bee and other pollinator numbers are already in serious decline and this impacting with fewer insect predators and pollinators to assist farmers and food growers is likely to worsen. Similarly their decline is affecting species higher up the food chain which depend on them for food

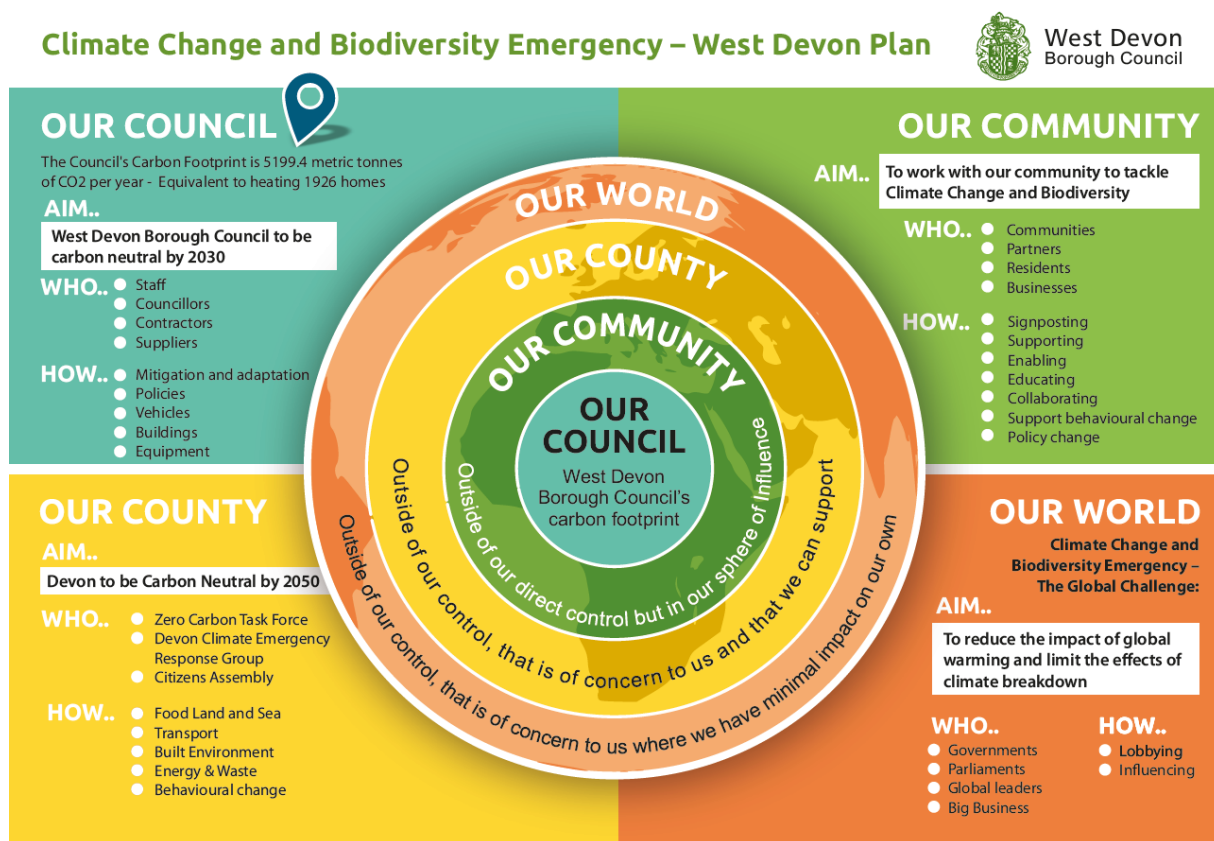
### 3. Our Influence

A Local Authority has many opportunities and powers to address Climate Change & Biodiversity Loss, it is important to recognise these powers are not unlimited. We have very few powers to raise finance directly and instead we must capitalise on our ability to develop partnerships, provide leadership and enabling a collective approach through galvanizing our residents and encouraging and supporting flourishing eco businesses and third sector bodies and community groups

The Committee on Climate Change recommends that local authority plans should include a high level of ambition for emissions reduction, and focus on emissions drivers and adaptation activity over which local authorities have control or influence

There are distinct areas of action the council can act on, and these are;

- Areas we can directly control/guide
- Areas we can enable through funding
- Areas we can enable through policy and regulatory systems
- Areas we can influence locally
- Areas we can influence nationally through request and lobby



The Committee on Climate Change 2019 Progress Report to Parliament<sup>6</sup> points to several priorities for the Government in stepping up their delivery approach to responding to Climate Change, whilst directed at central Government the same aims can apply to us too, these were;

1. Embed net-zero policy across all levels and departments of government, with strong leadership and coordination at the centre
2. Make policy business-friendly

<sup>6</sup> CCC, 2019, 2019 Progress Report to Parliament



### 3. Put people at the heart of policy design

### 4. Support international increases in ambition and celebrate the UK ambition

These four strands can be but supported by West Devon it both is operation and externally facing work. The Council has aim to reduce carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050 at the latest. The authority has an opportunity to show leadership and help foster collective action through a new climate aware implementation of policies, investment and engagement and the decisions we make can have long lasting environmental impacts and also shape the way we live. There are some key strategies and programmes being developed or altered which align with this Climate Action Plan and will be critical to ensuring success, such as:

- Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (including plan revisions expected to begin in 2021)
- Devon Carbon Plan
- Our emerging Recovery and Renewal Plan

This Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy represents the culmination of this work to date, there is no such thing as a 'final' version as this will constantly reviewed as demands change. We expect that this Strategy will be reviewed and refined based on continuous feedback and further engagement

## 4. How West Devon Borough Council will be changing and what we will be doing directly?

West Devon Borough Council has committed to reducing operational carbon emissions to Net Zero by 2030, our operational emissions are broken down into Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions;

#### Scope 1 - Direct emissions

Activities owned or controlled by your organisation that release emissions straight into the atmosphere. They are direct emissions.

Examples of scope1 emissions include emissions from combustion in owned or controlled boilers, furnaces, vehicles; emissions from chemical production in owned or controlled process equipment.

#### Scope 2 - Energy indirect

Emissions being released into the atmosphere associated with your consumption of purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling. These are indirect emissions that are a consequence of your organisation's activities but which occur at sources you do not own or control.

#### Scope 3 - Other indirect

Emissions that are a consequence of your actions, which occur at sources which you do not own or control and which are not classed as scope2 emissions. Examples of scope 3 emissions are business travel by means not owned or controlled by your organisation, waste disposal, or purchased materials or fuels.

In summary we will be;

- Reducing the resources we use such as paper and water and Improvements in the energy efficiency of our buildings, to improve comfort, lower bills and prepare for a switch to low-carbon heating.
- Supporting the public and the council for a move away from natural gas heating.
- Heat pumps to be seen as an established part of the solution, requiring strong progress during the 2020s within our buildings.
- An end to biodegradable waste streams going to landfill after 2025, with supporting actions through the waste chain.
- Preparing for an increase in the market share of electric vehicles (EVs) during the 2020s with an expansion of EV charging
- Increase the tree canopy cover on our owned land, and re-wild, smarter management and maintain trees and woodland; redesign parks to be carbon neutral.

- Supporting improvements in diet and increased walking and cycling among our staff, increasing support for remote working
- Ensuring that our suppliers have the lowest carbon impact possible
- We will promote virtual meetings rather than travelling, where appropriate.
- Fully supporting remote working to reduce staff commuter mileage to continue working practices deployed during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- Introduction of carbon/ environmental impact and climate risk assessments procedures to guide Council decision making to be included on the report template
- **Taking carbon and ecological footprint into consideration in procurement policy.**
- **Supporting understanding of climate and biodiversity issues through briefings for Members and Officers and sharing information through online newsletters**

There are more actions and the details of these are found within our 'Operational Carbon Reduction Plan', and in terms of what we have done and what we are seeking to do, the story so far is....

**OUR COUNCIL - West Devon**  
**Reducing our Carbon Footprint and increasing Biodiversity**  
 The Council's total carbon footprint is estimated at 5199.4 metric tonnes of CO2 per year.

**The story so far**  
 What we have already done to reduce our carbon footprint:

- At our Offices**
  - Electric car charging points
  - Energy efficient bulbs
  - Paperless offices
  - Meeting agendas accessed electronically
- For our Residents**
  - Promote Eco grants for homes
- In our Policies**
  - Good EP ratings on new developments
  - Policy to buy goods and services sustainably
  - Joint Local Plan – reduce carbon footprint and encourage walking and cycling friendly developments
- Cars and transport**
  - Electric pool car
  - Reduced business miles
  - Skype meetings instead of travel
  - Saved a million miles in officer travel
- For our Biodiversity**
  - Tree planting on new developments
- In our Leased Assets**
  - Solar panels on our offices

**What Next**  
 Some of our ideas to help us reach carbon neutral:

- At our Offices**
  - Webinar training to reduce travel
  - More sophisticated thermostats
  - Water saving taps and w/c's
- For our Residents**
  - New waste service – more recycling
  - Stream council meetings – reduce travel
  - More information on how to reduce carbon footprint
  - Litter, packaging and waste are key messages
- For our Biodiversity**
  - Woodland planting
  - Plant trees in open spaces
  - Grow saplings
  - Wildlife corridors
  - Cut hedges, trees and grass less often
  - Reduce use of weed killer on hard surfaces
  - Help communities to help us look after their bio-diversity
  - Build nature into new developments, e.g. Bat boxes
- In our Leased Assets**
  - Improve the energy efficiency of our buildings
  - Secure more renewable energy installations
- Fuel consumption and energy generation**
  - Create a Green Energy Company
  - Alternative heat system for Kilworthy Park
  - Buy truly renewable fuel
- In our Policies**
  - Invest in Green Banks
  - Identify land for renewables
  - Rain water harvesting on new developments
  - Implement sustainable procurement policy
  - Buy local wherever possible
  - Developer contributions go towards low carbon schemes
- Cars and transport**
  - Signpost, collaborate and enable more
  - Electric car charging points in carparks
  - Car share scheme
  - Electric powered machinery
  - Salary sacrifice for electric car scheme
  - Rully Electric fleet
  - Electric bike hire in towns, tourist hotspots
  - Higher parking charges for polluting vehicles
  - Promote electric vehicles through tax licencing

**Our Aim is to be Carbon Neutral by 2030**

Moving forward, the next part of the strategy, Part 2, is the framework for our strategy, which will then lead into our action plan which will form a basis for how the council will assist the area in becoming net zero by 2050

## PART TWO

### 5. West Devon Borough Council Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Framework

We began the process of developing an action soon after the declaration of a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency. This started with us beginning to understand our own carbon emissions as an Authority, what followed was a collective effort from all our services to begin to pull together a list of actions that could ultimately form our Action Plan.

Our work began with establishing 13 areas that reflect the priorities of the residents and business within West Devon. These 13 areas form the basis of the approach to the delivery of the Action Plan and can be grouped into four objectives that align strongly with the themes of many other leading cities and we believe will help us meet our two primary goals

#### Objective 1 - Energy

- Energy Supply
- New Developments
- Existing Buildings

#### Objective 2 - Sustainability

- Walking Cycling and Public Transport
- Strategic Transport Planning
- New Developments
- Greening the Economy
- Waste and Resources

#### Objective 3 - Land Use and Biodiversity

- Agriculture
- Land Use Change for Carbon Sequestration
- Biodiversity

#### Objective 4 - Capability & Engagement

- Behaviour Change & Communication
- Community Engagement
- Individual and Collective Action

These 4 objectives and the actions associated with them will help us to meet our targets, namely to reduce operational carbon emissions to net 0 by 2030 and reduce Borough wide carbon emissions to net 0 by 2050.

West Devon Borough Council has committed to working with partners through the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group to aim to reduce the Borough's carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 at the latest. But what does this mean for our Borough and what should be our primary aims?

Aim 1 – reach net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible and increase habitat value and wooded public open space

The council has committed to working with partners through the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group to;

- a. Aim to reduce the Borough of West Devon's carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050 at the latest;
- b. Aim for a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in the habitat value of its green and wooded public open space by 2025.

Aim 2 – Creating a resilient West Devon

If there's anything the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us is that the ability for communities to come together to tackle a common issue is possible on a large scale. Even if we do meet our target to reach net zero emissions by 2050, there will be some inevitable impact arising from the carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere. We are experiencing Climate Change and Biodiversity loss right now and this will continue. With this in mind we need adapt and mitigate the best we can as we experience

- a. frequent and longer heat waves
- b. warmer and wetter winters
- c. stronger and more frequent storms bringing about more flooding

## 6. Implementation and Monitoring

The delivery of this Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy will require input from across the council and collaboration with its partners, residents and businesses. Given the fast pace required to assist with the lowering of emissions, newly emerging technology and emerging Government initiatives as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic, the intention for the Action Plan in Part Three is for this to be a living document which can be amended and change as progress changes, technology emerges and Government initiatives are introduced.

We will monitor and report progress on this strategies actions throughout every year, however as this will be a living document, its important to keep communities and stakeholders involved. We intend to develop a Community Board which will comprise a fair representation of people throughout West Devon and introduce a quarterly officer facilitated discussions with the Community Board focused around one of the four objectives set out in this strategy in order to feed into revisions of the action plan.

We will use the following metrics as a basis for reporting on the plans outcomes

- Council operational carbon emissions
- Borough wide carbon emissions
- Amount of renewable energy generated across the Borough
- The amount of carbon captured or reduced through council action

## PART THREE– The Action Plan

The intention for this action plan is to be reviewed yearly to capitalise on new initiatives, emerging projects, changes in legislation and engagement activity with the public in addition to providing timely updates on proposed actions

### Objective 1 - Energy

Energy is essential, it supports our society, keeping heat in our homes, powering our hospitals and schools and fuels transportation. We know our natural resources are finite, and it's because of this we need to transition to using much less, or none at all and a significant challenge arises in meeting this need whilst also meeting current demand.

According to data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, in 2019 of all the new EPC certificates lodged in West Devon, only 35% were rated above C or above, and 38% in 2018, meaning many of our homes continue to be energy inefficient resulting in higher greenhouse gas emissions.

Fuel Poverty is also a related issue, inefficient homes can lead to excess energy bills for some of the poorest in our society and the health impacts of living in a cold or damp home can lead to cardiovascular and respiratory ill health as well as poor mental health<sup>8</sup>, dealing with climate change represent a scientific challenge as well as a social and ethical one and a response to climate change must be fair and just.

We must also encourage and facilitate increased renewable energy infrastructure, renewable energy in the West Devon produced 55,914 MWh in 2018<sup>9</sup>

The UK continues to move towards the legally binding commitment of reducing our national carbon emissions to "net zero" greenhouse gases by 2050 (Climate Change Act 2008, 2019 Amendment) West Devon Borough Council has a commitment to reduce its own emissions to net zero by 2030. We have an important role through seeking developments that are well designed and which support the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy, helping people make more conscious energy choices, supporting the transition to renewable energy across the borough, improving the energy efficiency of existing development

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<sup>7</sup> Met Office, 2020 - State of the UK Climate 2019 <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/about/state-of-climate>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/fuel\\_poverty\\_social\\_impact\\_bonds.pdf](https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/fuel_poverty_social_impact_bonds.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> BEIS, 2019. Renewable electricity by local authority

## What have we already done?

- Installed Solar Panels on some of our assets
- EV charging points installed at our Kilworthy Park offices
- Procured an Electric Vehicle for staff use

## What we propose to do

Id	Objective / Target	Activity	Current or Future Tasks	Timescales
1.1	Investigate procuring truly renewable energy.	a. Council to discuss with community energy providers and aid and support them in developing their renewable sites b. The Council to discuss with Western Power Distribution to determine the actions required to increase local network resilience to increase renewable energy capacity in West Devon		2021
1.2	Explore forming a non-profit green energy company and understand the capacity of renewable energy generation in the area	a. The Council to discuss with Western Power Distribution and other stakeholders to determine the actions required to increase local network resilience to increase renewable energy capacity in West Devon as a basis of forming a green energy company or advising on network resiliency		
1.3	Review strategic scale solar, wind and hydro energy for both commercial and community energy development	a. Investigate the allocation of land for renewable energy production within the Joint Local Plan Area. This work will require a call for sites which could take place alongside the plan review due to begin in 2021 b. Investigate the issues and capacity for Hydro power in West Devon	Land allocated for renewable energy in the Joint Local Plan revision and to aid with delivery  Discuss main issues with the Environment Agency and Dartmoor Nation Park Authority	2024  2021
1.4	Identify options for how smart renewable heat, power generation and storage could be	a. Appraise the potential for low carbon heat networks, heat pumps, and hybrid		

	considered when the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan are reviewed		boilers, including identifying current potential funding models and barriers to uptake. West Devon to monitor funding opportunities to commission appraisal	
<b>1.5</b>	Aim for a Higher result in the energy performance certificates	a.	Continue to apply new guidance on Policy DEV32 contained within the 2020 Joint Local Plan Supplementary Planning Document	<p>1) Review policy DEV32 at Plan Review Stage</p> <p>2) Set up a monitoring scheme for new development (measuring yearly EPC data provided by BIES)</p> <p><b>2024</b></p> <p><b>Yearly updates</b></p>
<b>1.6</b>	Promote and administer grants for home insulation, efficient heating systems and sustainable energy sources for owner occupied and tenanted properties	a.	Raise awareness for grant schemes and the Solar Together Scheme as part of a Climate Change communication strategy involving newsletters, web and social media	<p>Climate Change Communication Strategy developed and frequent newsletters, web and social media activity</p> <p><b>Doing now</b></p>
		b.	Continue to administer funding as and when it arises	<p>Continue to collaborate with Cosy Devon etc</p> <p><b>On going – review yearly</b></p>

## Objective 2 - Sustainability

In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as ***“meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*** Today, there are almost 140 developing countries in the world seeking ways of meeting their development needs, but with the increasing threat of climate change, concrete efforts must be made to ensure development today does not negatively affect future generations.<sup>10</sup>

Three common challenges were highlighted then, Population and Human Resources, Food Security: Sustaining the Potential, Species and Ecosystems: Resources for Development, Energy: Choices for Environment and Development, Industry: Producing More With Less, The Urban Challenge

In essence, sustainability is about living within our means, doing the same or more with less and ensuring that needs of the present can be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

We aspire to create these conditions the best we can by encouraging residents and business to make more sustainable choices in their day to day lives, using our legislative system to create more sustainable development and working collaboratively with external bodies to aid with these aims

### What have we already done?

1. The Joint Local Plan contains a carbon reduction target of 50% of 2005 by the end of the plan period, which is 2034

<sup>10</sup> <https://academicimpact.un.org/content/sustainability>

2. Adopted a Supplementary Planning Document, which among other things, provide clarity and re-enforcement as to how our low carbon policies are to be applied and what they are seeking to achieve
3. Adopted a Sustainable Procurement Policy

### What we propose to do

Id	Objective / Target	Activity	Future Tasks or Output	Timescales
2.1	Investigate the Introduction of differential changes to parking permits and in car parks e.g Higher carbon emission vehicles pay more.	<p>Investigate the method and systems needed to introduce with a view to trailing the system in selected car parks and/or streets.</p> <p>System is in effect in Bristol <a href="https://www.bristol.gov.uk/parking/residents-parking-permits-cost">https://www.bristol.gov.uk/parking/residents-parking-permits-cost</a></p> <p>Ringo already has an emissions based parking rate set up to deploy <a href="https://ringgo.co.uk/emissions-based-parking/">https://ringgo.co.uk/emissions-based-parking/</a></p>		
2.2	Ensure new housing developments are much more walking and cycling friendly.	<p>major development sites to consider the inclusion off road cycle routes to link between other cycle routes where connections exist</p> <p><a href="https://www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-routes/cycle-maps/">https://www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-routes/cycle-maps/</a></p>		
2.3	Better bus provision and strategic park and ride facilities to reduce traffic in towns	Investigate the potential for park and ride facilities in the main towns		
2.4	<p>Increase uptake of cycling in West Devon (<b><i>Draft R&amp;R Plan ref 2.12</i></b>)</p> <p>&amp;</p> <p>Take a lead in encouraging people to maintain the positives from lockdown – less travel, more exercise etc. (<b><i>Draft R&amp;R Plan ref 2.10</i></b>)</p>	<p>a. Investigate electric bike hire in towns &amp; and key tourist areas in summer to start to change culture.</p> <p>b. Increase cycle parking at key locations in towns and villages</p> <p>c. Development of a bespoke business support offer ‘Go Green’ grants to reduce carbon footprints. (<b><i>Draft R&amp;R Plan ref 2.10a</i></b>)</p>		
2.6	Promote the use of recycled and Sustainable construction materials through input at planning stage for new developments	<p>a. Continue to apply recently adopted Joint Local Plan Policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance</p> <p>b. Review Joint Local Plan to investigate options for policies amendments to</p>	<p>Monitor Planning Permissions and highlight exemplars</p> <p>Joint Local Plan Review</p>	<p><b>Now - 2024</b></p> <p><b>2021-2024</b></p>

		further incentivise or force the use of recycled and sustainable construction materials		
<b>2.7</b>	Monitor and review policies to reduce the carbon footprint of new development (Policies DEV32, DEV33, DEV34)	Continue to apply recently adopted Joint Local Plan Policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance  Review policies DEV32, DEV33 and DEV34 at Plan Review Stage  Reconsider a Low Impact Development Policy ('One Planet Living Principles')	Monitor Outcomes (EPC's etc)  Joint Local Plan Review	<b>Now - 2024</b>  <b>2021-2024</b>
<b>2.8</b>	Investigate adaption and resilience methods for new developments	Joint Local Plan Review - this will either form a new policy or a new revision to policy DEV32	Joint Local Plan Review	<b>2021-2024</b>
<b>2.9</b>	Review the potential for Borough Energy Networks in the Borough and invest in housing energy saving measures	Review internal processes to create a flow of investment from developer contributions related to carbon reduction. For example, invest directly into energy saving measures to help improve the efficiency of the existing housing stock or through the development of new Borough Energy networks		
<b>2.10</b>	As part of JLP review consider an Article 4 Direction that removes permitted development rights on class Q barn conversions.	Review the Annual Monitoring Report evidence whether or not there is too much housing delivery in tier 4 settlements (those areas not included in JLP policy TTV1.1-3)  If evidence continues to show more housing delivery in Tier 4 settlements then an Article 4 direction can be proposed and submitted	Delivery of an Article 4 Direction that removes permitted development rights on class Q barn if evidence continues to show more housing delivery in Tier 4 settlements within Plan Review timeframes	<b>2021-2024</b>
<b>2.11</b>	Allocate sites for renewable energy, in particular strategic scale solar and wind for both commercial and community energy development	Conduct a call for sites during the Joint Local Plan review process	Joint Local Plan Review	<b>2021-2024</b>
<b>2.12</b>	Lobby for changes to the National Planning Policy Framework or any such replacement to prioritise carbon reduction target over housing targets	Respond and input into the proposed changes to the Planning System	Input in 2020 consultation process	<b>2020</b>
<b>2.13</b>	Maximise local and closed loop recycling to minimise transport impacts and valorise waste materials.	West Devon moving to the Devon Aligned Service	Continue to monitor the recycling uptake	



2.14	Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans to ensure provision of EV charging points where parking spaces are provided in new developments	Continue to condition EV charging on major developments	Review EV requirement on Minor Development at Plan Review Stage	2024
2.19	Explore installing electric car charging points in car parks	<p>West Devon Borough Council has joined the Devon Low carbon Energy and Transport Technology Innovator (DELETTI) project which is a partnership with other local authorities and being led by Devon County Council to install electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) in the Council owned car parks</p> <p>It has committed to delivering electric charging points in the following car parks in phase one subject to the necessary surveys being carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tavistock – Bedford car park</li> <li>• Okehampton – Mill Road car park</li> </ul>	<p>There is a further potential to consider additional car parks in phase two which could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chagford car park, Chagford</li> <li>• Hatherleigh car park, Hatherleigh</li> <li>• Market Street car park, Okehampton</li> </ul> <p>Continue to monitor project and investigate the scope to extend into other areas after phase 1 and 2</p>	<b>Review after Phase 1 and 2 or by 2022 whatever is sooner</b>
2.20	Make use of funding opportunities to provide employment and community assets across the Borough, particularly where the market is unlikely to provide this, in order to minimise the need to travel for access to services.	Access UK Shared Prosperity Fund if and when its established and re-inforce COVID recovery support grants and initiatives	Review Action once the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is established and review what funding is available and how its allocated	2021
2.22	Investigate the creation of a new EP policy to ensure correct use of litter bins potentially reducing collection need			
2.23	The Council will support the principles proposed through the English Waste Strategy regarding the Extended Producer Responsibility. The principles support a circular economy approach which will be funded by producers and will lead to better packaging design, improved recycling and better consumer awareness of what can be recycled.	Raise awareness as part of a Climate Change communication strategy involving newsletters, web and social media	Climate Change Communication Strategy developed and frequent newsletters, web and social media activity	<b>By December 2020</b>

## Objective 3 - Land Use and Biodiversity

The UN defines Biodiversity as “the variety of life forms in any given habitat, from large animals to plants to fungi to the smallest of organisms”. The international Convention on Biological Diversity notes that “The Earth’s biological resources are vital to humanity’s economic and social development. As a result, there is a growing recognition that biological diversity is a valuable asset to present and future generations. Equally, the threat to species and ecosystems has never been as great as it is today and is threatened like never before. We are on the verge of a mass extinction: within the next 10 years, around 1 million species may be wiped off the surface of the planet. That’s one out of every four known species<sup>11</sup>. A functioning eco-system is critical to supporting humanity’s needs, which rely on a relatively stable climate, flows of fresh water, agricultural pest and disease-vector control, pollination for crops, interrelated facets of a functioning eco-system<sup>12</sup> The continued decline of mammal, reptile, avian, vertebrate and amphibian species loss over time will lead to a continued defaunation, being primary driver in global ecological change<sup>13</sup>

Appropriate land use and protecting biodiversity, also has significant social, health and wellbeing value. We recognise the value in being able to see, smell and touch a rich tapestry of natural spaces both in private and publically owned land through reduced intervention from a land management perspective and reduce usage of herbicides and pesticides for example. Increased access to nature, and thriving natural spaces within our towns and villages can help foster empathy for the environment which can lead to people making more environmentally conscious choices<sup>14</sup>.

The Council can lead by example through reduced cutting of our greenspaces, there is often a pressure for spaces to ‘look tidy’ but this often comes at a cost, with frequent grass cutting, wildflower have little chance to bloom which then impacts on insect population which then has knock on effect on flora and fauna. Here is what we will aim to do;

### What have we already done?

- Committed to contribute to the baseline mapping for the emerging Devon Nature Recovery Network Mapping project. This will be critical in guiding funding and developer contributions towards offsite compensation to help a Devon wide Nature Recovery Network to establish, ensuring the right projects and interventions are targeted in the right areas.
- Committed to help fund the Ancient Woodland Inventory review, the outcomes of which are expected in 2022
- We produce wood chip each year for use on shrub beds and under hedge lines and we also have a bio shredder producing compost that we also use on beds
- Eliminated the use of fertiliser and weedkiller on plant beds

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<sup>11</sup> <https://p.widencdn.net/bedxcl/WED-2020-Working-Brief>

<sup>12</sup> Ceballos G, Ehrlich P, Raven P (2020) Vertebrates on the brink as indicators of biological annihilation and the sixth mass extinction. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Jun 2020, 201922686; DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1922686117

<sup>13</sup> R. Dirzo et al (2014), Defaunation in the Anthropocene. Science 345, 401–406

<sup>14</sup> Lumber R, Richardson M, Sheffield D (2017) Beyond knowing nature: Contact, emotion, compassion, meaning, and beauty are pathways to nature connection. PLoS ONE 12(5): e0177186. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0177186>

## What we propose to do

Id	Objective / Target	Activity	Future Tasks or Outputs	Timescales
3.1	Securing tree planting through development proposals and Biodiversity Net Gain from new development including pushing the new Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0 at pre-app and for new applications	<p>a. Clear numbers now in a newly adopted Supplementary Planning Document for tree replacement. For new planting this is tied to a 10% bio net gain requirement as required by the Supplementary Planning Document using the DEFRA biodiversity metric</p> <p>b. Review process and method for spending 10% net gain developer contributions</p> <p>c. Review metrics and policy requirements at Plan Review Stage</p>	<p>Continue to apply policy and Supplementary Planning Document requirements</p> <p>To review once the outcome of the Nature Recovery Network Project is finished</p> <p>Joint Local Plan Review</p>	<p><b>Review each year</b></p> <p><b>2021-2024</b></p>
3.2	Support more approaches by communities for tree planting on our land where they trees and is consistent with land use and not likely to lead to conflict with neighbours or conflict with the outcomes from the Devon Nature Recovery Network Mapping project (DNRN) (i.e right trees in the right place)	<p>a. Investigate the creation of a formal system whereby someone with an ability to pay for the upfront cost of planting and a contractual arrangement for West Devon to manage as part it's a new grounds maintenance scheme</p>	<p>Monitor uptake of process and adjust and review if funding opportunities are presented which will allow the authority to lead as opposed to manage after the planting is completed</p>	<p><b>Develop project once the DNRN project is finalised (expected 2021)</b></p>
3.3	Develop and adopt a more biodiversity/environmentally conscious Grounds Maintenance procedure	<p>a. A new Grounds Maintenance procedure with a review of the following</p> <p>- Fix more carbon in vegetation cover (relaxing cutting regime) whilst managing community expectations and a level of complaint about 'unkempt/untidy' sites, lazy Councils,</p>	<p>Develop and adopt a new Grounds Maintenance procedure</p>	<p><b>2020 – March 2021</b></p>

		<p>etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scrape sites, reseed with wildflower mix, annual cut, use mixes that increase soil carbon sequestration</li> <li>- Look to reduce/eliminate weedkiller use on hard surfaces</li> <li>- Assess potential for amending to increase wildlife value balanced against amenity requirements (e.g. for short grass for dog walking/recreation, etc)</li> </ul>		
<b>3.4</b>	<p>Pushing tree planting agenda within Neighbourhood Plans (allocating spaces for woodland creation and sustainable management)</p> <p>Supporting mapping of local ecological networks/corridors within Neighbourhood Plans</p>	a.	<p>Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy to be sent to Neighbourhood Plan groups to delivery on aim and advise on how to apply findings from the Devon Nature Recovery Network process</p>	<p>On going</p> <p><b>On going</b></p>
<b>3.5</b>	<p>Ringfencing and promoting a % of Members grant schemes (SCLF/Localities Fund) towards tree planting schemes for community groups, Town and Parish Councils, or money towards a 'Tree Planting grant scheme' (we did this in 2010 for the International Year of Biodiversity)</p>			<b>2020?</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<p>Aim to develop and adopt a Natural Environment Design Guide to support Development Management proposals – establishing importance of street trees in urban/built environment proposals, trees in new hedgelines, and tree/woodland planting as part of onsite public open space provision</p>	a.	<p>Investigate and review during the Joint Local Plan Review stage and using the outcomes from the Nature Recovery Network Project</p>	<p>Needs resourcing before committing tasks</p> <p><b>2024?</b></p>
<b>3.7</b>	<p>Natural coastal and flood management approaches to increase carbon sequestration, reduce erosion, deliver improved</p>			

	catchment management				
<b>3.8</b>	Investigate the potential to apply a % management fee to offsite compensation/Biodiversity Net Gain payments (via s106) to part fund a new/existing role (there will be an additional pressure) in terms of findings sites to delivery this offsite habitat creation (which the LA could either buy and manage, or work in partnership with another, e.g. DWT, RSPB).				
<b>3.9</b>	New development led by West Devon Borough Council to aim to be exemplar (e.g. Building with Nature, bird and bat boxes, good design with GI, etc).	N/A	N/A	<b>2020-2050</b>	
<b>3.11</b>	Contribute to the creation of a Devon Nature Network and assist with the recovery of Devon's biosphere	a.	Enable landowners to express an interest in hosting biodiversity net gain initiatives related to development	Potentially allocate land for Carbon Sequestration as part of Joint Local Plan Review	2021-2024
		b.	Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan reviews to incorporate the principles of the Land Use Framework when setting spatial planning policies and allocating land for development	Joint Local Plan Review	2021-2024
		c.	Support community land ownership and management by engaging with communities to designate land/farms as community assets under the Community Right to Bid scheme.	Provide a point of contact for assistance (Neighbourhood Plan Team & Climate Change Specialist)	Ongoing
<b>3.12</b>	WDBC engages with members of the public and farmers to look at alternatives to using herbicides and pesticides (in particular glyphosate).	a.	To form part our communications work in the first instance		

## Objective 4 - Capability and Engagement

If we are going to meet our aim to become net zero by 2050, 'collective action' is essential. Many people throughout the area are enthusiastic about rising up to the challenge of reducing carbon emissions and reversing the decline in biodiversity, but may not have the tools or knowledge to enable them make lasting change.

By giving the community and business the tools, support and encouragement that they need, only then can collective action be truly unlocked to enable us to rapidly speed up the rate of change needed to address the pressing issues we face.

A recent study by CREDS demonstrated that household activities account for around two-thirds of global greenhouse gases and also identified some key areas where households can contribute most to reducing their carbon footprint<sup>15</sup>

There's no mistaking that the emissions cuts to reach net-zero emissions require people to do things differently, residents need to be engaged in the challenge and policy and actions should be designed to reflect this to bring people on the journey through encouragement and collaboration. With a population of 55,528<sup>16</sup> and an area containing 3145 businesses<sup>17</sup>, there remains a significant potential to reduce carbon emissions collectively in collaboration with one another. Part of our engagement work will involve the creation of Community Boards to align our plans with the community and have positive engagement

Research produced by the Behavioural Insights Team<sup>18</sup> (TBIT) The Centre for Behaviour & the Environment highlighted an important facet to environmental engagement, that being guilt-based messaging, which is often common in environmental campaigns, causes defensiveness and disengagement. Positive emotions, building rapport and having shared values can be more effective at eliciting engagement. Therefore the approach we will take will be to continually promote sustainable norms in the work we do, in order to more effectively reach as many people to promote a 'new normal', to motivate and ease the change

### What have we already done?

- We have set up a new Climate Change and Biodiversity bulletin which was first issued in August 2020
- Employed a Climate Change Specialist who is to act as a point of contact for interested people and organisations
- Improved our social media activity on Climate and Biodiversity related issues

### What we propose to do

Id	Objective / Target	Activity	Current or Future Tasks	Timescales	Priority
4.1	Raise awareness of Climate Change and Biodiversity issues as part communication strategy involving newsletters, web updates and social media activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A new engagement scheme to inform and advise our residents on the following issues;</li> <li>- Encourage individuals to plant wildflowers and maintain environments which encourage</li> </ul>	Climate Change Communication Strategy adopted with frequent newsletters, web and social media activity	<p>Newsletter to continue monthly, encourage more sign ups each year</p> <p>Otherwise, objectives to continue yearly and progress/feedback to be monitored when the strategy</p>	

<sup>15</sup> Ivanova, D., Barrett, J., Wiedenhofer, D., Macura, B., Callaghan, M. and Creutzig, F. 2020.

<https://www.creds.ac.uk/creds-study-uncovers-best-ways-to-change-consumption-to-cut-carbon-footprint/>

<sup>16</sup> ONS, population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2018-april-2019-geography

<sup>17</sup> ONS, 2019

<sup>18</sup> The Behavioural Insights Team (2019) Behavior Change For Nature: A Behavioral Science Toolkit for Practitioners

pollinators, such as bees, to thrive.

is reviewed

- encourage individuals to look at the impact of their diet and consider reducing their meat consumption, and increase the proportion of in-season, locally grown food eaten across Devon
- Support individuals to make better transport choices, this will require better infrastructure however
- Provide advice on choosing truly renewable energy electricity tariffs (rather than REGOS / greenwashing)
- Encourage reduced energy consumption at home – install greater insulation, use less hot water, use less heating, turn off electrical appliances when not in use, don't use unnecessary appliances like tumble dryer etc.
- Inform residents about how they can recycle Link in more with recycle Devon and all of the other efforts that people are going around the Borough
- Promote roof and window gardening for

		those without traditional garden spaces ( <b>Draft R&amp;R Plan ref 2.9</b> )		
		- Involve residents about what we are doing with climate change		
<b>4.2</b>	Volunteer/support collective action via community groups and provide time and resourcing to Town and Parish Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Have a presence at community events</li> <li>b. Develop a 'Community Board' of stakeholders in the area to discuss actions and collaborate</li> <li>c. Work with Town and Parish Councils over changes to their practices and activity they can do to contribute to local, borough and county action plans</li> </ul>	Creation of a Community Board	By December 2020

## Glossary

**Anthropogenic** - environmental pollution and pollutants originating in human activity

**Annual monitoring report** - In the town planning system in England and Wales, the Annual Monitoring Report is one of a number of documents submitted to Government by a local planning authority at the end of December each year to assess the progress and the effectiveness of its development plan policies

**Biodiversity Net Gain** - Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before

**Brundtland Commission** - Formerly known as the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the Brundtland Commission's aim is to unite countries to pursue sustainable development together

**Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019** - an Act of Parliament to set a target for the year 2050 for the reduction of targeted greenhouse gas emissions by 100%

**Committee on Climate Change (CCC)** - Independent advisory group to government on building a low-carbon economy and preparing for climate change.

**Convention on Biological Diversity** - The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), known informally as the Biodiversity Convention, is a multilateral treaty. The Convention has three main goals including: the conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity); the sustainable use of its components; and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

**Ecosystem** - a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment.



**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** - The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations

**Indigenous** - originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.

**Joint Local Plan (JLP)** – The adopted Planning Development Plan for Plymouth, West Devon and West Devon

**The Localism Act 2011** - The Localism Act 2011 (c. 20) is an Act of Parliament that changes the powers of local government in England. The aim of the act is to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government control to individuals and communities.

## **Appendix A – Key Council Resolutions**

### **Climate Emergency Declaration**

*West Devon Borough Council recognises that we have a ‘Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency’ and that urgent steps need to be taken to address all matters within the Borough which may affect climate change and habitat loss.*

*That this Council recognises that the crisis is both global and local and that Local Government has a role to play in promoting environmentally friendly policies. To this end, it is recommended that a Working Group be established with cross-group membership to be decided by the Leader of this Council, in discussion with other political groupings. To report back within three months with initial recommendations.”*

### **Full Council Update – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

*That Council:*

- 1. Adopt the Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan (as attached at Appendix 1);*
- 2. Note the content of the Councils first Greenhouse Gas Inventory (as outlined at Section 5);*
- 3. Aim to reduce the Councils organisational carbon emissions (Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions) to net-zero by 2030;*
- 4. Commit to working with partners through the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group to aim to reduce the Borough of West Devon’s carbon emissions to net-zero by 2050 at the latest;*
- 5. Aim for a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in the habitat value of its green and wooded public open space by 2025.*
- 6. Request that the Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group develop a Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy to be brought back to full Council for approval on 22 September 2020;*
- 7. Request that an update on progress against the adopted aims be brought back to Council on an annual basis; and*
- 8. actively lobby both Central Government and local MPs to improve the standards of infrastructure and new development and to introduce incentives to make our homes as energy efficient and clean as possible.*

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