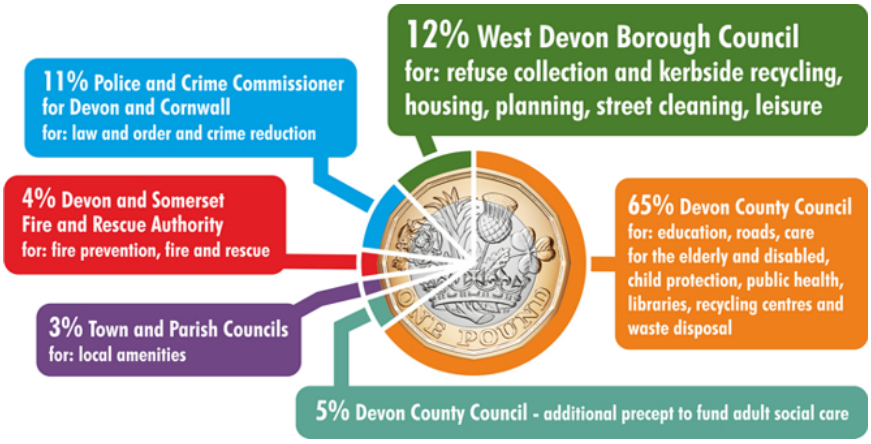
APPENDIX C

COUNCIL

Delivering efficient and effective services

Council Tax

- Average Band D total bill was £1,987 for 2019-20 (WDBC Band D of £231.63 equates to a 12% share of the council tax bill)



- 2019/20 increase of £6.72 to £231.63 (2.99%) – a 1% increase raises £47,000

- Government Council Tax referendum threshold higher of £5 or 2.99% for 2019-20. There has been no announcement from the Government as to what the referendum threshold will be for 2020-21 (maybe announced in September).

- The Government has not announced any plans to change the council tax system or to carry out a council tax revaluation within the near future. In 2018/19 the Council had 25,576 properties on the Valuation List, the make of up of which was 3,474 (Band A), 6,411 (Band B), 5,332 (Band C), 4,138 (Band D), 3,359 (Band E), 1,764 (Band F), 1,015 (Band G) and 83 properties in Band H. There are more Band B properties in the Borough than any other Band (representing 25%).

Council Tax Strategy Options: Members have options to either freeze council tax or to raise council tax anywhere between zero and 2.99%. Anything above 2.99% currently requires a council tax referendum, which is a costly exercise. Recent funding settlements from the Government are based on the assumption that Councils increase council tax by the maximum allowed.

Recommendation 1: To set the strategic intention to raise council tax by the maximum allowed in any given year, without triggering a council tax referendum, to endeavour to continue to deliver services.

If this recommendation were to be agreed, it would have the following impact on council tax:

Council Tax	2019/20 CURRENT YEAR	2020/21 Year 1	2021/22 Year 2	2022/23 Year 3	2023/24 Year 4	2024/25 Year 5
Band D	£231.63	£238.54	£245.67	£253.01	£260.57	£268.36
£ Increase		£6.91	£7.13	£7.34	£7.56	£7.79
% Increase		2.99%	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%	2.99%

APPENDIX C

ENTERPRISE

Creating places for enterprise to thrive and business to grow

Business Rates

- Self-sufficient local government: Business Rates Retention (BRR) of **growth above the business rates baseline.** The Government introduced the BRR system in April 2013 with the aim of providing a direct link between business rates growth (economic growth) and the money councils have to spend on local services.

- The title of the scheme (Business Rates Retention) has caused public confusion – as it implies that Councils are able to keep 40% of **all of** the business rates that they collect. This <u>is not the case</u>. Councils are only able to keep a share of any business rates growth above a baseline set by the Government.

- The baseline is the amount of money that the Government has assessed that the Council needs to keep to fund its services, based on a needs formula. The Baseline is around £1.66 million for West Devon for 2020/21 (rising to £1.7 million in 2021/22). Out of the business rates collected of £10.3 million, the Council keeps approximately 16 pence in every £1 to run its services. The rest is paid back to the Government and a proportion goes to Upper Tier Councils e.g. the County Council, to pay for their services.

- There is a risk of volatility in the system because Councils are exposed to any loss of income if businesses go into decline. The Council retains a Business Rates Volatility Earmarked Reserve to cope with any fluctuations in business rates and at 31.3.19 the balance on this Reserve was £0.492m. The Council's appeals provision was £1.62m.

- Since 2013/14 (when Business Rates Retention was introduced with a 50% scheme), the Council has been part of a Devonwide Business Rates Pool which has included all of the Devon District Councils (except South Hams for some of the latter years), Plymouth City Council (Lead Authority), Devon County Council and Torbay Unitary Council. The Pool has made Pooling gains every year and West Devon receives a share of the gains. The table below shows the business rates position from the 2018/19 Accounts.

Business Rates Income receivable 2018/19 (collected)		£10,293,212
Add on Section 31 Grants and Small Business Rates Relief		£1,865,276
TOTAL		£12,158,488
WDBC share (40% - see next page)		**£4,863,395**
Less Tariff (amount deducted and paid to Government)		£(3,107,710)
Total Business rates remaining after the Tariff	(A)	£1,755,685
Funding Baseline 18/19 (money retained by WDBC)	(B)	**£1,585,208**

(Note: As WDBC was a Pilot in 2018/19, the £464,365 of Rural Services Delivery Grant was also included within the Business Rates Baseline for 18/19).

Growth (Business Rates achieved over the Baseline) (A-B)	£170,477

Therefore the income from Business Rates which West Devon Borough Council retained in 2018-19 was the funding baseline of £2,049,573 (£1,585,208 plus £464,365) plus the pilot gain of £460,000.

ENTERPRISE

Creating places for enterprise to thrive and business to grow

Business Rates Pilot 18/19

- In 2018/19 the Devon Authorities applied to the Government to be a business rates Pilot area and Devon was chosen by the Government to be one of ten Pilot areas nationally.

- West Devon benefitted by approximately £460,000. This was one-off additional revenue money for the year of the pilot only (2018-19). Some of this funding was used to fund the revenue base budget in 2018-19 and the remainder of £316,484 was put into a future financial stability earmarked reserve.

- West Devon is a low growth area as shown overleaf (growth above baseline in 2018/19 was £170,000). West Devon is a beneficiary of the pooling and pilot arrangements as the growth across the whole of Devon is divided up amongst all Devon Councils

- In the future as Council funding is more reliant on business rates income, it puts West Devon in a more precarious position than most Councils due to its low growth and it is extremely important that the Council remains within the Devon pooling arrangements.

- The diagram below compares the split of business rates income under the 50% scheme (from 2013/14 to 2017/18) to the 100% scheme (Pilot status in 2018/19) to the 75% scheme which could be rolled out nationally from 2020/21 onwards.

Split of business rates income	**50% scheme (Devon Pool)** From 2013/14 to 2017/18	**100% scheme (Devon Pilot status)** 2018/19 only	**75% scheme (could be rolled out nationally)**
WDBC (see note)	40%	40%	40%
Central Government	50%	Nil	25%
DCC	9%	59%	34%
Fire	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%
NOTE: Even though West Devon starts off with a 40% share, a tariff is then deducted and paid over to Central Government, and therefore the amount of money West Devon ends up keeping is its business rates baseline funding amount plus any Pooling or Pilot Gain each year.			

ENTERPRISE
Creating places for enterprise to thrive and business to grow

Business Rates Baseline Re-set

The future for Business Rates in 2020 onwards

- One of the largest financial risks that the Council is facing is around how the Government will re-set the Business Rates Baseline for the Council in 2020 onwards when the 75% scheme is rolled out nationally. Many factors will influence this, including the Government's Fairer Funding Review.

- It is widely thought that the reform of Business Rates will now be delayed until 2021-22 but this has not been publicly confirmed by the Government. It is hoped that further clarity on the timescale for Business Rates Reform will be announced by the Government as part of the One Year Spending Review for 2020-21 in September 19.

Recommendation 2: To respond to any Government announcement/consultation in September 2019 on Business Rates Reform

Recommendation 3: To continue to actively lobby and engage with the Government, Devon MPs and other sector bodies such as the District Councils Network and the Rural Services Network, for a realistic business rates baseline to be set for the Council for 2020 onwards, if business rates reform is introduced for 2020-21 or a later timescale (it is widely thought that it will be delayed until 2021-22).

Rural Services Delivery Grant

COUNCIL
Delivering efficient and effective services

- Rural Services Delivery Grant – The Council currently receives an allocation of £464,365 per annum for this grant which is given to Councils to compensate for the extra costs of delivering services in rural areas. In 2018-19 the £464,365 was built into the Council's business rates baseline due to the Council's Pilot status. The Government has not indicated what RSDG allocations will be for 2020-21 onwards (The financial modelling for 2020-21 onwards assumes that this grant will continue at the same level of £464K per annum).

- The Strategy for Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) is that the Council will continue to provide local evidence of the cost of delivering services in rural areas, in order to lobby for higher allocations of RSDG as has happened in previous years.

Negative Revenue Support Grant

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Business Rates Tariff Adjustment in 2019/20 (Negative Revenue Support Grant)

- The Business Rates Tariff Adjustment is an amount (originally scheduled to be applied in 2019/20) which increases an authority's tariff. It is applied where cuts to a Council's Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) cannot be achieved through further cuts to the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), as the RSG is already zero. In effect the Tariff Adjustment is negative Revenue Support Grant which the Government chose to reflect through a change to the tariff, although this change has nothing to do with the business rates system and has caused confusion.

- In response to the technical consultation issued on 24 July 2018, the Government withdrew temporarily Negative Revenue Support Grant in 2019/20. This cost the Government £153m as negative RSG affects 168 Councils (with both West Devon and South Hams being affected).

- It is not known what will happen to negative RSG in 2020/21 and Councils including ourselves have stressed to the Government the importance of being given certainty of this as soon as possible. It is hoped that the Government will make an announcement on this as part of the One Year Spending Review for 2020/21 due to be announced in September 2019.

- The modelling within the MTFS currently assumes that negative RSG remains in some form (e.g. as part of the business rates baseline reset) from 2020/21 onwards.

- The negative RSG currently included within the Council's modelling for 2020/21 amounts to £293,000. **If the Government eliminates this, as an outcome of the one year Spending Review for 2020/21, the Council's budget position is bettered by £293K for 2020/21. However the benefit of this is likely to only be for one year, with negative RSG expected to be implemented in full in 2021/22 – so it just gives the Council longer to prepare for the extra cuts in funding.** If the position changes, the MTFS will be updated to reflect this.

Recommendation 4: That WDBC continues to lobby in support of the Government eliminating Negative Revenue Support Grant in 2020/21 (and thereafter) and continues to lobby for Rural Services Delivery Grant allocations which adequately reflect the cost of rural service provision.

COMMUNITIES

Council and residents working together to create strong and empowered communities

New Homes Bonus

- The New Homes Bonus was introduced in 2011 to provide a clear incentive for local authorities to encourage housing growth in their areas. It rewards local Councils for additional homes added to the council tax base, as well as long term empty properties brought back into use. The Council receives £1,337 per property over the baseline plus £280 per affordable home. The Council has modelled an extra 70 properties per annum in its Taxbase (estimate of housing growth).

- The length of New Homes Bonus payments was reduced in length from 6 years to 5 years in 2017-18 and 4 years from 2018-19. From 2017-18 the Government has introduced a national baseline for housing growth of 0.4% below which New Homes Bonus will not be paid, which the Government has said reflects a percentage of housing that would have been built anyway. The baseline equated to 98 Band D Equivalent properties for West Devon. **So for the first 98 extra properties per annum the Council receives no NHB**.

- **The Government has previously stated that 2019-20 represents the final year of NHB funding** and from 2020 onwards they will explore how to incentivise housing growth most effectively, for example by using the Housing Delivery Test results to reward delivery or incentivising plans that meet or exceed local housing need. The Government will consult widely on any changes prior to implementation. It is not known if NHB will continue for one more year in 2020-21 with wider reform for 2021-22. It is also not known if legacy payments already earnt will be honoured.

- The table below shows possible levels of NHB (or an alternative introduced post 2020) and how this could be used.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Amount of NHB (or alternative scheme)	500,595	337,000?	270,000?	270,000?
To fund Capital (affordable housing)	(80,000)	(50,000)	(50,000)	(50,000)
To fund the Revenue Base Budget	(375,000)	(200,000)	(100,000)	(50,000)
Funding remaining/shortfall	45,595	TBA	TBA	TBA

Recommendation 5: To use £200,000 of New Homes Bonus funding for 2020-21 (or any alternative scheme) to fund the revenue base budget and then reduce to £100,000 by 2021-22 and £50,000 by 2022-23 for modelling purposes.

COUNCIL

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Reserves Policy

- Current Levels of Reserves(at 31/3/19): £1.286 million Unearmarked Reserves and Earmarked Reserves of £4.3 million
- The Council's Net Budget is £7.1 million for 2019/20. Therefore Unearmarked Reserves equate to 18% of the Council's Net Budget.
- The Council currently makes annual contributions to Earmarked Reserves of £120,000 to the IT Development Reserve (£25,000), Planning Reserve (£25,000), Elections Reserve (£20,000) and Vehicle Replacement Reserve (£50,000).
- There is £0.2m uncommitted in the Invest to Earn Earmarked Reserve and £0.2m uncommitted in the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve. It is further recommended to transfer £0.2m of Unearmarked Reserves into the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve, to allow the Council to have further flexibility and options around how to close the Budget Gap in 2020/21.

Minimum level of Reserves to be held

- As part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy report, it is recommended to approve to retain the policy of maintaining a minimum level of Unearmarked Reserves of £900,000. The Unearmarked Reserves (General Fund) balance of £1.286 million stands above the minimum balance of £900,000 and acts as a safeguard against unforeseen financial pressures. Given the increase in financial risks which the Council faces, the Council should consider increasing this level through a stepped increase over the next five years, to reflect the new level of risks. The increased financial risks are in part from the Council's commercial investment strategy where prudential borrowing of up to a total borrowing limit of £50 million (for all Council services) has been approved.

- Further detail on the Council's Unearmarked and Earmarked Reserves is set out in Appendix D of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Recommendation 6: That the minimum level of Unearmarked Reserves to be retained is increased from £750,000 (2019/20 level) to £900,000 for 2020/21, to reflect the increase in financial risks which the Council faces.

Recommendation 7: To transfer £200,000 of Unearmarked Reserves into the Financial Stability Earmarked Reserve.

COUNCIL

Delivering efficient and effective services

Pension Strategy

- WDBC currently pays a 13.3% employer pension contribution for staff in the Local Government Pension Scheme. This is called the future service contribution rate. This is the anticipated cost to the Council of the pension rights that staff will accrue in the future and is expressed as a percentage (%) of pensionable payroll. Employees pay a separate amount out of their salary into the Pension Fund (the employee contribution).
- In addition to the 13.3%, the Council pays an annual sum of £524,000 into the Pension Fund as a past service deficit annual contribution. This cost arises where the cost of pension rights that have already been accrued turn out to be higher than expected. This happens where the Fund experience differs from previous assumptions, and so the contributions paid do not match the cost of the pension rights accrued during a previous period. The Council has been paying this sum annually for a long period of time.
- The Pension Fund has an Actuarial Valuation every 3 years which re-calculates the employer contributions that need to be paid for the next three years and the deficit contributions. Below are the results of the 2016 Actuarial Valuation. The results of the 2019 Actuarial Valuation are expected to be known around December 2019.
- WDBC is currently paying the Deficit off over a 17 years recovery period. An option being discussed with the actuaries is to extend the 17 years deficit recovery period to align with the period of other employers within the Devon Pension Fund (which is longer e.g. 20 to 25 years) and to increase the affordability of the payments in the next Actuarial Revaluation. The Council has currently included a £75,000 cost pressure for 2020/21 for the Triennial Pension Valuation. New contribution rates will be advised to the Council by DCC in December 2019, which will inform the cost pressure.

WDBC Pension Fund	2016 Actuarial Valuation
Assets	£22.2 million
Liabilities	£(29.4) million
Deficit	£(7.2) million
Funding Level	76%
Deficit Recovery Period	17 years

Recommendation 8 - That the Council continues dialogue with the actuaries of the Devon Pension Fund and DCC on the options for the Council's Pension position, with the aim of reducing the current contributions, increasing affordability, whilst best managing the pension deficit. A report will be presented to Members by January 2020 of options, once the results of the Triennial Pension Revaluation are known.

APPENDIX C

Treasury Management /Borrowing Strategy

COUNCIL
Delivering efficient and effective services

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy details its borrowing limits and specifies approved institutes for investment, (with maximum limits), based on credit ratings and other pertinent factors. It also publishes Prudential Indicators which set investment and borrowing performance indicators to ensure that the Council stays within these guidelines.

- Borrowing Limits – The Treasury Management Strategy for 2019-20 (approved by Council in March 2019) shows the approved level of Borrowing Limits: Operational Boundary of £47.5 million and Authorised Limit of £50 million

- The Council took external treasury management advice on the Council's overall borrowing levels in September 2018 and this advice was attached in Exempt Appendix G to the Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2018. Their recommendation was that the Council limits its overall borrowing envelope for its whole operations and services to £50 million. This advice was based on a range of benchmarking of indices that they undertook. Borrowing needs to be proportionate and affordable and with always having regard to the risks involved in the repayment of the debt. Members are able to set a higher borrowing limit if they wish to do so. The S151 Officer's advice is to keep borrowing levels within the £50 million limit advised. Sensitivity analysis is shown in Appendix E.

- The Council has published new indicators for the Investment Strategy for 2019/20 and these include indicators such as the following:
  Level of debt compared to Net Service Expenditure (proportionality)
  (This indicator shows debt is projected to be 6.62 times the net service expenditure of £7 million)
  Net Commercial Income to Net Service Expenditure ratio (3.86%)
  Interest cover ratio (this indicator shows the ratio of income from commercial property investments compared to the interest expense incurred by them – stated as 207.88%) – This indicator shows that gross income from commercial property is over twice that of the interest expense.

Recommendation 9 – That the Council maintains an Upper Limit on External Borrowing (for all Council services) as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy of £50 million.

Treasury Management /Borrowing Strategy (continued)

- The Council maintains regular engagement with our Treasury Management advisors and constantly seeks their advice on our strategic direction and key operational decisions. The Council's Borrowing Strategy will be to borrow appropriately to meet the Council's objectives as a form of financing. The key is affordability criteria and the Council being able to service that borrowing.

- The Council will set a framework around the borrowing through its annual Treasury Management Strategy. There will be regular (at least annual) reviews of the Council's borrowing levels and the Council will weigh up opportunities against that borrowing limit. The key borrowing mechanism is through the PWLB. However the Council will continue to explore other sources.

Minimum Revenue Provision (repaying the Principal element of debt repayments)

- The Council has currently approved the following Minimum Revenue Provision Policy through its Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20. No changes are currently proposed to the Council's MRP Policy but this will be kept under regular review. If there are projects which officers feel would warrant a different approach, this will be brought back to Members on a business case basis for approval to vary the current MRP Policy.

Borrowing	**MRP Methodology**
Commercial Property acquisition (Total Council Borrowing of up to £50 million to include all Council services)	***Annuity Method*** ***(over the 50 years)*** Under this calculation, the revenue budget bears an equal annual charge (for principal and interest) over the life of the asset by taking into account the time value of money. Since MRP only relates to the 'principal' element, the amount of provision made annually gradually increases during the life of the asset. The interest rate used in annuity calculations will be referenced to prevailing average PWLB rates.

Borrowing	MRP Methodology
	In area Council developments on Council land may propose to repay MRP based on 50% on the annuity method over the 50 year life (the assets will be regularly maintained), and 50% will be paid on maturity of the loan from either sale of the asset (a capital receipt) or through refinancing of the debt. The position would be regularly monitored. If at any point in time the valuation of the asset falls below the open market value then the MRP policy will be revisited.
Waste Fleet, Leisure Investment and Kilworthy Park	**Asset Life Method** MRP is charged using the Asset Life method – based on the estimated life of the asset. This option provides for a reduction in the borrowing need over approximately the assets' life.

Investments

The Council has widened its use of approved counterparties from countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA-. The criteria, time limits and monetary limits applying to institutions were set out within the Council's treasury management strategy approved at Council in March 2019.

COUNCIL

Delivering efficient and effective services

Future Cost Pressures

- The Council's Strategy is to identify cost pressures as early as possible. Cost pressures can be annual or one-off and can arise for a variety of reasons e.g. legislative changes, increase in demand, factors beyond the Council's control e.g. market conditions such as recycling rates, economic conditions or natural events.

- Appendix A of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the cost pressures which have been identified for the next five years and these total £479,500 for 2020/21.

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy has included a cost pressure of £70,000 for Inflation and increases on Goods and Services. The main items are £20,000 for Business Rates increases, £2,500 for the Apprenticeship Levy, £7,500 Utilities inflation and an amount of £40,000 is to fund a 2.5% uplift on other expenditure budgets.

- The strategy takes account of a 1% rise in pay, however, the Council needs to respond to national pay bargaining. The Council built the 2% pay award for 2019/20 which was nationally agreed into the MTFS and this equated to £95,000. Thereafter 1% has been profiled each year for years 1 to 5 of the MTFS.

- A cost pressure of £150,000 has been included in 19/20 for ICT future service provision and there is a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda regarding this for consideration.

- The strategy will be to state cost pressures as they come onto the horizon and to put mitigation in place through the budget setting process on an annual basis.

APPENDIX C

Income Generation / Savings

COUNCIL

Delivering efficient and effective services

Fees and Charges

- The Council's Extended Leadership Team will present further budget options to Members for income generation/savings/reduced expenditure, as part of the Budget Setting Workshop being planned for late September/early October.
- The Extended Leadership Team will bring forward business cases to Members to invest in technology to make savings or reduce costs in the base budget. This could also be through working with Partners e.g. Town and Parish Councils.
- Income from Fees and Charges will be annually reviewed and set. Some fees and charges are set by statute (e.g. planning fees) and others are set on a cost recovery basis e.g. licensing.
- The Council's strategy is that COP Leads will work with Hub Lead Members to review fees and charges on a regular (at least annual) basis and these will be presented to the relevant Committee or Council for approval as part of the budget setting process.
- For those not prescribed, fees will be set at a realistic rate following appropriate consultation e.g. car parking tariffs, where the Council will be looking to work with towns to achieve the optimum flow of parking to generate business in the towns with neutral income effect.
- Some income will be incidental e.g. recycling and will be market led in terms of income received. The strategy will be to share that risk with the contractor.
- The Council will continue to carry out paid consultancy work for other Local Authorities for example business transformation (T18), Human Resources (carrying out assessments using the behavioural framework) – to generate income for WDBC.
- Assets and Estate Management – the strategy is that rental income will be at market rates and rents are reviewed in a timely manner with active debt recovery. The Council has target occupancy levels, though rent free periods can also be allowed in limited circumstances where there is a business need.

ENVIRONMENT
Protecting, conserving and enhancing our built and natural environment

Procurement

- The Council's strategy is to market test its services through a pragmatic and rational approach and to look at the whole value for money case in terms of whether or not to procure. This would include soft market testing and taking procurement advice around the legislative framework.
- Where the Council does go out to procurement, there will be a balance between cost and quality. The Council's strategy is to build flexibility and risk sharing into the Council's contracts, whilst retaining value for money and having the ability to make potential changes on the contract.
- The Council will look to procure externally, where appropriate, keeping risk in mind. Where the Council doesn't have the necessary in-house expertise, the cost of using external advisers will be included within the cost of the project.
- The Council will also future proof its services. For example ICT contracts are much more dynamic and ever-changing and more suited to shorter contracts. Other services such as waste are more suited to longer term contracts.
- There is a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda for the IT procurement. This report considers the options available for procuring an IT platform which meets the Councils' customer satisfaction aspirations, and digital vision, and describes the rationale and methodology used in arriving at a recommendation.

COMMUNITIES
Council and residents working together to create strong and empowered communities

Partnership Funding/Grants

WELLBEING
Supporting positive, safe and healthy lifestyles and helping those most in need

- There is a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda for Partnership Funding levels for 2020/21 onwards. It is recommended that the Hub Committee adopts a commissioning model to award partnership funding from 2020-23, based on one or all of the following:

  i) local need ii) alignment to the Council's Corporate Strategy iii) statutory duty

- The Council's SeaMoor Lotto (Community Lottery) and the Crowdfunder will help certain projects / groups. Partners can join the Lottery facilitated by the Council in order to raise funding.

Review of Assets

- The Council's Asset Base is £46 million at 31 March 2019. The Council will continually review and challenge its asset base in order to deliver the optimum value for money from the Council's Assets.

- **Commercial Property Acquisition Strategy** – The Council has approved a commercial investment strategy within the Council's overall borrowing limit of £50 million. To date, four investment properties have been purchased in 2018/19 with a value of just over £21 million in aggregate. An income projection of £200,000 from the net ancillary income from investments in commercial property has been built into the 2019/20 Base Budget.

- On 16th July 2019, the Hub Committee recommended to Council (which was approved) an update to the Commercial Investment Strategy to include the renewable energy sector. The Council's commercial investment strategy has multiple objectives as stated below:

  To support regeneration and the economic activity of the Borough, the LEP area and the South West Peninsula (in that priority order)

  To enhance economic benefit & create business rates growth

  To assist with the financial sustainability of the Council as an ancillary benefit

  To help the Council continue to deliver and/or improve frontline services in line with the Council's adopted strategy & objectives.

  West Devon Borough Council was a business rates pilot area for 2018/19, which set out the economic objectives of the pilot area.

- New property acquisitions are assessed against the Council's multiple objectives and the criteria which are set out in the Strategy. The Council will only acquire properties where the running cost does not require Council subsidy. Per acquisition, a minimum net yield (an ancillary benefit) of 1.0% is to be sought, after acquisition, management, maintenance, capital repayment and funding costs. However, the Council may opt to accept a net yield return of less than 1% if the benefits of job creation or safeguarding, tourism, town centre regeneration, business rate growth or effective asset utilisation are deemed more important than a purely financial return.