

Annual Parish report from your District Councillors April 2024

Local Elections 2023

At the Local Elections in May 2023 control of South Hams District Council passed to the Liberal Democrats for the first time since the Council was formed in the 1970s. The only other period when the Conservatives were not in the majority was in the 1990s, when members of the Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independents formed a coalition ruling group for four years. There are now 19 Liberal Democrat Councillors, seven Conservatives, three Greens, one Labour and one Independent. One Conservative member and one Green accepted invitations to join the Council's Executive Committee. Guy Pannell and David Hancock are the two Members for South Brent Ward.

Council Plan approved for 2024-5



At their February meeting this South Hams District Council voted to accept the Council Plan setting out priorities for the next four years in response to the challenges and opportunities faced by communities across the District. Members also supported the Year 1 delivery plan, and the funding needed to deliver the plans. The Council Plan includes four key policy areas: to tackle the housing challenges, address climate change and biodiversity loss, support the economy and deliver good quality services to our communities. The plan is funded by an investment of £4.59m. This is made up of £1m of money released from reserves and capital schemes that are no longer needed together with £3.59m from the realignment of core budgets and government grants such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. To complement the housing priorities in The Council Plan, the Executive also approved a specific action plan focused on Housing and Homelessness prevention. Another of the Council's key priorities is to do all it can to respond to Climate change and Biodiversity loss . It will do this with a budget of £500,000 to support a wide range of environmental initiatives, including supporting changes to agricultural practices and decarbonisation of the marine economy. The four priorities will be underpinned by providing good quality core council services. The Council will do this by working closer with our communities, improving customers access to services, making sure it is financially sustainable and putting good governance in place.

Grants for climate and ecology projects



District Councillors have been given a budget of £2,000 each to enable them to support a wide range of projects to help us tackle our Climate and Ecological Emergency Declarations. The project should meet one of the objectives in the South Hams Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy. These are:

Each Councillor has a budget of £2,000 to help not for private profit groups or organisations to deliver community projects that benefit their Ward or the wider local area. This is in addition to each Councillor's yearly budget of £2,000 for their Locality Fund to support local groups and initiatives on other projects.

Devolution Deal for Devon



Devolution for Devon and Torbay has taken a step nearer with the publication of Government proposals for a ground-breaking deal that could re-draw the future relationship between local government in Devon and Torbay, and Whitehall. The plans, announced by Levelling Up Minister Jacob Young at an event in Paignton in January, would enable more decisions to be taken locally on issues such as building more affordable homes, investing in new quality jobs and skills, and improving public transport. The proposed Deal sets out proposals that could see the transfer of a range of powers and funding to a Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), subject to public consultation. This body includes representatives of the District Councils in Devon. Under the proposals the new body would have direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030.

Through Local Skills Improvement Plans, the proposed CCA will work with business and education leaders to create a stronger relationship between employers and schools, colleges and universities.. The Government is proposing to transfer over £16 million of new funding to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy.

The Government is offering a stronger partnership with Homes England, capitalising on the Affordable Housing Programme and Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people and reduce homelessness. The proposal includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and would facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.

On transport, the proposed Deal builds on Devon County Council and Torbay Councils' long history of working well together on local transport planning. The proposed Deal will strengthen this joined-up approach with Devon and Torbay working as equal partners on a CCA and improving the efficiency and co-ordination of public transport. There is an ambition to introduce a single ticketing system for travellers and investment in services to provide greater access to public transport.

The Government is also offering to transfer responsibility for developing, designing and delivering the next stages of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from 2025.

The CCA would be responsible for working with Devon County Council, Torbay Council, District Councils and the business and education sectors to support high growth business sectors such as advanced marine engineering, defence, photonics and digital, and improve the look and feel of local communities with street and town centre enhancements.

Waste/recycling collection on track



The final reorganisation of the waste and recycling rounds in areas not previously covered has gone much more smoothly than can have been hoped for. Managers have worked closely with the collection staff to ensure the rounds are planned as efficiently as possible, and the introduction of more smaller collection lorries has worked well. In January only 191 collections were missed out of 100,00 – a failure rate of less than 0.2 per cent. The recycling rate for all waste collected is currently 45% but this is steadily improving.