

Minutes of the meeting of Bridford Parish Council held at 7pm on Monday 2nd February 2026 in Bridford Village Hall

Present: Cllr. Topley (Chair), Cllr. Purser (Vice Chair), Cllr. Gallagher, Cllr. Hollingsworth, Cllr. Acheson, Cllr. Symons and 2 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr. Marriott

Meeting started at: 7pm

Agenda item	Action	Owner
<p>1) Public Discussion: James Lockwood - raised beating the bounds – marking out the boundaries of the parish, to be walked but hasn't been done in around 25 years. Christow do theirs regularly. It's meant to be every 7 years. Usually done on 8th May (link with the church) but ground nesting birds need to be considered. Traditionally, where the boundary stones for two parishes met, the two parishes would meet and have a chat and a drink. PC feels it's a good idea and can speak to landowners for permission (James to identify and let PC know). Walk is quite challenging and around 10-15 miles along streams but can adjust it. There might be a slightly easier route to make it more accessible to more people. Route starts at the church, down to Rookery Brook and across and down to Steps Bridge. Local walking group might be interested? Several Councillors happy to support on the day. Could do in sections on same day or over several weekends. Doing it on one day for the landowners would be more straightforward. James willing to organise with support. Let the church know and have a seeing off at the church. Like the church pilgrimage with stages. Health and safety issues to consider (risk assessment and first aid). PC happy to support. May 2027 to aim for. Twinning anniversary then too.</p> <p>Anne Mayes sent a message via Cllr. Topley – Snow Team has had a quiet time and only been out 5 times this year so far but it is second wettest winter since 1836. Dartline bus service is apparently not so far very consistent and no App to find times.</p>	<p>PC to support James in organising beating the bounds</p> <p>Continue to monitor bus times and issues</p>	<p>All</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p>2) Apologies For Absence: Cllr. Marriott due to work commitments – voted and all agreed to accept apology</p>		
<p>3) Declarations Of Interest: see agenda point 16</p>		
<p>4) Minutes – to approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd November 2025 (no meeting in January 2026 due to weather conditions) - approved</p>	<p>Update website with approved minutes</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>5) Review action points from previous meeting a) Clerk's: Put play park costings on agenda for March 2026, Set up payments in Unity Trust Bank, Add piece to Unity magazine article about budget setting and considerations, Request Precept from TDC, Scan in signatures for Code of Conduct, Carry over speeding campaign to January agenda, Report Westcott stones to DCC Highways (Cllr. Symons to provide more details to Clerk), Ask DCC to remove superfluous signs (ice sign by the bridge).</p>	<p>Put Highways as standing item on agenda each month</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

<p>b) Councillors’ SS: Fort in play park to be painted action point carried over from previous meeting, Send photos to Clerk of Westcott rocks, JT: Let Southwood residents know that neighbours have booked a date for hedge cutting, All: Remind all parishioners whose properties border Pound Lane about hedge cutting</p> <p>Highways discussion – Pound Lane repairs of the tarmac were inadequate and spring plate has also not been mended; continue to point out to DCC Highways where the issues are. Drains on Pound Lane have yet to be cleared despite being reported several times. Keep to the facts. Parishioners are paying for roads that are inadequately repaired, impassable, multiple blockages. Keep following up each report – make it relentless. Quality of what happens when they come to fix it is not good and does not appear to be quality assured.</p>	<p>Continue to raise, track and monitor Highways cases and complaints</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>6) District and County Councillors’ Reports – summarised here and full reports for December, January and February available at the end of the minutes and on the website</p> <p>District Cllr. Purser Cllr. Purser reported on devolution, storm damage, recycling and battery disposal and affordable housing in Newton Abbot</p> <p>District Cllr. Swain Cllr. Swain reported on the success of TDC’s decarbonisation plans</p> <p>County Cllr. Keeling Cllr. Keeling reported on the recent weather and storm damage, Highways, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and adult social care</p>		
<p>7) Chair’s Report (for information only)- summarised here and full report available at the end of the minutes and on the website</p> <p>The Chair covered Clerk’s ILCA training completion, tree planting, support for young people, the snow team, flood work and ditch clearing, the Post Office and Book Exchange transfer to Cllr. Hollingsworth</p>	<p>Put Need to Talk youth support poster in Unity and on website and Facebook</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>8) FINANCES</p> <p><u>Income</u> £46.35 from Gilbert Stephens Solicitors to cover Clerk’s time on wasted trip to Exeter to collect old deeds and documents for Village Hall due to clerical error by Solicitors (later sent by courier to Clerk) Payment from Clerk to BPC account for overpayment of employee Pension contributions for Oct and Nov due to fixed payment schedule £10.48 per month so £20.96 total by BACS £3 payment from Clerk to make up shortfall in Income Tax paid directly from BPC account to HMRC after running PAYE tools £3.66 from Clerk to BPC Account for accidental overpayment to Nest for backdated Pension contributions</p> <p><u>Expenditure</u> <u>Clerk’s salary, pension and other expenses</u> <u>Paid</u></p>	<p>Set up payments in Unity Trust Bank</p> <p>Renew Microsoft annual subscription</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>

Clerk's salary for December (agreed with Chair as no meeting in December) minus one week of unpaid Carer's leave and Pension employee contribution of £64.56 per month so £434.94 paid by BACS
No employer pension payment due for December due to reduced earnings coming in under qualifying earnings level
No income tax to pay for December and refund applicable: -£8 as salary reduced due to unpaid leave (£8 refund paid to Clerk by BACS)
Employer NI payment for Dec £2.69 but deducted from refund above so in credit by £5.31 and carried over to January
Clerk's salary for January £666 minus Pension employee contribution of £64.56 (no Income tax to be deducted for January as in credit) = £601.44 BACS
Employer's NI contribution to HMRC for January £37.35 by BACS
Clerk's employee contribution pension payment for January to Nest Pensions (taken off salary) DD £64.56
Employer's contribution to Clerk's pension payment for January to Nest Pensions DD £4.38 per month

Fuel and car park fee from Clerk's trip to Solicitors to collect historical deeds for Village Hall: £4.50 car park fee and travel expenses of 9.5 miles x2 = 19miles @45p per mile so £8.55 (according to the Bridford Parish Council expenses policy, which follows rates from Teignbridge District Council's expenses policy 2025) Total of £13.05 BACS
January's salary, Pension, NI and travel expenses authorised by Clerk and Chair under Financial regs as meeting cancelled in January 2026 due to bad weather

To be paid

Clerk's salary for February £666 minus Pension employee contribution of £64.53 minus Income tax for February of c.£5 = £596.41 BACS

Clerk's employee contribution pension payment for February to Nest Pensions (taken off salary) DD £64.53

Employer's contribution to Clerk's pension payment for February to Nest Pensions DD £4.38 per month

Employer's NI contribution to HMRC for February £36.41 by BACS

Village Hall hire invoices: PC meeting hire from Oct and Nov 2025 £30 and Post Office weekly hire Oct-Dec 2025 £72 Total of £102 BACS

Microsoft 365 annual subscription renewal for 6/3/2026 £84.99

Gritting volunteers' drinks £46.30 to Cllr. Judy Topley by BACS – invoice received and receipt supplied at meeting

Recurring payments

Clerk's homeworking expenses - £6 per week SO

Clerk's SIM and data plan - £3.99 per month recurring payment on BPC CC (previous SO to Clerk's own account cancelled as payment now direct from BPC CC)

<p>HP Instant Ink £4.49 now by BPC CC (previous SO to Clerk’s own account cancelled as payment now direct from BPC CC) CC monthly fee £3 by DD to Lloyds Bank (for Unity Trust) Unity Trust Bank service charge £6 per month by DD</p> <p><u>Other items paid</u></p> <p>Employer Pension payment for increased contributions due to back pay April-Sept 2025 £3.66 by DD in November DALC training - Chair’s finance course (authorised and paid by the Clerk as due 11/12/25 and under £200 and in training budget in line with the Financial Regulations) £35 plus £7 VAT so £42 total – BACS DALC training attended by Cllr. Hollingsworth - New Councillor condensed training - £40 plus £8 VAT so £48 total – BACS (payment set up and authorised by Clerk for 6/1/26 to meet 30-day payment terms and under £200 and in training budget in line with the Financial Regulations) NALC training attended by Chair: beyond the Precept: Funding solutions for smaller Parish and Town Councils £42 – BACS (authorised and paid by the Clerk as due 27/12/25 and under £200 and in training budget in line with the Financial Regulations) Allotments: £30 deposit and rent for 2025/6 refund for half plot in allotments as two half plots paid for but giving up a half plot – BACS (authorised and paid by Clerk as in budget line and under £200 in line with the Financial Regulations) Diary for 2026 for Clerk £8.49 from Amazon by BPC CC (authorised by Clerk as office supplies) Bank reconciliations and statements and Unity Trust Bank and CC statements for Nov and Dec 2025 and Jan 2026 supplied Third quarter finance report supplied in January 2026 Council to resolve to accept the accounts – all agreed and resolved to accept</p>		
<p>9) PLANNING</p> <p>Planning Applications - Dartmoor National Park has asked for observations from the Parish Council on the following planning applications: Applications Decisions</p> <p><u>Applications</u> 0375/25 Certificate of lawfulness application for existing use of building for short-term holiday lets at The Shippon, Copplestone Farm, Bridford DOC/0308/25 4 – Application for discharge of conditions: Retention of field shelter, tape fencing, use of land and building in connection with horse training including hard surface area for horse walker, manure trailer, welfare caravan and parking for vehicle/horse trailer or box - Barn at Swanaford House, Bridford</p> <p><u>Decisions</u> 0308/25 - Grant of Conditional Planning Permission: Retention of field shelter, tape fencing, use of land and building in connection with horse training including hard surface area for horse walker, manure trailer, welfare caravan and parking for vehicle/horse trailer or box, Barn at Swanaford House, Bridford</p>		

<p>0321/25 - Erection of single storey rear extension, Barnstone, Bridford – certificate of lawfulness issued</p> <p>0349/25 - Replacement and enlargement of existing and construction of additional roof dormer at Barnstone, Bridford – Grant Conditionally</p> <p>0244/25 – Grant of Listed Building consent for retrospective external alteration and repair works to existing chimney, Higher Neadon, Bridford</p> <p>0245/25 - Grant of Conditional Planning Permission: Retrospective external alteration and repair works to existing chimney, Higher Neadon, Bridford</p> <p>0338/25 - Regularisation works for alterations to an internal wall and change of use of internal rooms as previously approved under planning ref: 5/36/278/97/07 at Higher Neadon, Bridford, Grant Conditionally</p> <p>0150/25 Grant Conditionally - Siting of a temporary rural workers’ mobile home, extension to agricultural building; retention of track (retrospective) and yard (revised proposals) at Coombehead Farm, Bridford</p>		
<p>10) Policy updates: Civility and Respect statement and Dignity at Work policy revised (circulated before meeting) - resolve to adopt updated versions – both agreed and adopted</p>	<p>Annotate policies with date adopted</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>11) IT Policy and Data policy (shared before the meeting) - resolve to adopt – publish to website and Clerk to keep paper copy in case of IT failure – see Stephen’s correction sent by email and amend – IT and Data polices – all agreed and both adopted</p>	<p>Make correction and post to website</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>12) Parish Plan meeting date – to be discussed and agreed – Thursday 12th March at 7pm at the pub; Councillors invited to attend to contribute to the plan</p>	<p>Update Parish Plan after meeting</p>	<p>Chair</p>
<p>13) Annual Parish Meeting (APM) date – agree date and format for meeting (to take place by 1st June 2026) – volunteers at tables for different groups and reporting on post its what’s been done and learnt – date: Thursday 7th May 2026 to start at 6pm and refreshments and nibbles to be served.</p>	<p>Check APM budget and let Chair know</p> <p>Publicise date of APM</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p>14) 20’s plenty signs – discuss and agree whether to replace old signs with new versions from school children and where funding will come from – postpone to March’s meeting</p>	<p>Carry over to March agenda</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>15) Verges plan for approval (circulated prior to meeting) – resolve to accept Verges Plan for 2026 – approved and accepted – to be shared with parishioners</p>	<p>Share on website</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>16) Annual Audit – discuss appointing an auditor and contact agreed auditor to arrange for April – all agreed to appoint Hania Lee. Cllr. Acheson declared a personal interest; Hania Lee is his Accountant.</p>	<p>Contact Hania Lee</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>17) Road Warden scheme – discuss and resolve to agree whether to take part in the Devon County Council scheme – one volunteer to do training, one to work alongside and another possible. Road warden has to get permission for each job then DCC provide PPE, Hi-Viz, equipment and tarmac – need storage place for all</p>	<p>Check insurance policy for coverage of volunteers</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

<p>these things. If PC support and volunteers get training we can do it as a trial run and continue if successful. Agreed to ask volunteers to formally take part.</p>	<p>for personal injury</p> <p>Check DCC supply and pay for all training and tools and resources.</p> <p>Ask volunteers to formally agree to take part</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Cllr. Topley</p>
<p>18) Meeting dates – 13th April, (APM 7th May) 11th May – then back to first Monday: 1st June, 6th July (no meeting Aug), 7th Sept, 5th Oct, 2nd Nov, (no meeting December), 4th Jan, 1st Feb, 1st March – all agreed</p>	<p>Let Anne Cronin know re. VH bookings</p> <p>Publish dates to website</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p>Clerk’s report for information only Updates on Churchyard closure, Highways repairs, Westcott HGVs signs, DCC Locality Funding, TDC community funding and Data Protection training and related work on policies and procedures, Road Warden scheme</p>		
<p>Councillors’ reports and Out and About in the community (for information only) from December and January Councillor Acheson reported on the back lane between Christow and Bridford – river has washed the retaining wall of the road away. Reported to DCC. Water against the tarmac but not undermining the road – sheer drop on the river side and potholes on the opposite side and slippage from the opposite bank – road now closed. Needed attention. No road closed sign at the top of the lane or Commons Lane end. Reversing back is extremely tricky.</p>	<p>Ask DCC Highways to install road closed signs at either end of road</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>Email information DALC bulletins - up to #5 (2026) and NALC bulletins DNPA Planning applications DCC Highways updates Village Hall registration updates Churchyard closure updates Policies for updating</p>		
<p>Meeting closed at 21.03</p> <p>Date of next meeting - The next council meeting will be on Monday 3rd March 2026 at 7pm in the Village Hall.</p>		

Items for Information - Please also note that April's meeting will be on 13th and May's meeting will be on 11th (not on the usual first Monday of the month due to Bank Holidays).

Signed:

Date:

Chair of Bridford Parish Council

DRAFT

Chair's report for February

CLERK

Congratulations to Tamsin who has passed her ILCA course – no mean feat on top of all the work of Clerk and RFO she has been doing

TREE PLANTING

The PC received a free Landmark tree from Devon Wildlife Trust. The tree was planted last week in the little copse in the Playpark. Thanks very much to Lucy Smerdon, Wildlife Warden for her help in planting the tree (well she planted it while I watched!) She had a look at the other trees in the copse, most of which appear to be surviving.

POSTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE

Matt Bakall and Ellie Whyte very kindly offered to update a tired postcard offering support for young people in the village who may need to talk. They produced some very user-friendly posters containing updated information; many thanks to them both for this needful piece of work.

FLOOD WORK

Very many thanks go to Seven Acre Farm; the farm arranged to clear the sidings and dig out run offs into the stream at the top of the village. Such a thorough job was done that even in the heaviest of rain during the last two storms there has been no threat of flooding.

SNOW TEAM

We had thank you drinks for the snow team on January 4th – they do a sterling job. Thanks also to Snow Warden Anne Mayes for undertaking the training again and receiving a certificate. She also prepared and returned to DCC a Snow Plan. This will be included in the Emergency Plan when it is reviewed in the summer. Thanks also to grit bin man Dan Tidball for keeping grit bins working.

POST OFFICE

There was talk towards the end of last year that the Post Office might withdraw its services from Bridford. In fact our clerk checked and at that time there were no plans for this to happen. However, it made sense to flag up that the village has this service. Thanks to Cllr Hollingsworth for designing and making advertising posters.

BOOK EXCHANGE

Thanks to Cllr Hollingsworth who has taken over the organisation of the Book Exchange which continues to be well used.

MEETINGS

Since my last report I have attended a Village Hall Meeting as an observer and a Friends of the Church Meeting as an interested parishioner.

District Councillor Purser's report Feb 2026

Devolution – waiting to find out which option is chosen and a merger will begin. Many councils asked for elections to be cancelled (not Teignbridge as every 3 years). Exeter County Council been told they don't need to hold elections but challenged by Lib Dems and Reform.

Teignmouth Pier damaged in storms.

2.99% increase for Teignbridge Precept for budget.

Trialling new recycling arrangements for films and cartons which haven't been collected in the past but if successful people will be issued with a separate bag.

Will stop collecting batteries. 8 fires so far at the recycling centre so batteries not going to be accepted from 2027.

Teignbridge will be building new affordable housing in Sherborne Road in Newton Abbot; 1- and 2-bedroom apartments – will help reduce waiting lists for housing.

District Councillor Andy Swain's report January 2026

I have an update on our ongoing de-carbonisation plans at Teignbridge.

As you may remember over the last few years, we have been working through a project to overhaul many of the buildings in Teignbridge. Systems were in need of renewal and deliberate decisions were made to treat this as an opportunity to decarbonise.

The latest figures show over £130,000 of savings per year as a result of these projects. The works included energy efficiency measures, solar panels and air source heat pumps at the council offices and many of the leisure centres. The works have also resulted in increasing leisure centre memberships.

We continue to deliver zero carbon social rented housing projects, which provide low cost, cheap to heat homes. More are on the way at Sherborne House in Newton Abbot.

Climate action has also underpinned decisions of vehicle renewal. The first phase of fleet electrification has produced direct energy savings of £18,500 with carbon savings outperforming initial estimates by 24%. As previously reported there are issues with electrifying the waste collection vehicles and work continues.

Lib Dem Teignbridge Council is committed to continuing to lead the way and in December 2025 approved its Carbon Action Plan setting out actions to help businesses, groups and residents achieve similar savings.

It is always nice to good news, but when environmental projects are so often dogged with concerns about price, it is especially nice to see clear evidence that positive action of this sort does indeed bring financial savings as well as the necessary improvements to sustainability.

County Councillor Keeling's February 2026 report

Update on Recent Weather Conditions and Devon's Carriageways

Purpose

This note provides Elected Members with an update on the impact of the recent weather patterns on the condition of Devon's fragile road network and steps the Service is taking in response.

Background

- Through November and December, Devon has continued to experience a pattern of freezing road conditions followed by a significant thaw and heavy rainfall. At the time of writing this has occurred 11 times.
- This weather pattern is incredibly damaging for the carriageways and has led to a significant increase in pothole numbers.



Figure 1 Minimum Road Surface Temperatures Nov 25 to Jan 26



Figure 2 Daily Number of Potholes Awaiting Repair Nov 25 to Jan 26

The two graphs above show the close relationship between the freezing conditions and increase in potholes. In addition, since early December the Service has regularly received in excess of 250 public reports a day with 387 received on 11th January. Since 1st November the Service has responded to over 10,500 public reports. 2,300 (22%) of these are duplicate reports that effectively slow down our inspectors, highlighting the importance of adding your details to an existing report rather than raising a new enquiry.

Response

In response to the increase in pothole numbers all non-safety (serviceability) works were suspended in early December to focus resources on safety defect potholes. In addition, some planned maintenance works were suspended before Christmas and resources allocated to safety defect potholes.

A number of M Group gangs worked through the Christmas period, repairing more than 100 potholes with Highway Safety Inspectors triaging over 750 public reports between Christmas Day and New Year’s Day.

Devon Highways are currently operating with over 30 gangs across the network and continue to monitor the backlog and number of public reports daily. Many of these teams continue to work additional hours on Saturdays and Sundays to keep the network as safe as possible.

Other Impacts

As anticipated in December, the increase in reactive safety repairs has already begun to divert resources away from planned maintenance schemes. The team are looking at programme priorities when deciding schemes to be deferred.

With the cold weather comes increased gritting. This season has already seen more than 1,000 gritting runs spread approximately 4,800t of salt across the network. The gritter drivers are the same operatives that are fixing defects and carrying out planned works, further impacting our programmes.

As well as the high demand from potholes the same teams have also been a critical part of Devon Highways’ response to a host of recent weather warnings, including the highly impactful Storm Gorette.

Other Sources of Information

[Please find below letter sent to Minister of State re LGR](#)

Re: Proposal to Cancel the May 2026 Elections due to Local Government Reorganisation Preparations

Dear Secretary of State,

I write as Leader of Teignbridge District Council to express serious concern regarding the proposal to cancel the May 2026 local elections on the grounds of ongoing preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

In our view, cancelling scheduled elections for this reason would be a mistaken course of action and would carry significant democratic, legal and practical risks.

Local elections are a fundamental expression of democratic accountability. The electorate has a legitimate expectation that elections will take place as scheduled, and postponement or cancellation, unless in truly exceptional circumstances, risks undermining public confidence in local democratic institutions.

Administrative complexity or transitional pressures should not, in themselves, override this core democratic principle.

Local government has historically demonstrated its ability to deliver elections successfully alongside periods of significant structural change. While we recognise that preparation for LGR is complex and resource-intensive, it does not make running elections unworkable. On the contrary, holding elections during a period of reform can provide renewed democratic legitimacy at a time when major decisions are being taken.

I understand that Exeter City Council have debated this matter and concluded that they are requesting a postponement of the May 2026 elections on the basis of a lack of capacity. We have offered to the Leader at the City Council a commitment to provide resources and capacity from our Democratic Services to support the elections to go ahead, and understand that similar offers of support and capacity from Devon County and District Councils may be forthcoming too. We make this offer in light of the City Council's decision and following the serious and significant concerns raised at our own Council debate over the postponement of the elections. We are confident that we can assist and remove this burden and support the Leader of the City Council hold to his original intent that elections should proceed in 2026.

Teignbridge District Council continues to work constructively with MHCLG officials and local partners. We await the Government's decision on the submitted business cases and will continue to support residents, businesses and staff through this significant period of change.

For all these reasons, we strongly believe that the May 2026 elections should proceed as planned. Doing so would reinforce democratic legitimacy, maintain public trust and demonstrate confidence in local government at a time of transformation.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet to discuss these issues further and to explore how the Government and local authorities can work together to deliver reorganisation in a way that is democratic, sustainable and focused on improving outcomes for communities.

Kind regards

Councillor Richard Keeling

Leader of Teignbridge District Council

Executive Summary – Integrated Adult Social Care Cllr Richard Keeling

The 2026/27 draft budget for Integrated Adult Social Care (IASC) totals £395.9m, an increase of £9.9m (2.6%) compared to 2025/26. The budget reflects significant demographic pressures, increasing complexity of need, national reforms, and a continuing focus on prevention, early intervention, and maximising independence.

Key pressures include £15.2m in demand growth and £15.8m from inflation and National Living Wage increases. To balance the budget, the service must deliver £21.1m in savings, alongside alternative funding and income. The 'Living Well in Devon' transformation programme—supported by a three-year £10.9m capital investment—underpins the savings strategy, focusing on strengths-based practice, improved workflow, and modernisation of care pathways.

National changes such as immigration reform, NHS reorganisation, CQC's new inspection regime, and rising complexity among working-age adults and older people significantly impact financial and operational resilience. Workforce shortages, particularly in specialist dementia, autism, and complex behaviour support, remain acute risks both for the Council and the wider independent care market.

Locally, demand continues to rise due to projected increases in dementia and learning disability prevalence. Hospital discharge pathways remain too reliant on bed-based care; system partners are collaborating to redesign this model to improve independence and reduce costs.

The Better Care Fund remains central, with approximately £137m expected for Devon in 2026/27, including £58.7m directly supporting social care functions. However, NHS financial instability presents a material risk to joint arrangements and cost-shunting.

Major risks include market sufficiency, workforce capacity, volatile unit costs, demand uncertainty, and partnership instability. Mitigations include strengthened commissioning, upskilling staff, enhanced triage for safeguarding and DoLS, and strategic engagement with NHS partners. Delivery of the savings programme, alongside transformation, is critical to the long-term sustainability of adult social care in Devon.

Storm Damage Update

I have written to the MP on Support needed in General.

Councillor Richard Keeling

Leader of Teignbridge District Council Forde House Newton Abbot TQ12 4XX

28th January 2026

Martin Wrigley MP House of Commons London SW1A 0AA Delivered by Email Re:

Immediate Need for Government Intervention on Storm Resilience Across Teignbridge

Dear Martin,

I am writing with deep concern and a sense of urgency following the severe impacts of Storm Chandra and Storm Ingrid on Teignbridge. These storms have once again exposed the fragility of our coastal and inland infrastructure, and the situation is now critical. Overnight and throughout the morning, Teignbridge teams have been stationed in multi-agency tactical coordination groups responding to rapidly developing emergencies across the district. We are already facing significant flooding in Bovey Tracey, Teigngrace, Kingsteignton and Dawlish, with further damage continuing to emerge in Teignmouth and Dawlish, where clean-up operations are still underway. The situation along the coast is particularly precarious. The seawall footpath at Sprey Point between Teignmouth and Holcombe is being closed to allow emergency repairs after storm damage, highlighting yet again how exposed this vital stretch of infrastructure has become. The River Teign is exceptionally high, floodwaters continue to threaten communities, and further incidents cannot be ruled out. These events are no longer isolated weather incidents — they represent a pattern of escalating climate-driven threats that local authorities cannot continue to absorb without decisive national intervention. Our teams are stretched, our resources are strained, and the frequency of these storms means we are constantly reacting rather than able to build long-term resilience. Urgent Action Required Given the scale and immediacy of the risks, I am asking for your active support in pressing the Government to:

1. Release emergency and long-term funding for reinforced coastal and flood-defence infrastructure along the East Coast of Teignbridge.
2. Prioritise Teignbridge within national climate-resilience strategies.
3. Expand national multi-agency resilience support.
4. Accelerate investment in preventative climate adaptation work.

Without immediate and meaningful Government action, we face the growing risk of infrastructure failure, economic disruption, and severe impacts on residents' safety and wellbeing. The situation is becoming untenable for our communities and for the teams responding on the ground. I would welcome the opportunity to meet urgently to discuss how we can work together to secure the support Teignbridge now critically needs.

Yours sincerely, Councillor Richard Keeling Leader, Teignbridge District Council

Potholes

Please note that you can report online and track your issue quickly, link here: [Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

Please contact me if you have any questions on Devon County Council or Teignbridge District Council.

Kind regards

Richard

Councillor Richard Keeling, MIoL

Andy Swain District Councillor Report December 2025

The local government reorganisation is reaching the next milestone with the deadline for submissions. Teignbridge decided to submit the 541 option at full council on 25 Nov, confirmed by executive the same day.

The various proposals have some compelling differences, which I will summarise and explain why I eventually supported 541.

The Teignbridge officers report is included in the agenda of the meeting, available at <https://democracy.teignbridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=165&MId=3798&Ver=4>

and beginning at page 47. (There is an error in the agenda, and a partial duplicate begins at page 25)

This details 8 options that have been considered. Devon county council support Option B "Plymouth Torbay" 911. This is a very credible option.

Options E,F and G involve an Exeter centred council, which would suit Exeter, however I believe it would leave North Devon isolated with no clear administrative centre, no economic "engine" and isolated geographically, with the best transport links from North Devon being to Cornwall (which has refused to consider combinations outside the county) or to Tiverton, East Devon and Exeter.

Options C, C+ and D are all 451, with options to cede territory to Plymouth. This is a credible option, giving three unitaries, none too small (Torbay is small in terms of the ideal sizes set out by government) and each having a reasonable administrative centre, and sensible communications.

The point made very strongly by Devon County Councillors in support of the 911 option is "cost of disaggregation" the impact of splitting, especially children's services and social care. These services make up a large part of Devon county council services, some 80% of the budget, and impact on those services is a driver toward 911, or otherwise to minimise that impact.

This would make New Devon one of the largest councils in the country by electorate challenged only by North Yorkshire. The government has suggested councils should have 30-100 councillors, and new Devon will have over 100. A voter in New Devon will share their unitary councillor with around 5300 other electors.

This does not compare well with the current situation where a voter shares their district councillor with around 2200 other voters, in multi-seat wards, they have a choice, and they also have a county councillor.

Attending Parish councils and maintaining links into the community is one of the more satisfying aspects of the role, and it is surprising how often knowledge and experience can be shared through that network. I think this will be lost in the big new unitaries.

So I think New Devon in the 911 is simply too big and will mean a democratic deficit, and the isolation of communities and their parish councils from higher tiers.

Even in the 541, the 5 and the 4 councils are both extremely large, both will be nudging the largest 10% of councils in the country, and voters will share a councillor with over 4000 others, but it is within the sizing guidelines set out.

Concerns about breaking up services are real and need to be mitigated. That is a reason for avoiding the options to redraw the boundaries of Plymouth. Devon services are already to some extent operating in geographical areas, if 451 is chosen, I hope they can be grouped with minimal impact.

It was clear that most people favoured the existing arrangements with district councils, but that is not an option. Whatever the outcome I do hope that the regional committees are prioritised, given real power, and have meaningful connections to the local community. I hope that citizens assemblies or something similar will be looked at.

I supported 541 as the best balance between the democratic deficit of too large a council, and the impact on Devon services. Devon continues to support 911 which is also a credible option. Other options may be put forward and the government will choose one.

County Councillor Richard Keeling's report December 2025

This month I have driven around the patch highlighting defects which have been reported to me and escalating highways issues. Please note that you can report online and track your issue quickly, link here:

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

I have also attended a leadership training course at Warwick Uni on Adult Social Care and also attended the Children's and Adult Social Care Conference.

Dartmoor National Park

I have just been informed that Dartmoor National Park's visitor centres have received prestigious tourism awards, recognising their excellence and inclusivity. The Devon Tourism Awards was held at the Sandy Park, Exeter, on the 27 November. The Devon Tourism Awards recognises county's excellence with businesses of all kinds included, from pubs and activity organisers to information and wedding venues. There were also cross-sector awards for access and inclusivity, regenerative tourism, new businesses, international tourism, unsung heroes and dog friendliness.

Local Government Reform

We held a special Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 18 November to sign off our proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). At the special meeting, a call was made for local councils in Devon to work together and seize the opportunity to improve services, regardless of the Government's decision on local government restructuring. Cabinet has agreed the draft report outlining proposals, which will be submitted to Government this month. Watch the webcast from our Democracy in Devon website.

What's our proposal?

The document outlines our preferred model for the future, which is the creation of a new single unitary council for Devon, replacing the existing county and district councils with a single-tier authority (excluding Plymouth and Torbay), serving over 800,000 people. It's a bold and ambitious proposal, shaped by the voices of our residents, our staff, and our partners, and built on delivering better services, clearer accountability, and decisions made closer to home. This means:

- simpler, more accountable services with one council, one website, one phone number
- stronger local voice, through 16 Neighbourhood Area Committees with devolved budgets and decision-making
- better value for money with projected annual savings of £28.6 million and a payback period of just two years

- continuity of critical services, such as children’s safeguarding and adult social care
- improved outcomes for residents with integrated services across housing, health, social care, education, and economic development

Adult Social Care

As your aware I champion ASC at DCC so would like to share my report to members below:

The positive impact of the Devon Mental Health Alliance (DMHA)

·The Devon Mental Health Alliance is a group of charities who receive funding from Devon Partnership Trust, Livewell Southwest and Devon County Council to provide community spaces that help people improve their mental health and stay well. They run weekly Mental Health Wellbeing and Recovery Hubs across Devon that are free, open access drop-ins. A full list of the drop-in sessions has been provided in the attached, please do share this where and when you think appropriate. DMHA has been working with DCC following the closure of the North Devon Link Centres in Summer 2024 and run 11 sessions on a weekly basis across North Devon. Here are two case studies highlighting the impact the services are having:

·Case Study One: B was mainly accessing the Link Centre offer remotely due to anxiety. This support has transitioned to the DMHA, with B receiving weekly calls. B is now coming into the centre, with a current focus on completing housing forms. B has also been supported to complete their PIP application. B is now participating in the Alliance’s Expert by Experience Community, using their insight to help shape the service offer and inform wider research activity while building confidence. ‘I have really appreciated the Alliance’s support; it’s definitely helping keep me well. They always try their best to help with any challenges I am facing, and I know they’ll respond quickly when I ask for help. I’ve enjoyed the chance to use my insight to help others – it has felt really rewarding’.

·Case Study Two: The DMHA is working with Devon Partnership Trust’s North Devon Rehabilitation and Recovery Team, utilising their infrastructure to support pathways back into the community for people with experience of psychosis diagnosis. ‘The community Rehabilitation Team is delighted to be working with DMHA and have access to the new drop-in centre in Barnstaple. The physical environment is a positive bright and airy space. Before this, we were unable to find a kitchen in the community we could use to develop an essential life skill often lacking in our client group. The drop-in centre has provided us with a new community space which will connect many people hopefully reducing isolation and loneliness.’

Scrutiny Visits to operational adult social care teams

·This week I joined Members of the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee visiting the Devon County Council Hospital Discharge Team working in the Royal Devon University Hospital. The visit is part of an on-going programme of visits to adult social care teams as part of the committees’ work programme to support its overview and scrutiny.

·Committee Members and I were warmly welcomed by the Hospital Discharge Team who have a wealth of experienced in deeply personal patient aftercare. We will be looking into how we can help the team further. Myself and the Chair, with the committee will have regular bi-monthly visits so we can update colleagues on progress.

Progress on the transformation partnership with Newton

·The recent Cabinet decision to appoint Newton as our adult social care improvement partner. We have now started the process to begin the work, with staff engagement front and centre. Three staff sessions have taken place this week and last, with Senior Managers, with Team Managers and with frontline staff to ensure everyone is clear on the purpose of the approach, how staff can contribute and get involved, and provide the opportunity to ask questions.

·I look forward to working with Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee as it develops its Cabinet agreed recommendation to develop a Standing Overview Group to scrutinise the impact and progress of the partnership.

National Children and Adult Services conference

·Last week as mentioned I attended the annual National Adult and Children's Services conference alongside Cllr Jess Bailey, Chair of the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. This will be a great opportunity to hear from national and local leaders including Stephen Kinnock MP, Minister of State for Care, Department for Health and Social Care; Chris Badger, Chief Inspector, Adult Social Care and Integrated Care, CQC; Sally Warren, Director General of Adult Social Care, DHSC; and Sarah McClinton, Chief Social Worker, DHSC. I'm looking forward to connecting with Councillors from across the South West and beyond, and to share insights and learning from others during this first year that I've been in post.

·It's also a valuable opportunity for the sector to come together and collectively make our views heard, to lobby and influence central approaches to adult social care. Tandra Forster, our Director of Integrated Adult Social Care did speak at the conference on the adult social care Fair Pay Agreement consultation current taking place, setting out the local authority view and the influence we are trying to have in order that it will work.

Sharing our best practice nationally

·Last month I let Members know that we hosted the second Southwest Direct Payments Network Conference. It was attended by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), and people with lived experience. On the back of this conference and the work staff are delivering in Devon, we have been invited by DHSC and Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) to deliver a national webinar as part of an on-going programme of national events.

·Our contribution through the webinar will be to share how we are using Direct Payments to support adult safeguarding by providing individuals with more control over their care and support. This is testament the impactful work staff are delivering here in Devon, and how other areas can learn from the things we are doing to support independence and dignity, which in one of the Council strategic priorities within the Strategic Plan 2025-2029.

County Councillor Richard Keeling's report January 2026

Wishing you all a Happy New Year.

Thank you to all the Councillors I have spoken to over the last month with their concerns in their areas.

This month I will be attending Chudleigh Town Council, Christow, Bridford and Hennock weather permitting.

[A major 'stabilisation scheme' begins today on the B3212 between Dunsford and Doccombe](#)

It'll be closed for 18 weeks from Steps Bridge to Little Haytor Farm - where a section of the road has been shut since 2022 following a landslide where half of the road slumped, leaving it unsafe.

Extensive survey and design work has gone into developing a repair scheme which will stabilise the road, improve drainage and reinstate safety barriers. Trees were removed from the site earlier this year and a 12 tonne piling rig is being brought to the location in the new year to underpin the road. A lot of work has gone into the design of the scheme and because the road is in an environmentally sensitive area it's not straight forward. We have needed permission from landowners for the large plant that will be needed on site, and due to its size there's no choice but to close the road. Throughout the work, through journeys on Country Bus service 359, between Exeter and

Moretonhampstead, will be diverted via the A30. Devon County Council has organised a shuttle service which will operate three times a day in each direction between Dunsford and Exeter, via Longdown.

Devon County Council is urging all highway users to take extra care this week, with severe overnight frosts and widespread ice expected on the region's roads, footpaths and cycleways.

Road surface temperatures across Devon are expected to fall as low as -8.4° in some parts of the county, creating a significant risk of icy patches on both treated and untreated routes. Hard frosts are likely throughout the week, and ice may form wherever wintry showers fall on cold surfaces.

Devon County Council's gritter crews have been carrying out multiple treatments across the county's primary salting network and will continue to salt priority routes through the evenings and into the early hours. This will include treating some of the busiest cycle paths in Exeter.

More travel information and advice is available on the County Council's winter travel webpages or for updates follow @DevonAlert on X (Twitter) and Facebook

Just before Christmas I shared a message with the CEO, Cabinet member for Children and Senior Officers, the briefing covered:

- Inspection updates:** positive feedback from both the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted monitoring visits shows the progress we're making in adult social care and children's services.
- Looking ahead:** our strategic plan sets ambitious goals for 2026, focusing on improving housing for care leavers, fostering services, and continuing to support independence and dignity for adults.
- Your voice matters:** updates on the People Survey and new initiatives to support wellbeing, learning, and recognition were shared.

Public Health Devon is urging parents and carers not to send their children back to school in January if they are feeling poorly or showing symptoms of flu or winter sickness bugs.

Schools have seen heightened levels of flu among pupils and staff so far this winter, with higher numbers of outbreaks than usual reported to health professionals.

Dr Radha Modgil, NHS GP and broadcaster, said:

"Parents and carers understandably want to make sure their child is well enough for school and that they're not passing any illness or infection onto classmates. But it can sometimes be difficult to know when to send them, or not.

“The NHS has some really useful guidance to help you. It’s usually fine to send your child to school if they have mild cold symptoms such as a runny nose or a slight cough as long as they don’t have a high temperature (38C degrees or above) and are otherwise well.” There are however times when children are unwell and to ensure infections don’t spread to others, it is important they stay at home for a short period of time. Some of these include:

·**Fever:** If your child has a high temperature, keep them at home until the fever has passed and they feel well

·**Diarrhoea and/or Vomiting:** Children should stay home for **at least 48 hours after symptoms have stopped**

·For other infectious illnesses this checklist can help know the advised times

How long should you keep your child off school – checklist

The NHS has online guidance about when to keep your child off school when faced with common winter illnesses. Visit:

[https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/or search ‘Is my child too ill for school?’](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/or-search/Is-my-child-too-ill-for-school?)

Steve Brown, Director of Public Health Devon, said:

“We know that children are keen to return to school after the holidays, but if they feel unwell and have a high temperature, diarrhoea or vomiting, please keep them at home until any temperature has gone and for 48 hours after diarrhoea or vomiting symptoms have passed. This helps protect their classmates, teachers, and the wider community from unnecessary illness, and also speeds up their own recovery.”

Parents are also reminded to encourage good hygiene practices, such as regular handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes, to help prevent the spread of seasonal viruses.

Vaccination is the best way to protect individuals and their families from winter illnesses. For more information, visit [Winter vaccinations and winter health – NHS](#)

The Department for Education has published a blog with links to advice

Top tips on how to keep your child healthy at school – The Education Hub:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/10/top-tips-how-child-healthy-school/>

Pain-free flu protection for 2- and 3-year-olds, and school-aged children

Children are often described as ‘superspreaders’ of flu, as they pick up and transmit the virus easily, frequently passing it on to grandparents and other vulnerable family members. That’s why it’s important to vaccinate school-aged children, and children aged 2 and 3.

The free flu vaccine does not only protect them from serious illness, but also helps reduce the spread to those around them. Furthermore, the vaccine to children is delivered as a simple nasal spray rather than an injection, making it quick and pain-free.

The immunisation programme for school-aged-children is still underway – with catch up clinics running for those who may have missed or been unwell during school visits, or children who are home educated.

These free clinics are available throughout December and January, and parents and guardians can contact the School Immunisation Service on 01392 342678 for more information.

Parents and carers of 2- and 3-year old children should visit the NHS website and book a flu vaccination appointment at their local pharmacy, or contact their GP surgery for an appointment.

Devon's residents are being encouraged to take a few moments to take part in our ongoing Libraries Consultation, which will help shape the future direction of library services across the county.

Our consultation, which runs into the New Year, invites people of all ages to share their views on how they use their local libraries, what services matter most to them, and how the library network can best support communities in the years ahead.

Councillor Cheryl CottleHunkin, Cabinet Member with responsibility for libraries, said:

“We know how much our communities value their local libraries—not just for borrowing books, but as warm, welcoming places where people can learn, connect, and feel supported.

“The festive break is often one of the few moments in the year when people finally have time to pause. We’re asking residents to use just a few of those minutes to take part in this important consultation.

“Your views will directly influence how we protect, strengthen, and modernise library services across Devon into the future. Whether you use your library weekly, occasionally, or not at all, we genuinely want to hear from you so please get involved.”

She added that people’s views will play a vital role in shaping decisionmaking in 2026 and beyond. All responses will be carefully reviewed, and conversations will continue with partners and stakeholders as long-term proposals are developed.

Residents can complete the consultation online and are encouraged to share it with family, friends, and local organisations who may also wish to contribute. Parents are asked to complete the simplified questionnaire for children under the age of 13.

The consultation can be viewed and completed online.

For those unable to complete the survey online, paper copies are available at all 50 libraries across Devon.

Roads and transport

Please note that you can report online and track your issue quickly, link here Report a problem <https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/>

Please contact me if you have any questions on Devon County Council or Teignbridge District Council.

Kind regards

Richard

Mental Health Alliance update

Dear Sir/Madam

The Devon Mental Health Alliance is a group of charities who receive funding from Devon Partnership Trust, Livewell Southwest and Devon County Council to provide community spaces that help people improve their mental health and stay well.

We run weekly Mental Health Wellbeing and Recovery Hubs across Devon. These are free, open access drop-ins. All are welcome and we'd love the opportunity to meet you. You can attend once or as often as you like. Details of all sessions are included on the other side of this page.

Each Hub is staffed by professionals (some of whom have lived experience of mental health challenges) who are there to chat, signpost and support. Hubs generally have a group of regular attendees who are always keen to welcome new people, although there is never any pressure to engage in any group activity. Some people just sit in a quiet space or have a one-to-one talk with a member of staff. Some Hubs also have other organisations involved – for example once a month in Exeter we run a family hub with Parental Minds and Nexus GP practice.

If you'd like to attend one of our Hubs please just turn up, or if you'd like a chat or further information either phone a Hub co-ordinator while a session is on using phone numbers available at

www.mentalhealthdevon.co.uk/learning-network/drop-ins or email our drop-

in coordinator at **dropins@mentalhealthdevon.co.uk**. We'll do everything we can to provide a warm welcome – if you pass your number on to us, we'll give you a ring before hand.

If you've previously used a Devon Partnership Trust service and you feel you need more support, we can try to help connect you back into their services. Again, just turn up and speak to a member of our team.

Our Mental Health Learning Network website provides information on other free resources available in your local area: **www.mentalhealthdevon.co.uk/learning-network**

Very best,

The Devon Mental Health Alliance

Location	Venue	Time
North Devon		

Barnstaple	Rosebank, Derby Road, EX32 7EZ	Wednesday 10 - 1pm
Ilfracombe	Ilfracombe Link Resource Centre, <u>Two Lanes Belvedere Rd, Ilfracombe, EX34 9JH</u>	Friday 10.30am - 1.30pm
Holsworthy	Holsworthy Youth Centre, Sanders' Lane, EX22 6HE	Monday 10am - 12.30pm

Bideford	The Old School House Higher Gunstone, Bideford, EX39 2DG	Monday 1pm - 4pm
East and Central Devon		
Okehampton (delivered by Community Links)	Changing venue, please visit https://www.mentalhealthdevon.co.uk/learning- network/drop-ins for further information	
Honiton	Thelma Hubert Gallery, Elmfield House, Dowell Street, EX14 1LX	Thursday 1.30pm - 4.30pm
Exeter	Exeter Library, Castle Street, EX4 3PQ	Monday 1pm - 4pm
Exmouth	Opening shortly, please visit https://www.mentalhealthdevon.co.uk/learning- network/drop-ins for further information	
South Devon including Torbay		
Torquay	Exeter Library, Castle Street, EX4 3PQ	Monday 1pm - 4pm
Kingsbridge	Tumbly Hill Wellbeing Hub, Square's Quay, TQ7 1HN	Tuesday 1.30pm - 4.30pm
Newton Abbott	Opening shortly, please visit https://www.mentalhealthdevon.co.uk/learning- network/drop-ins for further information	
Tiverton	Coggan's Well House, Phoenix Lane, EX16 6LU	Tuesday 1.30pm - 4.30pm
Plymouth and West Devon		
Plymouth City Centre	Ernst English House, Buckwell St, Plymouth PL1 2DA	Thursday 1pm - 4pm

Plymouth Four Greens	Four Greens Community Trust, 15 Whiteleigh Green, PL5 4DD	Mondays 1.30pm - 4.30pm
Ivybridge	The Bridge, Leonard's Road, PL21 0SL	Wednesday 12.45pm - 3.45pm
Tavistock	Tavistock United Reformed Church, 1 Russell Street, PL19 8BD	Monday 12pm - 3pm

DRAFT