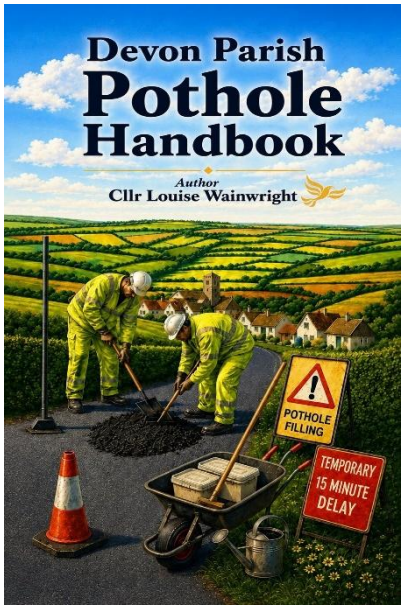
County Councillor Report- June

Libraries:

Great news for Devon's libraries! Following the extensive consultation which received more than 25,000 responses, Devon County Council's cabinet voted unanimously to support a range of positive proposals and a new vision for Devon's library service. This includes an extra £2M investment which will ensure there is no reduction in staffed opening hours over the next two years, as well as supporting transformation of our libraries to make them more resilient; making the most of all of the opportunities that came out of the consultation. This includes creating partnership libraries with local organisations and town councils, integrating more supportive services into library spaces, modernising the service to enable extended opening hours beyond traditional staffed opening hours, and training up volunteers (6000 people responded to the consultation saying they would be interested in volunteering in their local library!). As well as this we are investing an extra £100k into the book fund, and will be completely removing book fines which are a traditional and outdated concept: experience from other libraries shows that removing them entirely encourages more people to use the library, and actually makes it easier to get books back too!

£2 million cash boost secures future of Devon libraries - News

Pothole Pandemic and Revival of the Road Warden Scheme:



You may have seen on Spotlight recently, my colleague Cllr Louise Wainwright has been working extremely hard in reviving the road warden scheme to help improve the situation with our roads as much as possible. Call for volunteers to help fix Devon's £1bn pothole problem - BBC News

In parts of South Devon the road warden scheme has been working well, and we would love to see this happening right the way across Devon. If you know any keen and willing volunteers, do ask them to get in touch, and as a parish council I would be grateful if you could call 0345 155 1004 or email: communityselfhelp@devon.gov.uk to get the ball rolling and sign the parish up to the scheme.

I have printed copies available (one for each Parish) and for anyone wanting to take a look it is also available on Cllr Wainwright's website here too: Potholes | My Site 6

A Positive Direction for Devon

Things are very much on the up at Devon County Council. We have reported a £10 million underspend in our first year as a new administration. This is not because we have cut services or held back spending, but because we are managing resources more effectively and efficiently. Significantly, both Children's and Adults' Services have delivered a surplus, something that very few councils are currently able to achieve. This reflects improved financial discipline, stronger decision making, and a collaborative approach between councillors and officers.

Importantly, these savings are now being reinvested into the services that matter most to residents, including highways, libraries and frontline support.

Investing in Our Roads

Improving our roads remains one of the biggest priorities I hear from residents. I have been out and about locally in the highways van, inspecting issues first hand and working closely with officers to push for improvements. We are investing another additional £4 million into highways, including rapid response repair crews and the continuation of a successful repair trial. This allows teams to fix multiple defects in one visit, making repairs more efficient, longer lasting and better value. It is important to note that the past year has largely been delivered under the previous administration's budget. I am hopeful that with continued investment and a good summer of working conditions, we will begin to see more significant and visible improvements to our road network in the months ahead.

Council unveils £4m boost for road repairs - News

Supporting Children, Families and Foster Carers

Improving outcomes for children and young people remains our top priority. The latest Ofsted report has recognised real progress, including stronger leadership, improved stability and more effective support for families. Social workers are building better relationships and more children are receiving the right help at the right time. There is still more to do, but we are moving in the right direction and remain fully committed to improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children. We are also continuing to appeal for more foster carers. I recently attended the Hearts and Homes conference, which was both emotional and inspiring. Our foster carers do an incredible job and make a lasting difference to children's lives. It is important to know that fostering does not have to be a long term commitment. Short break and weekend care are also hugely valuable and much needed.

New approach to recruiting foster carers in Devon showing early impact

Ofsted report highlights progress in Devon children's services

Celebrating Devon's Rural Life

It was fantastic to attend the Devon County Show, which is always a highlight of the year and a wonderful celebration of our rural communities. It was a great opportunity to meet residents, farmers and local organisations.

I was particularly pleased to speak with NFU President Tom Bradshaw. We discussed important issues including food security, the impacts of climate change on farming, and the farm inheritance tax. These conversations are vital to ensuring that the voice of rural Devon is heard at a national level.

