

Council news round-up May June 2008



This news round-up is being sent to all Town and Parish Councils. You may wish to include these highlighted topics in your parish magazines. For more detailed information, you can go straight to the Council web site for agendas, reports and minutes by following this link – http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/index/your_council/committee_minutes_and_agendas.htm

Devon Unitary Review

Bob Darbourne (Communications and Improvement Manager 01395 517418)

The Boundary Committee for England is expected to announce its draft proposal for a single tier of local government in Devon on Monday 7 July. The draft proposal will be published at noon on that day on the Boundary Committee's website (see below for details) and every parish and town council will be informed via the county association.

The Boundary Committee's proposal will then be the subject of public consultation for 12 weeks through to 26 September. At the same time, the local authorities in Devon will be expected to provide detailed financial information for the affordability of the proposal to be assessed.

This will be followed by another 12 week period up to 19 December when the Boundary Committee will consider the feedback received from the consultation and may request further information.

Having deliberated, the Boundary Committee will advise the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, of its formal proposal for a single tier of local government in Devon by 31 December.

During January 2009, representations on the formal proposal may be made direct to the Secretary of State who may then decide to implement the Boundary Committee's proposal, reject it or ask for further information.

If the Secretary of State decides to implement the proposal, the earliest that any new unitary council could come into being is April 2010.

Draft proposals for Norfolk and Suffolk are expected to be announced at the same time as the one for Devon. These three counties are having unitary reviews because Exeter, Norwich and Ipswich took up the Government's invitation to seek to become unitary councils last year. However, the Secretary of State rejected their proposals to become unitary councils because she did not consider them to be viable on their existing boundaries. Instead she asked the Boundary Committee to review the local government structure in the three counties and recommend whether there could be an alternative proposal for a single tier of local government in each county.

The Boundary Committee's website is:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/boundary-reviews>

Relationships between the Statutory and the Voluntary and Community Sectors Peter Jeffs (Corporate Director 01395 517452)

East Devon Local Strategic Partnership (EDLSP) has previously signed up to the Devon-wide Compact between the statutory sector and the Community and Voluntary sector. The Government expects each area to have such a Compact.

The Compact is an agreement about how the Statutory sector (for example Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts) and the Voluntary sector will work together, and the responsibilities and approaches they will each adopt to make this a productive working relationship. It especially relates to circumstances where the Voluntary sector is providing services for, or on behalf of, the statutory sector

Having signed up to this Compact there is an expectation that all parties abide by it. It is not particularly onerous, and reflects little more than you would expect from any normal and mature relationship about trust, openness, support, professionalism, communication, and consultation. If it is felt that either party has not complied with the basic expectations there is a local mediation and resolution process

Various LSP representatives from around Devon have been involved in the production of these documents so they are sensitive to the statutory sector concerns as well as those of the Community and Voluntary sector.

As well as the main Compact document there are now supporting codes that set out more detail on the following issues:

- Equality and Diversity
- Funding and Procurement
- Volunteering
- Consultation
- Community Groups,
- Partnership

Anyone in East Devon who works with, expects services from, or provides services as the community or voluntary sector, needs to be aware of the codes, and can use them to assist in their relationship. They are available under 'Compact' on the Devon Association of CVS website www.dacvs.org.uk. More bodies are also invited to sign up to the Compact.

Public Speaking at Committees

Democratic Services 01395 517546

With effect from 1 July 2008, the Public has a right to speak at Council and Committee meetings. As standard, at the start of all Council and Committee meetings* a 15 minute period of public question time has been introduced to give members of the public the opportunity to ask questions. In addition, at all meetings of the Executive Board, the Corporate Overview Committee, the Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee, members of the public now have a general right to make statements and/or ask questions in respect of all agenda items that are not to be considered in Part B (the confidential part of the meeting). The normal procedure will be that after a report has been introduced by the relevant Portfolio Holder and/or officer, the Chairman will ask if any member of the public wishes to speak in respect of the matter and/or ask questions. In each case, contributions from members of the public are limited to a period of 3 minutes. Where there is an interest group of objectors or supporters, a spokesperson should be appointed to speak on behalf of the group. The public is advised that the Chairman has the right and discretion to control questions to avoid disruption, repetition and to make best use of the meeting time.

* The exception to this is the Licensing Committee and the Planning Inspection Committee which have their own arrangements. Public speaking at Development Control meetings will be introduced at a later date.)

Residents have their say

A District wide survey will be sent out by East Devon District Council on behalf of the department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) in early September 2008, the same questionnaire is being sent out throughout England. It will capture local people's views, experiences and perceptions, so that the solutions for an area can reflect local views and preferences. Similar surveys have been sent out since September 2000 and will also be sent out in the future, so it is also used to track people's changing perceptions, as a way of determining whether interventions made in an area result in the right outcomes for local people – that is, do people feel happier, healthier, safer? The questionnaire will be sent out to 2,500 residents of the District, and it is important that as many are completed and sent back as possible to make sure that the results are representative. The Place Survey will supply the data for a number of national indicators which will measure how well Government's priorities are being delivered by local government and local government partnerships over the next three years. They form an important part of the new, streamlined local performance framework. For more information: www.audit-commission.gov.uk or www.communities.gov.uk

Post Office Closures

(Post Office Member Champion – Councillor Ken Potter (01395 567147))

The Post Office Ltd has now put in place a Network Change Programme (“the Programme”) to implement the measures proposed by the Government. The Programme will involve the compulsory compensated closure of up to 2,500 Post Office® branches (out of a current Network of 14,000 branches), with the introduction of about 500 service points known as “Outreaches” to mitigate the impact of the proposed closures. Compensation will be paid to those sub-postmasters whose branches are compulsorily closed under the Programme.

Although more than 80% of branches will not be affected by the Programme, in order to ensure that people continue to have the best possible access to Post Office services, the Post Office Ltd will apply the minimum access criteria prescribed by the Government in the Response Document.

In order to achieve this, the Post Office has divided the UK into 47 areas and developed local area plan proposals for each area. Full details of East Devon's area plan proposals (Area Plan Proposal for Devon) can be found at www.postoffice.co.uk/networkchange.

The Post Office Ltd has taken a number of factors into account when developing the Devon proposals including local demographics, the proximity of the Post Office branches proposed for closure to other nearby branches, the number of customers currently using a particular Post Office branch, the size and ability of nearby branches to absorb extra customers, and the commercial implications of any decision for Post Office Ltd. Information has also been collected from sub-postmasters, local authorities and regional development agencies.

The local public consultation on the Area Plan Proposal for Devon commenced on 20 May and closed on 30 June 2008. This Council liaised with town and parish councils affected by the proposed closures and made appropriate representations during the consultation period. The Council does not want any of the Post Offices within the District to be lost and to help protect the network and promote the valuable work of the local Post Offices it has appointed a Member Champion for Post Offices – Councillor Ken Potter. Councillor Potter is currently working in liaison with Devon County Council (including eight local authorities) to ensure that fairness is achieved in the response to the Post Office Devon Area Plan Proposal.

Funding Opportunities

(Jamie Buckley, Consultation and Funding Co-Ordinator 01395 517569)

Money for Young People

This is an exciting opportunity for the young people of East Devon to get their own projects up and running in the area.

The Youth Opportunities Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF) are open to Young People in Devon aged 13 to 19 to apply for something they would like to do in their area, including paying for adults to help them. There is a total of £600,000 to give to the young people of Devon.

The Youth Opportunities Fund - can be used for facilities, activities, events and campaigns that help young people to be safe, healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution or achieve economic well being.

Youth Capital Fund - is just for capital items. Whatever is bought must benefit more than one person. The people that will benefit, the more likely you are to get an award. The items must be legal, have the appropriate permission or consent and not cause a nuisance.

Applications for both must be submitted by October by a young person (aged 13-19) living in Devon. For further information: www.devonyouthservice.org.uk or phone 01392 382049

Devon Village Halls

The Community Council of Devon has set up a separate website for, and about, village halls and community buildings in Devon. It can help you advertise and promote your village hall, and also provides advice and support to village halls on funding. For more information:

www.devonvillagehalls.co.uk

Museums, Libraries and Archives?

Do you have an interest or involvement in any of the South West of England's museums, libraries and archives. If so, the Museums, Libraries and Archives South West could have a course that will be useful for you. They have recently published their list of courses for 2008 including areas such as meeting national standards, involving children and young people, and tips on funding.

For more information visit: www.mlasouthwest.org.uk
