

Library Update

I spoke at the special meeting of the DCC Corporate Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee on 29 April, which was convened following the public consultation on the future of Devon's libraries. This consultation received an unprecedented 25,000 responses.

The purpose of the meeting was to consider the consultation outcomes and the recommendations due to go to Cabinet in May. However, the scrutiny report provided was extremely limited in detail, leaving little scope for meaningful scrutiny.

The Committee resolved that:

- The Cabinet decision should be deferred to allow full pre-decision scrutiny
- Statutory library hours across Devon should not be reduced

At the time of writing, it is unclear whether a further scrutiny meeting will be scheduled or whether the decision will proceed directly to Cabinet on 20 May.

Broadband

I recently organized a Teams meeting with DCC officers and West Hill Parish Council to discuss broadband upgrades in West Hill. If you would like me to organize a similar meeting for your Parish please let me know.

Local Plan

I attended the East Devon District Council (EDDC) Strategic Planning Committee on 5 May.

A key update is that the Government has extended the deadline for submitting local plans under the transitional arrangements. These transitional arrangements allow councils to benefit from comparatively lower housing targets (although still significant). The new deadline is 31st December 2026.

This extension gives EDDC additional time to complete its work. However, it also means East Devon remains highly vulnerable to speculative development in the interim.

Local Government Re-organization

We are currently awaiting the Government's decision on the reorganisation of local government in Devon, which is expected in June or July. Whatever the outcome, significant changes are anticipated, with the existing two-tier system set to be replaced by unitary authorities.

Elections to the new councils are expected to take place in May 2027. These councils will initially operate in "shadow" form, before assuming full responsibilities in April 2028.

DCC Locality Budget

My DCC locality budget is re-opening today 11th May [Locality budgets - Democracy in Devon](#). It is available to parish councils as well as community groups etc. Please contact me if you would like further information.