

**Report from Hilary Bastone – (My December notes for Parish Councils)**

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Issued by DCC on behalf of all local authorities**

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**THIS MONTH'S TOPICS IN MORE DETAIL:-**

**Household Support Fund Helps Provide Christmas Cheer**

The Benefits team have been working hard to make payments from the Household Support Fund to eligible households.

Since the scheme went live at the beginning of December, we have made payments totalling £32,170 to 98 households helping them with food, energy costs and other essential household items.

We have also made payments of £300 to 192 households which receive Council Tax disabled band reduction.

The Household Support Fund remains open for applications. To find out more information visit the Household Support Fund page on our website.

### **Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund**

The Government has announced that the Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund has opened for applications.

The fund is managed by the charity Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and village halls in England can now apply for grants to improve and modernise their facilities.

Village halls interested in applying can request grants from £7,500 to £75,000, and up to a maximum of 20 per cent of eligible project costs. Capital grants will be allocated to support infrastructure improvements, the refurbishment of facilities, such as kitchens and toilets, and measures to improve energy efficiency.

The application window will close on 20 January 2023, with successful applicants being able to draw on the funding from April 2023.

To find out more information on the fund, visit the Gov website and the ACRE website.

### **Councils 'measured' welcome to Home Office Homes for Ukraine announcement - Issued by DCC on behalf of all local authorities**

Issued by DCC on behalf of all local authorities

Devon councils have given a measured welcome to a Home Office announcement, that will see additional payments made to host households participating in the Homes to Ukraine programme.

Under the new terms, the hosts of Ukrainian guests who have been in the UK for over 12 months will be eligible for the increased national 'Thank You' payment of £500. The current national amount is £350 per host. This increased national amount is available until month 24 of the guests stay in the UK.

But councils will see Government funding reduce from £10,500 to £5,900 per guest to provide wraparound support for new arrivals from 1 January 2023.

They will however have access to additional funding to help mitigate homelessness, and to help councils with housing responsibilities acquire housing for people fleeing conflict from Ukraine and Afghanistan.

In Devon, more than 1,000 people have put themselves forward to be sponsors with over 500 more confirming their interest in becoming a future host. This has meant that over 1,600 citizens from Ukraine have arrived since Russia first invaded the country in February 2022.

District, County and Parish Councils have worked closely with voluntary and local community organisations to support both hosts and their guests.

Councillor Roger Croad, Devon County Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for communities, said:

"I'm pleased that the Government is extending their support to host households for an additional 12 months, and that additional funding will be available to help councils respond to the Home for Ukraine programme.

"However, we are yet to see the detail of this announcement or understand the impact that the reduced funding per guest will have in real terms on wraparound support for new arrivals."

Exeter City Council Leader Phil Bialyk, Chair of the Devon District's Forum, said:

"It is good news that the Government is extending its support to host households as part of the very important Homes for Ukraine programme.

"Many Ukrainians have been warmly welcomed in Exeter and across Devon through this programme, and it great that hosts will be offered enhanced support to extend those stays.

"But if the Government reduces the funding Council's receive for support services that is a concern, particularly given the growing pressures that all local authority budgets are under at the present time."

### **Council Votes Unanimously to Adopt 100% Council Tax Premium on Second Homes**

South Hams' Full Council has unanimously agreed proposals for second homeowners to pay a fair share of Council Tax. The proposals agreed would see second homeowners paying double the Council Tax amount for an area.

Proposals for the Council to adopt a 100% Council Tax Second Homes Premium as soon as legislation allows were passed yesterday, Thursday 15 December, at Full Council.

South Hams District Council declared a housing crisis in September 2021 and backed their declaration by a 12-point action plan. One of those actions included lobbying Government to allow local councils to be able to charge 200% Council Tax on second or holiday homes to ensure they contribute fairly towards the services they receive.

Their lobbying proved successful when in May 2022, the Government published the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill, which included proposals, aimed at addressing the negative impact of second homes on the supply of homes available to meet local housing need.

The Bill proposes that councils will be allowed to introduce a Council Tax premium of up to 100% in respect of second homes, meaning second homes would pay double the amount of Council Tax for an area.

The Bill is likely to become law from 1 April 2024 at the earliest.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council, said: "I'm really pleased to bring this motion to Council with Cllr Brazil. It's yet another tick in the box of our Housing Crisis's list of things that we are trying to resolve.

"The long-term viability of communities within the South Hams has been detrimentally affected by the level of second homes ownership. The sheer quantity of second homes means that house prices are pushed upwards. This can deny a home to a local resident as prices are pushed outside of what they can reasonably afford. This is especially acute for the younger generation.

"I went to Westminster in November to speak to a House of Lords Select Committee to discuss the challenges around short-term lets and the impact that has in the South Hams. It's truly concerning that with just under 4,000 second homes in the District, this means that nearly 1 in every 12 homes is a second home.

"We're not declaring war on second homes; we're simply levelling the field to make it easier for our local residents to find somewhere to live, let alone somewhere to buy. We know that the majority of people can't afford the prices of houses around the area at the moment. We do stand in solidarity with our local residents because they all have a right to have somewhere decent to live."

Cllr Brazil, Leader of the Opposition, said: "I am absolutely delighted that this motion has come about as a joint motion with the Leader of the Council, we speak as one in this Council. This is absolutely the right way forward. It will make a massive difference to us. To people who say it is an attack on second homeowners, it is not. What it is, is asking them to pay a fair share to our communities. They're in the lucky position to own not one, but two houses, when many of our local families here struggle to own just one.

"The fact that they pay a little bit more should be compared to the increase in value of their second homes. Before the latest hiccup in the economy, house prices in the South Hams increased by around 25% in the last year. Increases of hundreds of thousands of pounds. We are asking them to pay a little bit extra to support the services that we struggle to deliver.

"I'd like to pay tribute to the Leader of the Council. She has worked incredibly hard lobbying MPs for them to understand the issues. I tabled a similar motion about 15 years ago without support but, we have got there in the end."

Council Tax is charged to households to help fund the services that the area's local Town, District, County Council, Police, Fire service and Crime Commissioner provide. These services are essential for a community to function and are designed to improve the quality of life for the people who live in their communities.

The proposals to charge a 100% Council Tax premium on second homes were agreed with a unanimous vote.

A final agreement to these proposals will be made in February 2023.

You can watch the Full Council Committee Meeting here: <https://youtu.be/b1YaD1S0B0c>

### **Council Awarded £1m to Support Community Net Zero Targets**

South Hams District Council has been granted funding of over £1m to help reduce carbon emissions in the District. The money will allow the Council to deliver targeted business and community support programmes.

The award comes from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

The Council is using the money to achieve the most sustainable outcomes possible to support its Climate Change and Biodiversity promise to become net-zero by 2050.

By working closely with specialist organisations, businesses and community groups, the Council can improve sustainable travel infrastructure, begin to decarbonise our marine sector, and help our farming community to adopt innovative approaches to farming that are better for our climate and ecology.

The first step towards improvements is Active and Inclusive Travel through:

programmes of activities to encourage people to use sustainable travel for their work and leisure activities, particularly making our tourism sites accessible through low carbon transport

the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, setting out and prioritising interventions to improve the local cycling and walking networks

Agriculture and Regenerative Farming improvements will support the rural economy by:

bringing research and development to our agricultural communities, turning them into a test bed for new technologies and processes so that they can lead the way in improving the national agricultural sector.

supporting farms to transition to regenerative farming processes. Focusing focus on improving soil quality, moving away from pesticides and fertilisers, and improving biodiversity on their sites.

supporting farms and food producers to get their products into local market places.

As a coastal district it is also important to consider the Decarbonisation of the Marine Economy. Therefore, the District Council will be using their funds to:

decarbonise the Lower Dart Ferry and Salcombe water taxis.

establish the carbon footprint of Salcombe Harbour and develop a strategy to decarbonise the site.

deliver innovative pilot projects to bring new technologies and processes to the marine sector.

Across the District, the Council's specialist officers will be offering Wider Business Decarbonisation Support and Consultancy with:

support for Community Energy Groups to help them bring projects forward and access funds to support their goals.

support for village halls to strengthen the role they play in our most rural communities.

delivery of decarbonisation plans for businesses, which will then be used to help them access grant support.

work with the local construction sector and its supply chain to strengthen its ability to deliver decarbonised building projects.

Councillor Hilary Bastone, Deputy Leader of South Hams District Council, said: “This is fantastic news for the Council and the District’s communities and businesses. It’s vital that we protect our environment through clean growth but still continue to deliver the economic advantages so that our District continues to thrive and grow.

“We all know how important it is to our wellbeing to live a healthy lifestyle and this funding will help us to work towards improving that goal on travel, food and lifestyle for our residents.”

These are only some of the range of projects currently planned with some activities set to begin in January, and others scheduled to run from April 2023 until the end of March 2025.

### **Play Parks Transformed and Ready for Action**

Collapark play park in Totnes has reopened following a £100k makeover, with Westonfields park set to follow in mid-January.

Councillors from South Hams District Council, Totnes Town Council and Bridgetown Alliance representatives attended the official opening to mark the occasion.

After asking the local communities what type of playground they wanted for their children, the District Council used the information to tender a contract. Playground experts, Kompan, designed the playground equipment into an area suitable for pre-school and primary children, in line with the requests of the local residents.

The existing equipment has been removed and replaced with new freestanding wooden equipment and new safety surfacing has also been put in place throughout the parks. Collapark has also kept some of its existing long-lasting swings, which remain in good condition.

The new design has generated excitement from the children as they have watched the parks develop through their construction phase. The wide-ranging equipment will stand the test of time for children for years to come.

South Hams District Council has provided £60k from the Capital Play Parks Renewal Scheme, together with approximately £30k from reserved s106 planning funds. (Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between local authorities and developers, linked to planning permissions.)

Totnes Town Council has also contributing £10k towards the Collapark play area improvements.

South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Jonathan Hawkins, said: "It's always really great news when a play park is completed and ready for the children to use. As always, the new park has been designed to an incredibly high standard by Kompan to meet the needs of the Totnes families who will be using it.

"What makes this more special is the communities had a real input into the design of the equipment, so it closely meets the needs of the children who will be using the park.

"This has been a great community project from start to finish with joint working with our partner Totnes Town Council and with valuable input from Bridgetown Alliance.

"It is important to us that the children have great fun, gain social skills and develop their physical endurance. Parks are also a great way for parents and carers to get an opportunity to meet and have opportunities for some social time. Parks also don't have an impact on parents' finances which is incredibly important as finances are squeezed during the current cost of living crisis."

### **Raising awareness around the cost of living**

Members will recall, our Cost of Living Action Plan includes a significant focus on signposting and promoting support available to residents.

By way of an update, we thought it would be a good time to highlight some of the ongoing work in raising awareness for our residents.

We have sent out a number of cost of living e-bulletins to our subscribers, covering a wide range of topics, including foodbanks, warm spaces, energy efficiency and more. Many of these have been jointly developed with partners such as Citizens Advice.

If you know of any residents who would like to sign up, or could benefit from signing up, send them this link to our subscription page.

Our website is regularly being updated with new information on the cost of living crisis, signposting residents to support services and funding that could help them through a difficult winter.

On the homepage, residents will see a link to our Cost of Living Help page, with lots of helpful links and information.

Our online support directory, which has been live on the website for more than a year, is a trove of information on a wide variety of subjects, including issues around cost of living.

Social media posts have been going out on our channels, covering issues like foodbanks, warm spaces and more.

We've also been prominent in traditional printed media too; our communications team have been providing weekly cost of living columns for the Tindle newspapers in both the South Hams and West Devon for several months. Here in the South Hams, that includes the

Kingsbridge and Salcombe Gazette, Totnes Times, Dartmouth and South Hams Gazette and the Ivybridge and South Brent Gazette. We will be continuing this until at least March.

The articles have covered a range of topics, including:

Where to go for help and advice

Signposting to help you can receive

How to avoid scams

Warm spaces

Protecting your mental health this winter

Downsizing to reduce bills

Helping others in difficulty

Do you qualify for Council Tax reduction?

Improving homes and reducing costs

Help with housing

Universal Credit explained

We will continue to raise awareness around these issues and will keep you posted on further promotion we do.

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

The Council has received confirmation from the Levelling-Up Department that our UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) proposals have been accepted.

UKSPF is designed to put local authorities in control of the business and community support programmes delivered in their areas. The proposals are worth £1,062,367 for the South Hams.

We consulted with members in South Hams on the 6th of June to help shape our proposals and determine local priorities.

We took on board members suggestions to strengthen the agri element of the programme and to work with our community energy groups and incorporated these into our proposal prior to submission to the Government on the 1st of August.

Through the initial member consultation, we agreed a number of local priorities which align with the Corporate Strategy and the Government's Levelling-Up objectives. This has resulted in a programme of support which includes (but is not limited to):

Active and Inclusive Travel

The development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (which sets out and prioritises interventions to improve our cycling and walking network – hopefully to attract other government investment)



Support for the West Devon Transport Hub to enhance the active and inclusive travel infrastructure linking the new hub to the wider community and surrounding areas

Programmes of activities to encourage people to use sustainable travel for their work and leisure activities, particularly making our tourism sites accessible through low carbon transport

#### Agriculture and Regenerative Farming

Bringing R&D to our agricultural communities, turning them into a test bed for new technologies and processes so that they can lead the way in improving the national agricultural sector

Supporting farms to transition to regenerative farming processes (which focus on improving soil quality, moving away from pesticides and fertilisers, and improving biodiversity on their sites)

Supporting farms and food producers to get their products into local market places (mostly the food and drink sector, but also to actual markets)

#### Marine Economy and Decarbonisation

Decarbonisation of the Lower Dart Ferry and Salcombe water taxis

Studies to establish the carbon footprint of Salcombe Harbour and development of a strategy to decarbonise the site

The delivery of innovative pilot projects to bring new technologies and processes to the marine sector

Wider Business Support and Consultancy (focused on decarbonisation)

Support for Community Energy Groups to help them bring projects forward and access funds to support their goals

Support for village halls to strengthen the role they play in our most rural communities

The delivery of decarbonisation plans for businesses, which will then be used to help them access grant support

Work with our construction sector and its supply chain to strengthen its ability to deliver decarbonised building projects

and a range of other projects.

Some activities will begin delivery in January, but the bulk of our programme will run from April 2023 until the end of March 2025.

We are arranging a member briefing on January 19th at midday, where more detail of the programme of activities will be set out, and a full report will be going to Executive on the 31 of January.

### **Plymouth and South Devon Freeport Approval**

Earlier this week, the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport was the first of eight Freeports to be given the full green light along with two others.

The approval unlocks millions of pounds of grant seed funding and enables applicable businesses to join and take advantage of the Freeport status.

The Freeport will:

Enable new employment land to be bought forward at the three sites of South Yard, Langan and Sherford

Accelerate the formation of advanced manufacturing clusters in marine, defence and space sectors with low carbon applications at the forefront

Leverage £250m private sector investment

Ensure seed capital grant from Government of £25m for essential infrastructure

Include £29m investment from local councils

Support a new £30m Innovation Centre at Oceansgate

Provide a major expansion plan for Princess Yachts

Deliver over 3,500 jobs

### **Support for Homelessness**

As you are aware, South Hams and West Devon Councils work with all rough sleepers across the area to ensure they have access to appropriate services should they wish to engage and work with us to enable them to access accommodation.

With the weather getting colder we have now activated the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol until 1 March 2023. Currently there is expected to be lower day time temperatures and below zero temperatures at night during this next week.

We would be grateful if you could let us know of anyone sleeping rough and advise them to contact a member of the Housing team on 01803 861234.

Outside of office hours, the number is 01803 867034.

We will arrange for an outreach worker to make contact with them. This is particularly important during periods of severe weather, which we are expecting over the next few days.

If you are aware of any rough sleepers in your constituency areas please let me know, and if you have any questions regarding this, feel free to contact Naomi Carr.

### **Auditor gives Council Finances a Clean Bill of Health**

South Hams District Council will be one of the first few councils in Devon to have its Annual Accounts and Audit signed off.

On Thursday 24 November, South Hams District Council's Audit and Governance Committee met to approve the Council's audited Annual Accounts for 2021/22.

The Council has been given a clean bill of health by external auditors, Grant Thornton LLP, who anticipate issuing an unqualified opinion on the Council's Accounts, with the Audit Findings report having been published before the end of November.

As soon as the Government guidance has been issued on the accounting for infrastructure assets (expected early January 2023), Grant Thornton will be in a position to issue their audit opinion, as the audit is substantially complete.

Grant Thornton made specific reference to the high quality of the work and accounting records by the Council's finance team with very few adjustments to the draft accounts as a result of the audit. They stated that this reflects favourably in comparison to other Councils.

This means the Council's financial statements were properly prepared in accordance with the Accounting Code of Practice and give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year.

Cllr Lance Austen, Chairman of the Council's Audit and Governance Committee, welcomed the report. He said: "The Council has a strong reputation for financial management over the years and this audit report is a very positive endorsement of the way in which South Hams operates and looks after its finances.

The annual external audit is one of a very few external measures of the Council's financial probity and systems of control and the Council is proud to receive such a positive external audit report. The audit and inspection is testimony to the Members and staff of the Council who work hard as a team to provide the very best for the people of South Hams."

The audit work was completed through a hybrid approach, with a mixture of on-site and remote work during July to November, with a significant amount of time being invested by Council staff. There was praise too for the positive and constructive approach the Council made to the annual audit and inspection with audit queries being responded to in a quick and efficient manner.

The review was carried out by Grant Thornton UK LLP who are part of a global network of independent audit, tax and advisory firms who are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Grant Thornton will be completing their work on the Council's Value for Money (VFM) arrangements by February 2023 and will issue their Auditor's Annual Report.

They have already concluded that as part of their work so far they have considered whether there were any risks of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. They stated that they have not identified any risks of significant weakness.

At the same Audit Committee meeting, the Council also received praise from the Devon Audit Partnership (the Council's internal auditors) for way in which it administered the business grants during the COVID pandemic.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: “During the pandemic, the Council had to step up to the huge challenge of administering the COVID 19 business grants on behalf of the Government, which had to be done ‘at pace’, with the appropriate due diligence and fraud checks in place and with very limited resources. We knew how much our businesses were relying on us to deliver and how the grants were a financial lifeline for many businesses in their hour of need.

It is therefore particularly impressive that the COVID 19 Business Grants has been given an audit opinion of ‘Substantial assurance’ by the Council’s Internal Auditors, which is the highest rating possible on the internal audit of this process. The Council paid out 16,600 business grants of a total of £86 million in value which is a significant achievement.”

### **Thousands sign up for garden waste service in first month**

Thousands of households have signed up for the new chargeable fortnightly garden waste collection service in the South Hams since subscriptions went live a month ago.

Subscriptions for the service went live on 1 November and in the first month thousands of households have signed up. Anyone in the district can sign up; an annual £49 subscription covers collections for one brown wheelie bin, with a maximum of two subscriptions for two bins per household.

Collections will begin in March 2023. Residents wanting to get their first collection in March will need to have signed up to the service by 22 January 2023. This is so Council staff have enough time to create the collection rounds and get everything ready ahead of launch.

If you don't sign up by 22 January, you'll still be able to sign up, but your first collection will happen at a later date.

Cllr Keith Baldry, South Hams Executive Member for Environment, said: “The early take up of the service is really encouraging. We’d love to get as many residents as possible signed up by 22 January, so that we can create the most efficient and best collection routes possible for subscribers.

“Our staff are working tirelessly to make sure we’re ready to provide the district with a new and improved garden waste collection service in the spring. We want to reassure residents that the annual subscription fee will purely cover the cost of the service, with no profit being made. Compared to what private companies charge for collections, the annual fee represents good value for money.”

Residents can sign up to the new service in two ways:

The quickest and easiest way to sign up is on our website:

[www.southhams.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/gardenwaste) - the website is full of information and useful FAQs on the service.

Alternatively, call us: You can call us on 01803 861234. We expect phone lines to be busy, so there may be a wait.

Residents can keep their garden waste wheelie bin even if they choose not to subscribe to this service. Anyone who decides not to sign up to the service and would like to have their brown bin removed can fill out our online contact form at: [www.southhams.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/gardenwaste)

Those who decide not to sign up for the service can still take their garden waste to all three recycling centres in the South Hams. Full details, including opening hours, are available online here: [South Hams Recycling Centres](#)

Alternatively, people can find out more on home composting possibilities here: [Recycle Devon - How to Compost](#)

## **Funding to help fight climate change in the South Hams**

New projects are making a profound impact in the fight against climate in South Devon, thanks to tens of thousands of pounds' worth of funding from South Hams District Council.

In 2022, the Council has launched two key funds available to the district to support projects and infrastructure that will help in the South Hams' fight against climate change.

Back in February the Council launched a £50,000 Climate Engagement Fund to support community engagement and behavioural change projects. That was followed in May with the launch of the £100,000 Climate Infrastructure Fund. This second fund supports and boosts investment in the development of infrastructure related projects to help the district reduce its carbon emissions.

Successful organisations have now been informed of their success and projects receiving this key funding are moving forward.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council, said: "As a Council we're delighted to be able to deliver these funds. The fact that we are supporting key infrastructure projects and projects designed to change behaviours should have great long-term benefits for the environment and the South Hams community.

"Everyone needs to work together to tackle climate change and engaging with community groups and organisations is a great way to make that happen. The sort of projects that this fund can support will all play a profound part in making the South Hams reduce its carbon footprint."

Due to the strength of applications, the Council allocated £55,285 to support a broader range of Climate Engagement Fund applications while keeping as close to the £50,000 allocation as possible.

Among the main beneficiaries is Sustainable South Hams, who have received £22,500 from the fund. The money will support the continuation of the SSH and support their flagship projects going into 2024. SSH is a growing network of volunteers, parish councils, experts and residents working together to fight climate change. A grant of £7,500 to Blue Environment will be used to support, promote and accelerate the use of clean technologies for the marine leisure and recreation industry.

The biggest beneficiary from the Climate Infrastructure Fund is a scheme to create a bike and e-bike network by CoBikes. The scheme will trial a network of bike and e-bike stations in Dartmouth and Totnes.

Helen Scholes, Marketing and Partnerships Manager for CoBikes, said: “We are really excited to be trialling an e-bike network in Totnes and Dartmouth.

“Because they are electric, our bikes can easily tackle hills and shorten journey times whilst helping people avoid getting tired or sweaty, giving them the confidence to make journeys by bike they may not have previously considered.

“E-bikes also reduce car journeys - in a recent survey, 54% of respondents said they used our bikes to make trips that would have otherwise been done by car.”

Other schemes to benefit include Share Shed – A Library of Things. They have received £19,600 of funding to expand its weekly mobile service to Ivybridge and Kingsbridge. The Share Shed already serves South Brent, Totnes, Ashburton, Buckfastleigh and Dartington and has over 350 useful items for people to borrow, reducing pollution and waste.

### **South Hams waste service stabilising since transfer back in-house**

The waste and recycling service in the South Hams has seen significant improvements in performance since the service successfully came back in-house on 3 October.

In July, the decision was made to bring the services in-house, so that the Council could do everything in its power to provide a stable and reliable waste and recycling collection service for the residents of the district.

Almost nine weeks since the transfer back at the start of October, the Council is now completing all collection rounds as currently scheduled and reduced the number of reported missed collections by around 75%.

There is still a long way to go, but these are all steps in the right direction to provide South Hams residents with the service they deserve in the long term.

Cllr Keith Baldry, South Hams Executive Member for the Environment, said: “We have successfully taken back in-house the waste service. Enormous credit should go to the officers who have done so. They have worked extremely hard to achieve what we have achieved.

“This is a far better result than I expected. It is a great achievement, what has been done so far. We went from a situation where we were regularly failing under the previous regime to collect people’s waste and recycling. We’ve now reached a situation where it is extremely rare for us to fail.

“That happened from day one of taking the service back in-house. It has been a successful transfer. That is due to the tremendous hard work of the team. It is a success story of which the team should be enormously proud.

“We’ve achieved that, but there’s a long way to go. Our teams are continuing the hard work to improve the consistency and efficiency of the service, but these aren’t easy fixes. They take time. After these first steps though, I am positive that with the team we have, both on the ground and behind the scenes, we will get there.”

A report on the progress being made was presented to the Council’s Executive on 1 December. It noted that as well as the household waste and recycling collections, other aspects of the service have seen improvements too.

Since the transfer, fly-tips are being clearer more quickly. The public toilet cleaning schedule has been maintained, and processes have begun to deploy the street cleaning sweepers.

Speaking at the Executive meeting, Cllr Bernard Taylor, South Hams District Council Vice Chairman, said: “I’d like to congratulate the team on what they’ve done. It’s nice to open up the computer and not get a load of complaints from residents. Talking to the drivers when they come around, they’re delighted because they’re being listened to. They’re happy doing what they do.”

One of the most significant pieces of work to ensure continued improvements is the review of collection rounds across the district – this is due to take place next year.

### **Councils promoting sites for affordable housing in Kingsbridge**

South Hams District Council and Kingsbridge Town Council are inviting expressions of interest (EOI) to deliver affordable-led housing in Kingsbridge.

The two Councils are inviting EOIs, including offers and proposals for purchase or partnerships on two sites at Ropewalk, for the delivery of good quality affordable led housing. The first location is a brownfield site, previously used as a day centre for those with additional needs by Devon County Council. The second location is a greenfield site accessed from Ropewalk.

Interested parties are invited to submit informal proposals for the site by 29 January 2023.

The sites currently do not have planning permission for housing. Any interested party would need to outline within their EOI how they would plan to deliver an affordable led scheme on these sites, including obtaining all necessary planning consents and related infrastructure.

Cllr Judy Pearce, South Hams Executive Member for Housing, said: “Housing has been a priority for the Council for many years, but our declaration of a housing crisis last September has made this topic even more important for us.

“We hope to hear from as many interested parties as possible to bring forward housing schemes on these sites. Affordability is a key component of any suggestion and any houses built on these sites should also have an emphasis on quality too.”

Applicants should make clear their requirements as part of their proposal.

After submitting the application, parties may be invited to discuss their proposals in more detail.

All proposals should be in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan.

Martina Edmonds, Kingsbridge Town Councillor and representative on the focus group, said: “We at Kingsbridge Town Council have been working alongside the landowners South Hams District Council, officers and South Hams Councillors for some time on this project. We are delighted that the advertisement for Expression of Interest has now been launched.”

To find out more, visit <https://www.seamoorhomes.co.uk/property/186/0-bed-land-for-sale-land-at-rope-walk-kingsbridge/>

Site visits are available but by appointment only. Contact South Hams District Council on [estates@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:estates@swdevon.gov.uk) or 01803 861436.

### **Motorhome scheme set to stay**

A 12-month pilot scheme allowing self-contained motorhomes to stay at nominated South Hams’ car parks has been permanently adopted by the District Council’s Executive Committee.

The pilot scheme, which began in June 2021, trialled five sites for self-contained motorhomes in the following car parks:

Longmarsh Car Park, Totnes

Leonards Road Car Park, Ivybridge

Poundwell Meadow Car Park, Modbury

Park & Ride Car Park, Dartmouth

Cattlemarket Car Park, Kingsbridge

Having reviewed the pilot, it has been agreed to permanently allow overnight sleeping for a two-night consecutive stop with no return within 48 hours within these car parks. The scheme is restricted to motorhomes with on-board facilities including a toilet.

The stays will continue to be charged at an overnight fee of £10 from 6 p.m. until 9 a.m.

The adoption of the pilot will continue to support increased tourism and boost the local economies of the featured towns. Furthermore the policy assists with the effective management of motorhomes including, access issues from inconsiderate parking in areas unsuitable for larger vehicles.

During the pilot Totnes was revealed as the most popular destination for motorhomes within this scheme. Followed by Dartmouth, Kingsbridge and then followed by Modbury and Ivybridge.

There have been some concerns with reports received of antisocial behaviour at one of the sites, although it is not certain whether this relates to visiting motorhomes or other users of the car park. To ensure the use of our car parks for our visitors and residents using the



facilities, enforcement visits will continue regularly at the locations. This will involve checks late at night and at very early morning.

Cllr Keith Baldry, South Hams District Council's Executive Member for Environment, said: "I'm really pleased that the scheme has been adopted in five towns to continue permanently. It has been a positive experience for our visitors and for our economy, which is what we had hoped for when we embarked on this trial.

"We have listened to our communities throughout the past 12 months, where there were some isolated anti-social issues and we responded to them rapidly. We did this by increasing visits by our officers, improving site signage and introducing number plate parking to help regulate the two-day parking rules. This quick action has helped to address the concerns of our apprehensive residents."

Here is what some of the motorhome visitors had to say about the scheme.

- 'Basic car park next to some really nice walks along the river. Toilets up the road and only a short walk into town. Very busy in the morning but it is a car park after all.'
- 'Stayed here one night just before Christmas and had no problem parking up. Toilets were not available but self-contained so no real issue. There is a bit of a hill but we parked at the bottom where its level. We'll definitely use it again (especially out of season).'
- 'Did a litter pick around the car park and had evening meals out as well as spending in your shops and café. I expect we spent between £150 - £180 in total, which your town would not have received had it not been for parking.'

### **Slow cookers, cookbooks, electric blankets**

Just some of the ways South Hams District Council will distribute £187,311 of government funding allocated to them by Devon County Council.

The Government has now made a further £421m available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need with the rising cost of living.

This latest fund must be used to support households in the most need and particularly those who may not be eligible for other support the government has recently made available.

At the meeting of its Executive today, South Hams District Council's Lead Member for the Cost of Living said that South Hams would like to focus on supporting those who may be just above income thresholds, meaning they do not qualify for other support.

Cllr Nicky Hopwood, South Hams Executive Member for the Cost of Living said: "We have seen many different funds come forward to support residents in different ways. But as always it is those people just outside of the thresholds for getting help that will be suffering the most.

"This funding has to be spent by March 2023, and we wanted to devise a range of different ways to help families. We didn't just want to provide the funds, but by providing things like slow cookers and electric blankets we can help the residents save money and reduce their costs for a longer period of time.

The Executive proposed to use the funds in the following ways:

Making payments of £650 to working age households receiving council tax reduction and not receiving passported benefits on 1 December 2022. It is estimated that 21 households will benefit as a result.

Making payments of £300 to households receiving council tax disabled band reduction on 1 December 2022. It is estimated that we will be able to support 234 households who are likely to have additional energy costs due to disabilities.

Providing funding of £10,000 to help partners provide slow cookers and cookbooks, electric blankets, warm clothing and sleeping bags to individuals and households identified as being in need.

Using the remainder of the funding to offer an open application process to provide support to low-income households and others in financial need.

South Hams District Council says that the key to distributing this money is to get it out to those most in need as quickly as possible and the Council has a proven track record in this area.

The Council officers have now been given permission to activate these plans and more news on the fund and how direct payments will be made will follow in the coming days.

For more information of everything that the council is doing for the cost of living – please visit: [www.southhams.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help)

### **South Hams doing all it can to help housing crisis**

A year after declaring a housing crisis in the district, South Hams is working hard to try and help the situation.

The Council declared a housing crisis in September 2021 and laid down 12 specific actions it could take to try improving the problem.

Among numerous actions taken to help since last September, the Council has:

Started building its own affordable homes for the first time in a generation at St Ann's Chapel, near Bigbury

Launched a scheme to incentivise downsizing homes for those living in a housing association or social housing property – with 15 homes already freed up and four more accepted on the scheme

Launched an innovative new “Step On” pilot scheme to help people get on the housing ladder by helping with deposits on shared ownership homes

Worked in partnership with Kingsbridge Town to invite expressions of interest on two council-owned sites in Kingsbridge, to bring forward affordable homes

Lobbied Government, through MPs and the Local Government Association, for a licensing scheme with physical checks and an extension of the Regulation Act 2015 in areas with high numbers of second homes

Built a new website for its ethical lettings agency in an effort to promote this further and encourage landlords to sign up

Council Leader and South Hams Executive Member for Housing, Cllr Judy Pearce, also appeared at Westminster on 8 November to speak to a House of Lords Select Committee to discuss the challenges around short-term lets and the impact that has in the South Hams.

Cllr Pearce said: “We recognise that the problems surrounding housing in the South Hams – and across large parts of the country – are complex and often outside of our control. However, we want to do whatever we can as a Council to help alleviate the problems. It’s imperative that we continue to lobby Government to bring about legislative changes and continue to take opportunities to champion our causes.

“It’s also a priority to make best use of our existing housing stock and continue our work on our own housing sites, such as the two sites at Kingsbridge and to complete the new homes being built at St Ann’s Chapel and ensure they’re allocated to local people in housing need.”

Since declaring the crisis 14 months ago, the Council has embedded its efforts to improve housing options in its Better Homes, Better Lives Housing Strategy, which will be refreshed in the coming months.

In that time, the size and significance of the crisis has appeared to grow, with new challenges arising. The war in Ukraine and Homes for Ukraine scheme, the cost-of-living crisis and global price rises in material and labour have aggravated issues surrounding the crisis.

The 12 actions laid down in September 2021 are:

The District Council will lobby government, through MPs and the Local Government Association, to allow a Council Tax charge on housing plots with planning permission if they have not been built after a specified period. This would encourage developers to get on and build their sites without delay.

They will also lobby Government to review all holiday accommodation. This would ensure that it is properly regulated, complying with local planning policies and taxes. This could include an extension of the 90-day short let legislation, a proper planning class for short lets and proper licencing for them. This would prevent people finding loopholes in the taxation system and prevent too many local homes being converted to holiday accommodation.

The Council should also immediately review all holiday letting in the District to ensure that the owners are paying the correct amount for the removal of waste and recycling. Businesses should not be on the normal domestic recycling and waste collection.

South Hams District Council will also ask the Joint Local Plan project team to review the amounts of affordable housing in the Joint Local Plan and see if this can be increased, so that the percentage of "First Homes" on a development is in addition to the existing requirement for 30% affordable housing.

The District Council already runs a letting agency to encourage landlords to make properties available for local families in need. There should be further promotion of this and regular landlord forums to encourage more properties to become available.

The District Council works closely with registered providers on many housing projects across the District; they will now be working with them to ensure the best use of those properties, such as to encourage tenants to downsize where possible and make larger properties available for larger households.

In addition to this, the District Council is proposing to use some of the affordable housing revenue to increase payments made to those tenants downsizing to make the move more attractable and affordable.

The Council is committed to using Section 106 affordable housing contributions as soon as possible, to help fund developments anywhere in the District where the terms of the Section 106 agreements will allow.

The Council also wants to campaign for changes to the Broad Market Area, to better reflect the costs of rents in the South Hams.

The Council would encourage the development of an exemplar site of low carbon modular housing such as ZEDpods, to show that developments like this can be both stylish and great to live in.

South Hams District Council also agreed to actively seek opportunities to invest in Council owned social housing with highly sustainable specification.

To lobby Government to allow local councils to be able to charge 200% Council Tax on second / holiday homes, as they do in Wales.

### **South Hams Council supporting Devon Carbon Plan**

The importance of the objectives and ambitions laid out by the Devon Carbon Plan have been backed by South Hams District Council this week.

The Devon Carbon Plan is the roadmap for how Devon will reach net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. It has been created following long-term, ongoing assessments of Devon's greenhouse gas emissions. The plan is a milestone for the County on its path to reducing carbon emission and outlines actions for how each sector of the county's economy and infrastructure can reach net-zero.

At their Executive meeting on 1 December, South Hams Councillors endorsed the plan and has recommended to Full Council that its own Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, which predates the publication of the Devon Carbon Plan, be revised to ensure it contributes to delivering the Devon Carbon Plan.

Council Leader, Cllr Judy Pearce, said: "The Devon Carbon Plan has been a significant piece of work, proving what can be achieved if we work together.

"Of course, identifying what needs to be done is only the first step on the path to getting to net-zero. We now need to take the actions necessary to limit rises in global temperatures.

“It’s vital that we act now and as a Council, we’re committed to lowering our carbon output and playing our part.”

South Hams District Council declared its climate change and biodiversity emergency back in July 2019. At that time, it committed to collaborate with Devon County Council, all the Devon District Councils, Plymouth City Council and other agencies to address the emergency.

These partner organisations – working together under the banner of the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group – have worked together since 2019 to create the Devon Carbon Plan.