



Councillor Richard Keeling's Report March 2026, to Chudleigh, Hennock, Ashton, Bridford, Christow, Doddiscomleigh, Dunsford, Mortonhampstead, Tedburn St Mary & Trusham.

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to all the Councillors I have spoken to over the last month with their concerns in their areas. This report covers mainly the new budget at Devon County Council which was passed with unanimous support - 52 in favour.

Key Headlines.

Highways

The budget puts an extra £19 million into roads to fix potholes and highways drainage.

There's an extra £500,000 to improve quality assurance on the work done.

It's the first Liberal Democrat budget since last May's elections and in a full-on display of your councillors working together and putting aside politicking - the budget was voted for by Green, Independent, Conservative and Reform councillors. Just two councillors decided not to vote and abstained.

Libraries

Libraries Unlimited was supported with a grant of over 7 million pounds with an increase in the book purchases to £500,000 a planned £650,000 efficiency saving was cancelled and then money put back in the budget along with a new £1m transformation reserve. To be clear not 1 of the 50 libraries are being closed we are investing more, because we are listening to residents.

Budget For Residents

The budget focuses on the services residents rely on most, particularly support for, children vulnerable adults, the condition of our roads and your concerns. One of the biggest concern as well as potholes was that the libraries were supported. I spoke out at Cabinet and voted to support the investment into our libraries which are our community hubs, the additional 1 million transformation fund will help with libraries being able to open longer by introducing technology.

So at the Full Council meeting (Tuesday 24 February) it was agreed that a 4.99 per cent increase on our council tax share, this amounts to £89.91 a year (£1.73 a week) for a Band D property for the county council's share (precept).

This would result in a council tax requirement for the authority of just over £610 million for 26/27.

To balance the position, the authority has to deliver £38.98 million of savings, alternative funding or additional income.

The budget explains how the council will continue to support local services at a time when costs are rising and demand for help is increasing.

The council will spend £839.2 million on day-to-day services next year. This is £33.2 million more (4.1 per cent) than in 2025/26.

Councillors also agreed a £770.6 million capital investment programme covering the five years from 2026/27 to 2030/31.

This money will be used for major projects such as road repairs, new school places, support for children with special educational needs, and improvements to council buildings across Devon.

Roads and transport

Spending on highways maintenance will rise to £32.4 million in 2026/27, an increase of £2 million.

Full Council also agreed an additional £4 million investment for highways maintenance over the next financial year.

This will pay for more road repairs, better drainage, clearing roadside gullies and protecting Devon's road network.

This is all part of the Climate Change, Environment and Transport budget of £96.9 million.

Additionally over the next five years, £546.1 million in total will be invested in highways. This includes an extra £55 million over five years for preventative maintenance.

Children and families

The Children and families budget will see the largest increase in funding across the council.

Spending will rise to £268 million in 2026/27, an increase of £19.1 million. This reflects growing pressure on children's social care, early help for families, and support for children who cannot live at home.

Children and families – capital investment

A total of £76.5 million will be invested over five years in children's homes, school expansions and specialist education provision.

Helping children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities remains a key priority.

Over the next five years, £25.8 million will be spent on new and expanded specialist schools to create more places for children who need extra support.

Adult social care

Adult social care continues to be the council's biggest area of spending.

The budget for adult social care will rise to £395.9 million in 2026/27, an increase of £9.9 million, or 2.6 per cent. This helps cover rising costs, including higher wages for care staff.

The council will also invest £51.6 million over five years to help adults live independently, including adaptations to homes and investment in care facilities and equipment.

Public health, communities and libraries

The council will receive £37.7 million to support public health services, including help with drug and alcohol misuse and stop-smoking services.

Spending on community services and libraries will total £14.4 million in 2026/27.

As I mentioned in the headlines we agreed additional funding of £225,000 to restore the book fund to £500,000 and an extra £425,000 to support general library delivery during transition.

Together, these total £650,000, and reverses the proposed efficiency saving within the original libraries budget resulting in a libraries budget of more than £7 million.

In addition, a £1 million reserve for Libraries and Rural Hubs will be established to support genuine transformation and community led improvement.

Additional funding

The council also approved targeted funding which reflects priorities that have arisen through meetings of the council's scrutiny committees, community feedback and consultations with businesses and voluntary organisations.

These include an additional £600,000 to improve the speed in which Education Health Care Plans are delivered; £300,000 additional foster care support; £106,000 to strengthen domestic abuse provision; increase of each councillor's locality budget to £10,000.

There is also an additional £500,000 for post-16 and foster care transport.

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

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