

Appendix 1 - In answer to 'So what are we doing to address some of these issues?'

Here is just a flavour of what the Council is or will be doing over the next couple of years.

1.1 Leisure

1.1.1 Review pricing policy for lower income families:

The Council continues to offer discounts for lower income families. Further information and eligibility criteria can be found on the Mid Devon Leisure website.

<https://middevonleisure.com/concessionary-discount/>

1.1.2 Consider a swimming pool in Cullompton:

The Council is aware of this desire for many people in the area, however the Council has had a significant challenge to maintain the existing leisure service in its current form, an additional swimming pool in Cullompton would add to that affordability pressure.

1.1.3 More cycle paths:

A local cycling and walking infrastructure plan is out for consultation by Devon County Council, who the Council continues to work closely with.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/consultations/cullomptonlcwip/>

The Council continues to work to promote the inclusion of walking and cycling paths in new developments and is undertaking work to consider future mobility and the provision of mobility hubs – including at the Culm Garden Village.

1.2 Housing

1.2.1 More affordable housing for local people:

The Council continues to progress its delivery plans for more affordable and social homes in the district – both through its own developments of social housing, but also by working in conjunction with other developers and landowners to promote and secure the wider delivery of affordable homes.

The Council has recently delivered new modular social homes in both Cullompton and Tiverton and more planning applications will be submitted for social housing projects across the whole district.

<https://www.zedpods.com/st-andrews-house>

<https://www.zedpods.com/mid-devon-shapland-place>

1.3 Climate:

1.3.1 Improve air quality:

The Council has commissioned the Crediton Masterplan with a key ambition of identifying interventions that the Council can deliver to support air quality improvements in Crediton.

It also continues to seek funding to enable delivery of the Cullompton Town Centre relief road, with a key aim of addressing existing air quality issues in Cullompton.

1.3.2 Plant more trees:

The Council has planted/is planting over 50 'standards' (large sized trees) in winter 2023/24.

'Standards' are equivalent to 10 'whip' sized tree saplings, which means we have met our annual tree target.

1.4 **Street Scene and Recycling:**

1.4.1 Change the way recycling is stored and collected:

The Council's kerbside recycling scheme ensures only recyclable materials are collected; any non-recyclable materials are left behind and residents are made aware. Recycling rates are shown to be higher in districts that have kerbside sorting, as opposed to recycling using wheelie bins.

1.4.2 More frequent recycling and waste collections:

The introduction of three-weekly collections has seen a 5% rise in the district's recycling rate and is now (2022/23) in the top 10% of all councils nationally for its high recycling rate and low residual tonnage collection.

1.4.3 Enforcement for dogs:

On 7 October 2021, the Council introduced a new Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for a duration of 3 years in order to ensure that dogs are kept under proper control in Public Spaces, as well as to tackle dog fouling.

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/dogs/public-space-protection-order/>

1.4.4 Tackle ASB:

Environment enforcement of fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling up by 100% on 2021/22.

1.4.6 Maintain overgrown footpaths, verges, etc.:

The Council's in-house Grounds Maintenance team have a regular maintenance regime in place for council-owned land. Generally, footpaths and verges around the district are managed by Devon County Council. Our customer services assist with ad hoc enquires.

1.4.7 Re-open all public toilet facilities:

The Council has transferred a number of public conveniences across to town and parish councils to ensure that they continue to be operational. Tiverton Town Council have a partnership arrangement for the upkeep of conveniences in the town.

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/public-toilets/>

The Council has also secured partial funding for 'Changing Places' facilities at each of its three leisure centres; these will greatly enhance the facilities offered at each site.

1.4.8 Collection of soft plastics:

All councils in England will be expected to collect soft plastics from 2027 as part of the Government's Simpler Recycling mandate. At present, these can be recycled at larger supermarkets.

1.4.9 Reduce parking fees:

The parking service has been working with stakeholders to bridge the communication gap between the Council and local community groups.

As a result, a parking consultation group has been established with community and business representatives to better understand opportunities and requirements in relation to parking and decision-making. The parking consultation group is currently preparing proposals to put forward to the Economy PDG.

We also offer parking permits – which for regular users offer excellent value for money.

1.5 **Planning**

1.5.1 Review your planning process:

Mid Devon is currently one of the highest performing local planning authorities in the South West in terms of application processing.

The Council continues to work in accordance with national planning guidance and is working to develop a new Local Plan; Plan Mid Devon.

1.5.2 Address issues facing Cullompton Town Centre. Traffic, parking, only housing (no additional doctors, schools, etc.) and relief road. Stop building without infrastructure:

The Council is committed to delivery of the Cullompton town centre relief road and continues to work hard to secure the balance of funding required to deliver this crucial enabling infrastructure.

It is also working to ensure that other supporting infrastructure is provided alongside new development.

1.5.3 Protect and provide green spaces:

The current adopted local plan for Mid Devon includes policies that require the provision of public open space in new development, setting out standards for this, and also protecting open spaces and designates areas of 'local green space' at 7 villages.

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/354365/local-plan-review-2013-2033-adopted-11112022-accessible.pdf>

Recently adopted neighbourhoods plans also designate local green spaces to be protected; Cullompton – 16, and Tiverton – 30, with neighbourhood plans for other areas currently being prepared or consulted on.

1.5.4 Enhance town centres. Empty shops:

Town centres continue to be supported through grant schemes and business support/advice – 7 businesses have filled empty units, 46 town centre events have been supported, nine businesses have decorated their shopfronts and two have fit-out units. Notably, the Higher Bullring in Cullompton has undergone months of improvement works to enhance its heritage setting, and creating a functional public space to bring community members together.

1.5.5 Improve planning enforcement:

Despite challenges with funding and recruitment, the Council remains committed to providing a robust and effective planning enforcement service.

1.6 Members:

1.6.1 More engagement with residents from town/parish councils who could forward issues to the Council:

The Council has appointed a Town and Parish Liaison Officer so that there is a named point of contact should town and parish councils need to contact the Council. Town and parish councils have been made aware that residents have raised engagement as an area for improvement.

District Councillors are also encouraged to attend their town and parish meetings on a regular basis so that they can listen to concerns raised by residents.

1.6.2 Ask councillors to be more involved with the residents they 'represent':

District councillors are encouraged to attend their town and parish meetings, and local surgeries so that they can listen to concerns raised by residents.

The ability of the Council to promote a closer working relationship was explored at the State of District Debate on 20 March.

1.6.3 I would like to see my local representative out and about in the community more:

Same as 1.6.2.

1.7 Finance

1.7.1 Invest in areas other than Tiverton:

Circa £41M of social housing development is planned across 2024/25 to 2028/29, delivering more than 200 units of social housing development outside of Tiverton, with circa £12M due to be spent in 2024/25.

The Council is also supporting town centre vitality projects through the Vibrant Town Centre Scheme and other destination management projects, which includes awarding funding towards 4 town centre projects in Crediton, 4 in Cullompton and 1 in Bampton.

1.7.2 Spend less on corporate services:

Delivered significant budget savings to meet the £2.103M budget shortfall originally identified for 2024/25.

1.7.3 Support for businesses:

The Council secured £486,704 of funding towards supporting economic projects in 2023, and a total of 292 businesses were supported between April and November 2023 - performance in upper quartile and one of the best in Devon.

1.8 Corporate; customer services and communication:

1.8.1 Better responses to emails:

The Council is in the process of changing how we manage customer contacts and have implemented a new customer self-service portal, which allows customers to register an account and will enable them track their service requests online.

<https://my.middevon.gov.uk/>

1.8.2 Serve rural areas better:

A survey to help the Council better understand how well rural places in Mid Devon meet the needs of their communities was live from Wednesday 3 January to Friday 1 March 2024.

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning-policy/monitoring/rural-services/>

1.8.3 Cut management:

Cuts have been made to the top and second layer of management.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-67156348>

Here are some additional items that the Council is or will be doing over the next couple of years.

2.1 Corporate Performance:

We are developing a new corporate plan, which will set out the Council's future aims and objectives for delivering even better services in Mid Devon. The new plan will be published in April 2024, and [performance will be reported against this every three months](#).

2.2 Street Scene:

The district is continuing to see a rise in its recycling rate and reduction in its residual waste tonnage – this is helping to reduce our carbon footprint and has been recognised by Ofcom.

To improve recycling rates further, the Council is no longer collecting side waste (introduced in February 2024) and will publish a paper on how it aims to continue to increase recycling rates for the long-term future.

2.3 Human Resources:

Following a recent staff survey, an action plan is being created to show the Council's priorities for the future with a particular focus on improving organisation and team communication.

2.4 Leisure:

During 2023/24, leisure membership numbers recovered to pre-pandemic levels across all centres.

Lords Meadow, Crediton and Exe Valley, Tiverton have moved away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources through the [installation of air and ground source heat pumps](#), as well as the installation of additional solar panels and LED lighting for outdoor pitches.

Additional [funding for the installation of 'Changing Places' toilets has been obtained](#) for Culm Valley, Cullompton and Exe Valley, Tiverton – enabling everyone, regardless of their access needs or disability, the use of a toilet facility hygienically and with dignity.

[Lords Meadow, Crediton received comprehensive equipment upgrades](#) through investment of £135,000 with Culm Valley, Cullompton set to complete a refresh of Mid Devon Leisure portfolio in October 2024. In February 2024, all three sites have received 48 top spec indoor bikes, which will greatly enhance our indoor cycle class experience.

2.5 Corporate Assets (Property):

New social housing provision at Beech Road, Tiverton has also been completed, and the sale of the Post Hill site, Tiverton is currently being facilitated.

Fire and door security upgrades have been made to the Council's Phoenix House office, and a new tenant has been secured for part of the building. The neighbouring multi-storey car park has plans to add solar panels, which will provide renewable energy to Phoenix House.

Council-owned car parks will soon start to be installed with new electric charging points, and the Council will support and facilitate towns/parishes with community charging points.

2.6 Economic Development:

The Council secured £486,704 of funding towards supporting economic projects in 2023, and a total of 292 businesses were supported between April and November 2023.

Town centres continue to be supported through grant schemes and business support/advice – seven businesses have filled empty units, 46 town centre events have been supported, nine businesses have decorated their shopfronts and two have fit-out units. Notably, the Higher Bullring in Cullompton has undergone months of improvement works to enhance its heritage setting, and creating a functional public space to bring community members together.

2.7 Communications

The Council launched a new engagement website, [Let's Talk Mid Devon](#), designed to encourage open discussion, idea-sharing, and active community participation to help shape the work of the Council.

2.8 Financial Support

We continue to provide hardship support for our residents and have maintained a substantial funding package for key local organisations (e.g. CAB, Involve, CHAT, etc.)