

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 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.

1.1.2 More cycle paths:

Devon County Council consulted on a [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan \(LCWIP\) for Cullompton and Tiverton](#) in early 2024, and published a revised plan in September 2024. The Council continues to work closely with the county council.

Devon County Council also recently published and consulted on a [draft Countywide LCWIP](#), and a [draft Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4](#).

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’s Crofts scheme in Sandford will be completed in the coming weeks and having acquired St Georges Court in Tiverton, the Council will shortly be welcoming the first group of tenants. St Georges Court will ultimately provide 39 units, mostly as dedicated over-55s accommodation in a unique town centre location. Furthermore, having secured planning permission for an additional 70 affordable homes at Post Hill, the Council has recently successfully transferred this site to a Housing Association who has already commenced work on site. In the longer-term, the Council has a record number of schemes in the pipeline and an ambitious target to deliver 500 new social homes into our stock over 5 years.

Residents can find out more at our [dedicated Mid Devon Housing development hub](#).

1.3 Street Scene and Recycling:

1.3.1 Improve street cleaning:

The Council undertakes regular reviews of highway litter and detritus, as well as responding to public reports for particular areas. These reviews ensure we are able to target areas that appear to become problematic and resolve issues quickly. The introduction of a mechanical walk behind sweeper has assisted the Council in providing a deep cleanse within high streets, this has attracted praise from members of the public and elected members on its effectiveness.

1.3.2 Provide more dog poo bins:

The Council regularly reviews its provision of public waste bins, this includes frequency of collection and volumes. Where concerns are raised by parish or towns councils an assessment of the area is undertaken to determine the extent of the issue and what steps can be taken to minimise these issues, this may include enforcement patrols and/or the provision of an additional bin where deemed appropriate.

1.3.3 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.

1.3.4 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 in the top 10% of all councils nationally (2022/23) for its high recycling rate and low residual tonnage collection. The Council is awaiting news of where it sits nationally for 2023/24, and expects this to come in February 2025.

1.3.5 Enforcement for dogs:

On 6 October 2024, the Council renewed its [Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order \(PSPO\)](#) for a duration of 3 years. This ensures the Council is able to continue tackling issues relating to dogs being kept under proper control in Public Spaces, as well as dog fouling and dog prohibition from areas such as play parks and cemeteries.

1.3.6 Tackle ASB and littering:

Environmental enforcement is a key focus and tackling issues such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and littering is at the forefront of this focus. The Council has taken great steps to improve investigation and prosecution for these offences, working with partnership agencies and other authorities to share best practice. The Council also leads on an enforcement task group with other Devon authorities. A review of enforcement policies was undertaken in 2024 and signed off by Cabinet.

1.3.7 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 enquiries.

1.3.8 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.

Two new 'Changing Places' facilities have been opened at Exe Valley and Culm Valley leisure centres, partially funded by government grant, which will greatly enhance the facilities offered at each site.

1.3.9 Reduce parking fees:

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

As a result, the parking consultation group is established with community and business representatives to better understand opportunities and requirements in relation to parking and decision-making. The parking consultation group then takes these proposals back to Members for consideration.

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

1.4 **Planning**

1.4.1 Review your planning process – quicker decisions, cheaper costs and more considerations for locals:

Mid Devon District Council is a high performing Local Planning Authority (LPA) that continually significantly exceeds government targets for the speed of determination of all application types.

The Council continues to work in accordance with national planning guidance and is working to develop a new Local Plan; Plan Mid Devon. A new local plan timetable will be published in March 2025.

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The Council has a duty to ensure a defined percentage of decisions meet the statutory time limits for applications for planning permission as set out in article 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015 (as amended). They are 13 weeks for applications for major development, 10 weeks for applications for technical details consent, and 8 weeks for all other types of development (unless an application is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, in which case a 16 week limit applies). There will be times where further negotiation is required whereby an extension of time could be agreed but it will always be the aim to determine a planning application as soon as reasonably possible, primarily within the statutory time limits set.

The fees for Planning Applications are set nationally whereas the planning fees associated with pre-applications and other discretionary services are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they cover the cost of the service provided by the LPA, noting that the Council are not able to make a profit on the services undertaken. When it comes to the determination of a planning application, these must be considered against national and local planning policies. Statutory consultees will be consulted and the local public notified whereby material planning considerations can be taken into account subject to them being material, e.g. noise impact; flooding; planning history. As such, consideration will be given to the impact of any development on a local community.

1.4.2 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. In August 2024, the District Council successfully secured a funding package to enable delivery of the relief road. The funding package, includes additional funding to be provided by Homes

England, which will allow Mid Devon to progress the delivery of the relief road in close conjunction with Devon County Council as delivery partner. Completion of the road is programmed for March 2028.

It is expected that the relief road will be the first phase of major road infrastructure investment in Cullompton with further investment expected to support the upgrading of J28 in order to address the capacity of the junction and support wider planned growth. A business case for investment in the motorway junction is currently with Government for consideration. The project to reopen Cullompton Railway Station is also well advanced and is awaiting a final decision from Government to fund its construction. The District Council is also working with other service providers to ensure that other supporting infrastructure is provided alongside new development.

Devon County Council, as Highway Authority, provide statutory advice as to what level of development (including housing) can be built prior to specific highway improvements being implemented. Future development proposals are therefore phased to follow the delivery of infrastructure accordingly.

1.4.3 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.

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.

1.4.4 Enhance town centres. Empty shops:

Town centres continue to be supported through grant schemes and business support/advice – 6 businesses have filled empty units, 111 town centre events have been supported, 7 businesses have decorated their shopfronts. The new enhanced Cullompton Bullring opened in February 2024. Crediton adopted in 2024 a masterplan for improvements to the town centre.

1.4.5 Improve planning enforcement:

Additional resources have been allocated to the Council Enforcement team to investigate reported breaches within the district and to reply to queries in a reasonable timeframe. The Mid Devon District Council Planning Enforcement Policy was updated in 2024, setting out the Council's Service Aims with regard to Planning Enforcement and the relevant timeframe for enforcement action.

1.5 **Finance**

1.5.1 Invest in areas other than Tiverton:

Circa £40M of social housing development is planned across 2025/26 to 2029/30, delivering a significant number of social housing development outside of Tiverton, with circa £26M due to be spent in 2025/26.

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 3 town centre projects in Crediton, 4 in Cullompton and 1 in Bampton. Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, the Council also coordinated the first of a Mid Devon Walking Festival supporting and promoting walking events across the district.

1.5.2 Spend less on corporate services:

Delivered significant budget savings to meet the £1.196M budget shortfall originally identified for 2025/26.

1.5.3 Support for businesses:

The Council secured £1.3M of funding towards supporting economic projects in 2024, and a total of 392 businesses were supported from April 2024 – January 2025.

1.6 Corporate; customer services and communication:

1.6.1 Be more transparent:

The Council publicises all meeting agendas in advance and council meetings are open to the public to attend, this allows the residents of Mid Devon to read about upcoming decisions, scrutinise reports and to see local democracy in action. There is also a process in place that ensures our residents can ask questions and raise concerns at public meetings.

We encourage residents and businesses to sign up to the Council's news bulletin service, which means they are emailed council news and agendas directly.

The [Let's Talk Mid Devon](#) platform encourages two way communication in the form of surveys, forums and traditional consultation and allows people to keep up to date with council news.

1.6.2 Listen to the public:

The Council implemented a new customer feedback policy and recording system, including improved monitoring of complaints. Staff training was provided, and the Council is continuing to invest in training.

As new services are implemented into the new system, the Council is using satisfaction surveys to gain feedback from customers.

1.6.3 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.

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

2.1 Leisure:

Mid Devon Leisure is pleased to report its highest ever membership base in 2024/25.

New poolside changing rooms will be installed at both Exe Valley, Tiverton and Lords Meadow, Crediton, ensuring a comfortable and convenient experience for all our users.

[Culm Valley, Cullompton received comprehensive equipment upgrades](#) through investment of £150,000. A significant refresh of facilities, including a much improved functional studio, new gym equipment and a new sauna.

Mid Devon Leisure will soon be launching a new management system, incorporating access control that will streamline operations and enhance the customer experience by providing customers with greater control, along with increased security within each centre. In addition to this, new swimming lesson software will soon be launched, which has been designed to enhance the experience through giving customers greater flexibility, control and information.