

County Cllrs Report – Andrew Saywell.

DCC Update Report for Merton Parish Council

Dear Councillors,

Apologies I cannot be with you this evening as I'm working late in Exeter, but please find an update report below:

Devolution – Unfortunately due to the calling of an early General Election there was not enough time to pass the statutory orders to legally create the Combined Authority/Devolution settlement. Nevertheless, the legislation and legal work is ready to go as soon as the new Parliament meets. As both main parties are committed to the devolution agenda, I would still expect a deal to be formally passed by Parliament despite the change in Government. Though whether there are any further changes remains to be confirmed...

Council Restructures/Modernisation – Restructuring and streamlining of the Council continues behind the scenes. The Information Governance and Customer Complaints Team are being merged with the Legal Directorate which should create a more streamlined team and as there is quite a lot of synergy between governance, complaints and legal it, in my view, is a logical merger.

Family Hub Consultation – The Council is changing the way that young families are supported at Children's Centres, and is inviting those who use the services, as well as professionals and community groups, to help influence the changes. It follows a national move, announced by the Government last year, for Children's Centres to become Family Hubs, as part of its Start for Life Programme initiative.

In Devon that means extending the age range, from current services that deliver targeted support to 0 to 8 year-olds, to future services that provide **universal** as well as targeted and support to 0 to 19 year-olds, or up to 25 year-old young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. And it would mean a wider range of services than present, including support from local community groups, working together to help young families.

Having agreed at the end of last year to make the change in line with national thinking, Devon County Council is now inviting families, professionals and community groups to help shape what the new Family Hubs support network will look like in Devon.

Exactly which services will be integrated into a Family Hub will very much depend on the needs of local families. But the kind of services that families could access include early years services and education; Public Health Nursing and Midwifery services; activities delivered by local groups; drug, alcohol and domestic abuse support; mental health support and youth services.

This will likely lead to a change in how some of the current Children's Centre buildings are operated but I want to make it very clear that this is not about cutting or reducing services. Indeed for rural areas I see this as an advantage because if the services provided by the Family Hubs can be delivered through outreach services directly here in Dolton, that is better than making a family travel into Bideford to access the service from a building there.

Family Hubs are likely to be located in areas of greatest need, with outreach services extending from them into local communities. Much of the support families currently receive will still be available.

New Interchange Railway Station for Okehampton – The DCC Cabinet approved plans to build a new ‘Interchange’ station at Okehampton which will be located near the industrial estates on the road heading towards the A30. It should have 200 parking spaces and will be an easier station for people to get to and use than the existing historical station which has few parking spaces. The reopening of the Okehampton Line has been one of the most successful re-openings in the country and I hope this new station will make it an even more attractive option for local people to travel by rail to London, Bristol and beyond without having to go all the way down to either Exeter or Tiverton Parkway, or take lengthy connections from Barnstaple or Umberleigh.

That’s it for this month, anything you need me to look into please let me know.