

DCC Update Report for Merton Parish Council September 2024

Dear Councillors,

Apologies I cannot be with you this evening as I'm attending DCC Corporate Parenting Board in Exeter and am unlikely to be back in time for your meeting. Please find my report below:

Family Hubs – The Council has formally agreed to proceed with the Family Hub provision and change the way Children's Centres operate. This will move the service away from a limited and targeted approach to a universal offer. Discussions over the future use of the Children's Centre building in Torrington continue and from the discussions I have had with Officials I know they are keen to build links with the wider community as the new Family Hub model should provide more support for parents and families in Torrington Rural. One of the areas highlighted during the consultation has been childcare provision and the thinking has been that the existing building could be remodelled to provide a child care facility in the town, but those discussions are continuing. The other positive of this model is also to provide more support for families in rural communities like Merton, so that we're not having to make young parents in Merton travel to a building in Bideford or Barnstaple etc. and even make use of the facilities we have locally such as the Clinton Hall.

Local Highways Matters – The road from Chapel Cross to Limers Lane should now have been dragon patched. The last time I drove down the A386 this hadn't been treated with Elastomac yet but this is still in the system to be done. They have changed how they lay the treatment this year, it now looks a lot coarser and less visually appealing but it should still work well for the kind of pitting defects we have on the road.

Devolution – We are still awaiting news from the new Government as to how they wish the proceed with the Devolution Deal. My understanding is that the new Government have made it clear to Plymouth that they have to choose a partner – either Cornwall or Devon – to work with and that they cannot have a separate devolution deal on their own... We will wait to see how these machinations play out. Again my understanding is that they want a decision this month.

As all the legal documentation etc. is ready to go before Parliament, I would hope that even if Plymouth do not wish to rejoin with Devon, we can get the statutory instruments approved in Parliament and then work with the Government on any potential changes they want to make to the Combined Authority.

Summer Holiday Activities and Food – Holiday activities and food for children who receive free school meals were provided again over the summer holidays. Funded by the Department for Education, DCC teamed up with over 100 different activity providers across Devon to offer more than 30,000 places to children aged five to 16 years old, who receive benefit-related free school meals.

That's it for this month. As ever, anything you need me to look into please let me know.
Best regards, Andrew