

Councillor James Buczkowski - Update July 2026

Local Focus

Cullompton Relief Road Moves into Main Construction

One of the biggest milestones for Cullompton in many years has now been reached, with the Town Centre Relief Road moving into its main construction phase.

It's genuinely exciting to see it move from planning into delivery. The relief road will help reduce congestion through the town centre, improve air quality, and provide the infrastructure needed to support the planned growth of Cullompton.

As with any major infrastructure project, there will inevitably be some disruption while work is underway, but reaching this stage is a significant achievement and reflects many years of partnership working between Devon County Council, Mid Devon District Council, Cullompton Town Council, Government and our local MP.

Cullompton Railway Station

I attended the latest Metro Board meeting, where Network Rail provided a further update on progress towards reopening Cullompton Railway Station.

Having been involved with the project in one form or another for almost a decade, I remain more optimistic than I have ever been. Detailed design is progressing, procurement is underway and work continues to resolve the remaining technical and commercial issues before the main construction contract can be awarded.

There is still work to do, including flood modelling, drainage and property agreements, and I don't think it would be honest to describe the station as a "done deal" until construction contracts have been signed. However, the project continues to move in the right direction and there remains a strong commitment from all partners to delivering the station.

The meeting also reinforced that the station is intended to serve Cullompton and surrounding communities, rather than operate as a large parkway station. That makes good integration with local bus services, walking and cycling routes, and appropriate accessible parking all the more important.

Finding Solutions to Meadow Lane Parking

The start of the Relief Road also brings into sharper focus another important issue: parking around Meadow Lane and the Leisure Centre.

The new waiting restrictions at the Exeter Road/Meadow Lane junction were introduced for important road safety reasons, improving visibility and making the junction safer for everyone. I support those objectives, but I also recognise the impact the changes have had on residents, businesses and users of the leisure centre.

For that reason, I've continued working with both Devon County Council and Mid Devon District Council to ensure options for increasing parking provision are explored now, rather than waiting until the wider Relief Road project has been completed. I'm pleased officers continue to look at potential solutions, and I will continue following this work closely so that progress is made as early as possible.

Tiverton Road Resurfacing Confirmed

Following continued discussions with our highways team, I'm pleased to confirm that full resurfacing of Tiverton Road, between Swallow Way and Way Mill Cross, is now scheduled to begin on 10 August.

This will be a full resurfacing scheme rather than further patch repairs. Whilst I appreciate the delay has been frustrating for residents, it's good to finally have a confirmed programme of works and a long-term solution for this section of road.

Baulk Bridge Replacement

Work continues on the replacement of Baulk Bridge.

Following the issues encountered on site earlier this summer, I have continued seeking updates from officers and contractors regarding environmental protection, public safety and programme delivery. I know many residents use this route regularly, and I will continue sharing updates as work progresses.

Air Quality in Cullompton

Discussions continue regarding the future of Cullompton's Air Quality Management Area.

My view remains that the focus should be on improving air quality rather than simply changing designations.

The long-term improvements remain delivery of the Relief Road, reopening Cullompton Railway Station and future improvements at Junction 28. Until those projects are in place, I believe it is important that we continue monitoring air quality so that decisions are based on robust evidence.

St Andrews Estate Parking

I've continued discussions with Mid Devon Housing regarding proposals to install bollards on the grassed area at St Andrews Estate and the restriction of the amenity car parks to residents only.

Residents have made their views very clear, and before any decision is taken I've requested independent highways advice together with a site visit. My aim is to ensure that any solution is proportionate, evidence-based and takes account of the concerns raised by local residents.

Extra Investment Helping to Tackle Potholes

Following Devon County Council's decision to invest an additional £4 million in highway maintenance earlier this year, new measures are now being rolled out to improve the condition of our roads.

Four dedicated Rapid Response Teams are now operating across Devon, carrying out small and medium-sized repairs that may not meet the normal safety intervention criteria but nevertheless cause frustration for residents. The aim is to address more of these defects before they deteriorate into larger and more expensive problems, with every electoral division expected to benefit from the additional resource on a regular basis. I'm already aware of work having taken place in Cullompton, Bradninch and Kentisbeare as part of this programme.

Alongside this, the Council has launched an expanded 12-month pothole repair trial in eight areas of Devon. The trial allows highway crews to repair additional potholes while they are already on site responding to reported defects, reducing repeat visits and making better use of resources. Although the trial is not currently taking place in our area, I will be following the results closely, as I believe it has the potential to improve efficiency and deliver better outcomes for road users across Devon if it proves successful.

Consultation Opens on New SEND Hub at Cullompton Community College

A public consultation is now underway on proposals to establish a new Specialist Base (SEND Hub) at Cullompton Community College.

If approved, the hub would provide specialist support for up to 20 students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) whose primary needs relate to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH), including those experiencing Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA). The proposal forms part of Devon County Council's wider strategy to increase specialist provision within mainstream schools, enabling more young people to receive the support they need closer to home.

If the proposal is approved, the Specialist Base is expected to open in January 2027, with places introduced in phases and a purpose-built modular facility to follow later in the year. The consultation is open until 19 September 2026, and I would encourage anyone with an interest—including parents, carers, staff, students and local residents—to take the opportunity to read the proposals and share their views before a final decision is made.

Casework and Surgeries

Alongside these larger projects, I've continued helping residents across Cullompton, Bradninch, Kentisbeare and the surrounding villages with a wide range of issues including highways, planning, public transport, parking and local services. Much of this work takes place behind the scenes, but helping residents resolve problems remains one of the most important parts of being your local councillor.

I also continue to hold regular residents' surgeries across the division, with monthly surgeries in Kentisbeare (first Saturday), Bradninch (second Saturday) and Cullompton (fourth Saturday).

From September, appointments for all surgeries will be available to book online or by phone. If you have a local concern, a question or simply want to discuss an issue affecting your community, I would be pleased to meet with you.

Full details of my surgeries, including venues and booking information, are available using the link below.

[Details of my monthly residents Surgeries...](#)

Devon Wide Updates

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has now confirmed its decision on the future structure of local government in Devon. Rather than adopting the "Reimagining Devon" proposal supported by Mid Devon District Council, or the alternative proposals submitted by Devon County Council, Ministers have chosen a four-unitary model based on the submission from Plymouth and Exeter City Councils. This will see new unitary authorities created for Plymouth, Exeter, Torbay and a single "Devon Coast and Countryside" council covering the remainder of the county. As part of the decision, six Mid Devon parishes, including Crediton, Crediton Hamlets and Newton St Cyres, are proposed to transfer into an expanded Exeter authority.

I am disappointed by the Government's decision and remain of the view that there were better options available for Devon. I believe the alternatives put forward would have created financially stronger councils, better protected the identities of our communities and provided a more balanced approach to local government across the county.

As the implementation programme progresses, I will continue to scrutinise the proposals carefully and press for answers where concerns remain, supporting further action if necessary to protect residents.

In particular, we must ensure that the reorganisation is properly funded by Government, that local taxpayers are not left to bear the costs of the changes, and that vital frontline services—especially adult social care and children's services—are fully protected throughout the transition.

Although the direction of travel has now been confirmed, there is still a significant amount of work to do before any changes take effect. Existing councils will continue to deliver services as normal while detailed implementation plans are developed.

Elections to the new authorities are expected in 2027, with the new councils due to assume responsibility in 2028, subject to Parliament approving the necessary legislation. As both a Devon County Councillor and a Mid Devon District Councillor, my priority throughout this process will be to ensure residents continue to receive high-quality services, that our local communities have a strong voice during the transition, and that the interests of Cullompton, Bradninch, Kentisbeare and the surrounding villages are robustly represented every step of the way.

Devolution and a Devon Mayoral Authority

Alongside Local Government Reorganisation, discussions continue around devolution and the potential creation of a strategic mayoral authority for Devon.

Done well, devolution has the potential to bring decision-making and investment closer to Devon, giving us greater influence over transport, housing, skills and economic development. However, any new arrangements must also provide strong accountability, clear governance and ensure rural communities continue to have a meaningful voice.

This is a significant opportunity for Devon, but it's equally important that any proposals are properly developed before decisions are made.

Delivering Financial Responsibility

One of the most significant milestones this month was the publication of Devon County Council's 2025/26 Statement of Accounts ahead of the statutory deadline.

Despite continuing financial pressures facing local government, Devon County Council delivered a balanced budget while continuing to invest in the services residents rely on. During the year we achieved almost £18 million of savings, strengthened our financial resilience and maintained investment in priority areas including highways, children's services and adult social care.

As Cabinet Member for Finance & Public Value, I'm particularly pleased with the progress we've made. Sound financial management isn't an end in itself; it's what allows us to continue investing in frontline services while preparing the Council for the challenges ahead.

Annual Delivery Plan

Cabinet recently approved the Devon County Council Annual Delivery Plan for 2026/27.

The plan sets out the priorities the Council will focus on over the coming year and how we will measure progress. As the Cabinet lead for performance, I've worked with officers to develop this plan and strengthen the governance and performance arrangements that underpin its implementation, ensuring there is clear accountability and transparency for delivery.

At a time when local government is changing significantly, it's more important than ever that the Council remains focused on delivering good services for residents while remaining financially sustainable.

[The plan can be viewed here](#)

£4.8 Million Secured to Improve SEND Support

Devon has secured £4.8 million to introduce the new *SEND Experts at Hand* programme from this autumn.

The funding will provide earlier specialist advice and support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, helping schools access expertise more quickly and improving support for families.

More Flexible Opening Hours for Devon Libraries

Cullompton Library now offers longer opening hours through the introduction of Open Plus technology.

Registered members who complete a short induction will be able to access library facilities outside normal staffed hours, providing greater flexibility while retaining staffed opening hours and the valuable support library staff provide.

Supporting Independent Living

Construction has begun on a new £20 million Extra Care Housing development in Cranbrook.

The scheme will provide affordable homes for older people and adults with additional support needs, enabling residents to remain independent while having care available when required. Developments like this help people stay within their communities for longer while reducing pressure on residential care services.

Investment Continues at Skypark

Skypark continues to grow as one of Devon's key employment sites, with a major housebuilder opening new premises during the month.

Investment in employment sites such as Skypark supports economic growth, creates jobs and helps strengthen Devon's economy.

Long-Term Vision for Farming

The Government has published its new Farming Roadmap 2050, setting out plans for the future of farming over the next 25 years.

The roadmap aims to provide greater certainty for farmers while balancing food production, environmental recovery and climate resilience. Long-term planning is particularly important for rural businesses making investment decisions that often span generations.

Exploring Legal Options on Water Quality

Devon County Council continues exploring legal options in response to ongoing concerns about water quality and sewage discharges affecting rivers and coastal waters across the county.

Clean rivers and beaches are important for wildlife, tourism, recreation and public health, and improving water quality remains an issue of significant public interest.

Preparing Devon's New Highways Contract

Work has begun preparing Devon's next highways maintenance contract, which will shape how roads are maintained across the county over the coming years.

As weather patterns continue to change and traffic levels increase, the new contract presents an opportunity to improve preventative maintenance, strengthen resilience and deliver better long-term value for residents.

Protecting Roads During the Heatwave

The prolonged hot weather has presented new challenges for Devon's highways network.

During the recent heatwave, highway teams used a process known as "dusting" to help protect recently treated road surfaces from the effects of extreme temperatures. While unusual to see gritters operating in summer, the treatment helps extend the life of road repairs.

Affordable Homes Supported Through Pension Fund Investment

The Devon Pension Fund has continued investing in projects that deliver both financial returns and wider community benefits.

A recent investment is helping deliver additional affordable housing in North Devon, demonstrating how responsible investment can support both pension holders and local communities.

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