November 2026 Parish Report covering October

As always a busy month – and next is likely to be even more so.

Breaking budget news

The Autumn Budget has bought significant news regarding Devolution and the budget for Devon. The Government has confirmed the establishment of a **Mayoral Strategic Authority** for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. "This new model of government will be structurally embedded for the long term, and local people will be given the power to hold local leaders to account." This new authority will cover a population of 1.25 million and an economy worth over £33.1 billion. We will hear much more about this in the weeks and months ahead, and I will continue to share updates as they become available.

In addition, the Government has announced a new £2.6 billion Household Energy Payment, which will provide a £100 payment directly into bank accounts from January 2027 for households in England in Council Tax Bands A to D. The Government estimates that up to 20 million households will benefit. There will be two schemes the other being 'discretionary' funding will be provided.

Local authorities will be responsible for delivering the scheme. However, we are still awaiting the Government's full scheme guidance, which will set out the detailed eligibility criteria, payment arrangements, and administrative requirements.

Schemes of this nature are very complex to administer, particularly given the need to identify eligible households accurately and make payments directly into bank accounts. We will need to work through the detailed requirements carefully once the guidance is issued, including arrangements for households where the Council does not already hold suitable payment information.

Further information will be provided to Members and residents once the detailed guidance has been received and the local delivery arrangements have been established.

Elections

A by-election was held 15 October for the Bradninch ward on Mid Devon District Council following the resignation of former council leader Luke Taylor, who has taken up a new role in the USA. The Liberal Democrats successfully retained the seat, with retired GP Mary Ryan elected as the new district councillor. The contest was fought between candidates from the Liberal Democrats, Labour, Conservatives, Greens and Reform UK. Bradninch has been a strong Liberal Democrat ward in recent years, and the party comfortably held the seat.

Plan Mid Devon

Those keeping an eye on Plan Mid Devon may be interested to know that the District Council has now passed Gateway 1, the first stage in the Government's new Local Plan process.

This is largely an internal readiness check, confirming that the Council has the staffing, governance and resources in place to prepare the new plan. It is not a consultation on policies or development sites and does not predetermine any future planning decisions.

The focus now turns to evidence gathering, environmental assessments and engagement with communities. The scope of the plan is expected to be finalised during the autumn, with further consultation and technical work continuing through 2027.

As the new Local Plan will help shape Mid Devon's future growth, infrastructure and environmental priorities for years to come, I will continue to share updates as opportunities arise for parish councils and residents to get involved.

Tiverton Town Centre Regeneration Framework - Update

Work on a regeneration framework for Tiverton town centre first began in 2017, with an initial public consultation taking place in 2018. Progress was subsequently delayed as council resources were diverted to dealing with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the town's recovery. The draft framework has now been refreshed to reflect changing economic conditions and current challenges facing businesses and town centres.

In October 2026, Mid Devon District Council's Cabinet agreed to launch an extended eight-week public consultation on the draft framework. The proposals focus on three key areas: the Pannier Market, Phoenix Lane and Beck's Square, alongside better links between the rivers, improved public spaces and stronger connections to Tiverton's heritage assets.

The framework includes proposals to make the Pannier Market more visible from Fore Street, create more flexible space for traders, events and community activities, improve signage and public spaces, and explore new uses for nearby sites. It also considers improvements around Phoenix Lane and opens a discussion about the future of Beck's Square, including the possibility of town-centre housing.

The consultation is expected to run through late 2026, with responses considered in early 2027. Following any amendments, the framework is scheduled to return to Cabinet in June 2027 and then to Full Council in July 2027 for possible adoption. Any individual projects would then be subject to separate funding decisions, design work and planning approvals.

Please find details of a consultation by the Council regarding Tiverton town centre.

Tiverton Framework for the Future | Let's Talk Mid Devon

Drought

Despite some recent rainfall, Devon remains in severe drought following months of unusually hot and dry weather. While the recent wet weather and the forecast of more rain are welcome, our rivers, reservoirs and groundwater supplies are still under significant pressure and will take time to recover.

Residents will be aware that the hosepipe ban remains in force across Devon, and further measures could be introduced via a Drought Order. We can all help by using water wisely, whether that's taking shorter showers, turning off taps when they're not needed, fixing leaks or being mindful of everyday water use.

As a council, we're also looking at how we can reduce our own water consumption while continuing to deliver services safely and effectively. Every small change helps, and together we can play our part in protecting this vital resource until conditions improve.

For more information and water-saving advice, visit : https://www.southwestwater.co.uk/help-and-contact/save-water/

Community Hubs

MDDC members attended a talk on 27 October on drought Planning and Community Hubs.

This was a briefing from the MDDC Resilience Officer Lewis Dyson, to update members on the current Drought status following on from the “Severe Drought” declaration issued 15 October including the work currently underway within MDDC. Additionally the Resilience Officer presented to Members a new initiative known as Community Emergency Hubs, what they are and why they are an excellent way of building resilience at a local scale. Lewis is keen to be further engaged with the community please see message below.

“I am Lewis, the Resilience Officer for Mid Devon District Council and I am offering all Parish Councils a visit to talk to you about Community Emergency Hubs. Community Emergency Hubs are a great way to build resilience in your communities as a first step or as a way of improving your Community Emergency Plans. A Community Emergency Hub is a safe, local place where people can come together during an emergency. It allows communities to share information, support one another, and take safe, practical action until emergency services arrive.

There is no obligation on any Parish Council but I would love to attend and present for 15 minutes at your regular Parish Council meeting to talk to you about the Hubs as well as support on your Emergency Resilience journey and point you to where some funding or support may be available.

If you have an upcoming Council meeting and would like me to attend, please e-mail me on ldyson@middevon.gov.uk and I will come along. I have attended 8 Councils so far and have had really positive feedback. Similarly, if you have any questions about Community Resilience, Emergency Planning or the Hubs, do not hesitate to get in touch. I look forward to hopefully seeing your community soon. “

Grants

Devon Community Foundation

I'd also like to draw attention to the Devon Community Foundation, which provides grant funding for voluntary and community groups across Devon. If your organisation is looking for support for a local project, community activity or initiative, it may be worth registering with the Foundation. Once registered, groups can be matched with suitable funding opportunities as they become available. Further information can be found at https://www.devoncf.com/.

Access to funding can make a real difference to the communities we serve, and I would encourage local groups to take a look at what support may be available.

Emergency Planning

The Devon Emergency Resilience Fund may also be of interest to parish councils and local community groups looking to improve preparedness for flooding and other emergencies. Small grants of up to £250 are available to help develop a Community Emergency Plan,

while grants of up to £1,500 can be used for resilience equipment such as flood signage, sandbags and other practical measures. Communities that have experienced recent flooding are particularly encouraged to apply. Applications are straightforward, and funding is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Further details, guidance and application forms can be found at: https://www.devoncommunities.org.uk/grant-funding-emergency-flood-resilience

Any questions can be directed to dcrf@devoncommunities.org.uk

SEND Swim Sessions Become a Permanent Success

Active Mid Devon's SEND swimming sessions in Crediton and Tiverton proved a success over the summer. More than 180 children and their families took part, with feedback showing that families valued the quieter environment, supportive staff and inclusive atmosphere.

The programme has been so well received that these sessions will now become a permanent part of the school holiday timetable. Virtual walkthrough videos of both pools have also been introduced to help reduce anxiety and make visits easier for children and their families.

This is a great example of how small changes can make a real difference in ensuring local services are accessible and welcoming to everyone.

Cyber Attacks

Residents are reminded to stay vigilant against cybercrime and online scams. Information recently circulated by Devon & Cornwall Police warns that computers and devices running unsupported software are at greater risk of cyber-attacks, ransomware and identity theft because they no longer receive security updates. The National Cyber Security Centre recommends enabling automatic updates wherever possible. Separately, Neighbourhood Watch has highlighted growing levels of insurance-related scams, with Admiral Insurance reporting a significant increase in fraudulent online adverts designed to impersonate legitimate insurers. Residents should be cautious when responding to unexpected emails, messages or online adverts and report suspected fraud promptly.

KFC in Tiverton

On 26 October, KFC opened its first restaurant in Tiverton, creating 45 local jobs and bringing the chain's full menu to the town. The company says the new outlet forms part of its £1.5 billion investment programme across the UK and Ireland, with further restaurant openings planned over the coming years. A spokesperson said they were delighted to bring the brand's "Original Recipe" chicken to Tiverton and to create new employment opportunities for local residents.

Mid Devon Business & Economy Newsletter - Edition 006

I have been asked by the Economic Development officer to share the information with community and business, as appropriate. It is very reassuring to see that MDDC are

working to support these areas - including hosting an event as shown below. The PDF Newsletter and support flyers are attached to this report for consideration and use.

Business Rates

Mid Devon District Council is hosting a **Business Rates Drop in event on Thursday 16th November (between 3pm and 6:15pm)** at Phoenix House, Tiverton. Following the Government's Autumn Budget, this drop-in session is a chance for businesses to speak face to face with the Business Rates team about the latest announcements, what any changes could mean for their Business Rates, and any other issues they may have with their Business Rates.

Lets Talk Mid Devon

The council's online engagement platform, Let's Talk Mid Devon, recorded an engagement rate of just six per cent during the first quarter of the year, highlighting the challenge of encouraging residents to take part in consultations and community discussions. Despite efforts to gather local views through the platform, participation remained relatively low, raising questions about how the council can broaden engagement and ensure decisions reflect the views of a wider cross-section of residents. **On a personal note – I use the app a lot and would encourage others to try it.**

Anti-Social Behaviour

Paul Wilson, the council's specialist lead for community safety and safeguarding, warned that although 110 incidents were recorded across Mid Devon during the previous 90 days, under-reporting makes it harder to identify hotspots, target resources and take action.

The council is also reviewing how it can respond more quickly to persistent offenders, particularly in council housing, using measures ranging from warnings to court injunctions. The message from officers was clear: if we want anti-social behaviour tackled, incidents need to be reported directly to the council or police, not just shared online.

We encourage anyone experiencing or witnessing ASB to report it to MDDC or the Police 101 service so that the authorities are aware of it and can take action.

ASB can be reported online via:

Anti-social Behaviour Toolkit - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK (or phone 01884 255255)

or an email to 101@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk .

You may also wish to contact us as your Ward Councillors and we will endeavour to progress action

A few facts

- Leisure income is up £44K - as membership grows
- Waste Service faces £500K pressure due to Mid Devon District growth

- Fly tipping is down (but please report where you find it)

.. And Did you know …

1 in 9 houses in Mid Devon are social housing - not including temporary accommodation. Also 95 percent of our Mid Devon houses are let at social rent.

As ever, if I can be of any service, please email me

Gwen DuChesne MBE

District Councillor for Halberton

Cabinet member for Parish and Community Engagement

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