

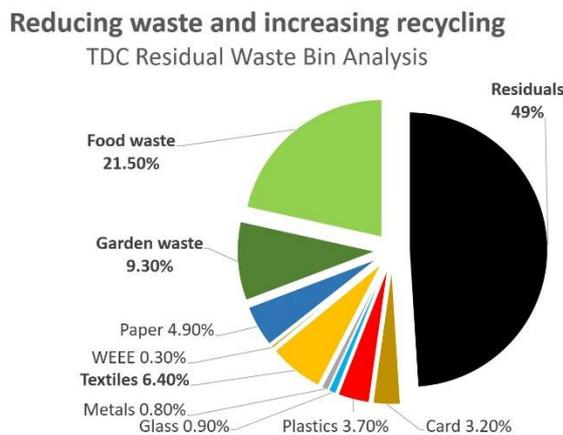
## County Councillor's Report 16<sup>th</sup> March – Coffinswell

Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March started the UK's first Food Waste Action Week and highlighted the link between food waste and climate change.

Devon residents can find practical tips and advice on how to reduce food waste and take part in a food waste challenge via Recycle Devon social media feeds on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and on its YouTube channel.

A survey by Waste Resource Action Programme (WRAP) found that while most people acknowledge food waste is an issue, less than half of people (39%) make a strong link between wasted food and climate change.

The Food Waste Trends Survey 2019 estimates that, on average, almost one in four potatoes (22.8 per cent) are thrown away uneaten, compared to around a fifth of bread (21.5 per cent), chicken (20.5 per cent) and milk (18.4 per cent).



Finally, on the subject of waste, residents are invited to have their say on the draft Resource and Waste Management Strategy for Devon and Torbay.

The Public Consultation runs from Wednesday 3 March to Wednesday 14 April, and the responses will help shape how Local Authority Collected Waste is managed in Devon up to 2030.

The new document will present how the 10 councils responsible for waste collection or disposal in Devon, will continue to work with residents to try to reduce the amount of household waste created and continue to ensure that waste is managed in a sustainable and cost-efficient manner.

The consultation responses will then be reviewed, and an amended strategy will be presented for final approval to the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (DASWC) and individual councils this summer, with the intention to publish the final strategy at the end of the year. The consultation is here

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/consultations/draft-resource-and-waste-management-strategy-for-devon-and-torbay/>

Around 56,000 homes and businesses will be provided with access to Gigabit capable broadband by internet providers Airband, Truespeed and Wessex Internet in the coming few years.

Airband is due to start construction of its first link for the new network in July – this will take place in Devon and will include Powderham, and Combefishacre. Survey work is underway in these areas. It's anticipated that these properties will be the first to be connected by this autumn.

Airband has already provided superfast access to 18,700 homes and businesses across Devon and Somerset and its latest full fibre programme will extend its network to a further 40,150 premises.

All of the internet providers working on behalf of CDS are continuing to “mobilise” staff, materials and equipment and are securing any sub-contractors needed to deliver the programme.

CDS is currently completing a refresh of its Open Market Review which was carried out before going out to tender in February last year. This has to be double checked after the contract is awarded to ensure any areas earmarked by CDS for coverage are not in the plans of commercially funded programmes. This enables public funding to be spent where the need is greatest.

CDS, BDUK and the contractor carrying out the work can decide if the public money should be redeployed to another area in need of subsidised coverage. Some limited “overbuilding”, overlapping commercially built networks, can happen in some areas where it provides the most cost-effective route. Before construction can start, surveying, design and planning work also has to be undertaken. This involves examining the geography of the area, determining the build route and most efficient timescales.

As this critical work develops prior to construction, discussions have to be held with landowners and local councils to find the best and most cost-effective route for the new network. This requires securing landowner consent and access to highways.

Three weeks ago, saw the start of Devon’s £578.5 million Budget process. Monday saw the Children’s Scrutiny Committee looking at their £158.3 million budget. What is really terrifying here is that we were told the High Needs Block negative reserve will reach £78 million by the end of 2022 – at this rate it will consume the Council in a couple more years. Tuesday saw the £282.5 million budget for Adult services being scrutinized – it is nearly half the total budget.

A marathon session the CIRS Scrutiny Committee looked at £39.9 million Communities budget (a 0.2% increase), the £40.4 million Corporate budget (a 7.5% increase) and the Highways £57.5 million budget (a 0.5 % decrease). We were staggered that there were to be cuts to winter operations and Highway Network management.

Following representations made by my Party and the recommendations made by Scrutiny the Leader announced an extra £600,000 would be added to the county council’s roads budget under a new plan announced at Cabinet.

At Council, surprisingly, there was no amendment to the Budget from Labour who abstained from voting on the Budget or its proposed Amendments but spoke in favour of the Conservative Budget!

The Lib Dem Budget amendment which comprised investing £3.4 million on fixing Devon’s roads (filling potholes, routine maintenance, repainting white lines and investing in cycling and walking); £1/2 million on supporting communities who want 20 mph zones; £1/2 million on Green Devon schemes (Bee corridors, wildflower verges; £1 million supporting “Made in Devon” and “Bought in Devon” schemes and £3/4 million for mental health support for children. This all to be paid for by a draw down from the £64.4 million Budget Management Reserve set up to support this very type of thing.

Finally, this amendment sought to end the tax loophole whereby second homeowners can switch from Council Tax to Business rates and then claiming small business exemptions.

You won’t be surprised to know that many Conservative Councillors echoed the North Devon MP’s call for Highway improvements but failed to vote for the amendment that would have actually given them those improvements!

After 4 hours of debate the Council voted for a 4.99% increase in Council tax which comes down to £1,511.28 per Council Tax band D property for 2021/22.

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