

DCC Cllr Claire Wright

Monthly Report 1st Feb 2021

Letter to Baroness Berridge

I have circulated an email I sent to Education Minister, Baroness Berridge last week requesting funding for a rebuild of Tipton St John Primary School within the village. The government has a national school rebuilding programme and it would be great if the town council could also write in support.

Devon County Council Covid support fund

This fund, which helps finance community groups that are supporting vulnerable people in their communities is likely to return, I understand from senior officers. Hopefully, by this time next week we will receive confirmation. I will keep you posted.

Unpaid carers

I asked for a scrutiny review of unpaid carers at Devon County Council's Health and Adult Care Scrutiny meeting. I had chaired a spotlight review into the challenges facing unpaid carers which was published a year ago. We reviewed the recommendations at the meeting. Much progress has been made in terms of support provided, however, not in terms of the most important issues relating to pay of care workers, and financial support for unpaid carers. Nor has any communications with government ministers taken place, it was said, due to covid. Unfortunately, also due to covid-19. ONS stats state that unpaid carers will now be around 130,000 in Devon alone. An increase of 50 per cent nationally.

Only 12 per cent of those surveyed nationally said they received enough support from social care. Many have been forced to give up jobs or reduce their hours, leading to financial difficulty. An added challenge. I formally proposed that we undertake another short scrutiny review. This was overruled and instead I will be invited to the next Partnership Board meeting where carer representatives will have been asked to undertake a survey of their contacts.

Vaccination of Devon care home residents and staff at 95 per cent

We were informed at 26 January Devon County Council Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Meeting, that 95 per cent of Devon care home residents of staff have had their first jab. 12 care homes were not visited due to significant outbreaks. Uptake has been "high", but no further detail was offered.

Devon County Council's Cabinet was set to have talks with local MPs over adult social care funding cuts

Devon County Council's cabinet was set to initiate talks with local MPs, following my recommendation agreed at the November Adult Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, in order to press upon them the seriousness of the adult social care funding situation.

However, Andrew Leadbetter, the portfolio holder for Adult Care and Health confirmed at last week's Health and Adult Care Scrutiny meeting that he had not yet set up a meeting.

This is disappointing, especially given the seriousness and urgency of the situation.

Adult social care has been in a hugely precarious financial position, following what is now a decade of government funding cuts. As a result far fewer people are in receipt of personal care and unpaid carers are more stretched than ever before. The pandemic of course, has made a very hard situation even tougher.

The papers at the November scrutiny meeting quoted from a national survey of councils.

The key messages from the survey were:

- *Without significant financial intervention from the government, the lives of people who use social care and their family members will be seriously impacted in terms of their lives and wellbeing*
- *Only four per cent of respondents are fully confident that their budget will be sufficient to meet their statutory duties this year, down from 35 per cent in 2019/20*
- *The actual costs to local authorities and adult social care providers of the pandemic will far outstrip the Emergency Funding made available by the government to date*
- *The risk of already fragile care markets failing has significantly heightened as a result of the impacts of covid-19*

The papers also stated that Adult Care and Health was showing an overspend of £2.276m before management action and strategic savings.

I proposed that the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee recommend that the council write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care requesting an adequate social care settlement. This was seconded by Cllr Martin Shaw.

This recommendation was considered by Cabinet in December and it was resolved that the portfolioholder for Health and Social Care raise the issue with local MPs during a series of meetings - and write to the Secretary of State for Health if this was necessary.

It was emphasised by officers and the budget papers for the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny meeting on Tuesday 26 January stated:

“... significant unknown risks remain in respect of the cost of future pandemic response measures, ensuring the ongoing viability and sustainability of the independent care sector, and sufficiency of government Covid response funding.”

This is an incredibly important issue and one that I will continue to monitor and raise.

Here's the latest information and advice on support, including financial, available during the pandemic and lockdown... <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/support-for-people-and-families/>