

# Corporate Plan 2011-2015

September 2011





## **Corporate Plan 2011-2015**

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North Devon Council  
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# Contents

Introduction from Leader of North Devon Council	3
Co-operation Agreement	4
A profile of North Devon	5
 Community leadership and well-being	7
 Building a more robust local economy	9
 Protecting and enhancing North Devon's unique environment	11
 Improving North Devon's housing	13
 Increasing the council's capacity to deliver what North Devon needs	15
 Shaping the future of North Devon	17
Delivering our plan - the tools	19
Who is responsible	20

# Leading for North Devon



Cllr Brian Greenslade

**We are all passionate about North Devon, not just our own local community, but also our local economy, our environment and the future of our area. As a result, we have refreshed North Devon Council's Corporate Plan, which sets out the direction we will take over the next four years.**

Following the local elections in May 2011 the political leadership of North Devon Council is made up of Liberal Democrat and Independent councillors. I have the privilege to lead this experienced team. A copy of the co-operation agreement between the groups is set out on the following page.

We are all aware that these are particularly challenging economic times, with a reduction in central government funding across the public sector. For North Devon Council, this means less money from the government every financial year for the foreseeable future.

We intend to deal with this challenge by increasing the capacity of the council so that despite having fewer resources we can do more for North Devon. We will do this in two main ways – reducing overheads and working more closely with a variety of partners, especially Torridge District Council. This will allow us to protect and improve our front-line services. We will use this increased capacity to deal with some of the area's long-term issues. These include improving housing, protecting our unique environment and building a more robust economy.

Taking all of these challenges into account and with the expertise and dedication of our councillors and staff, this Corporate Plan sets out the council's priorities. These priorities are based on listening to what people of North Devon have told us. As well as explaining why we think these priorities are important, we have also highlighted what we aim to do to address these issues, as well as how we will measure our success.

The Executive team comprises of Cllr Rodney Cann (Deputy Leader/Environment), Cllr Mike Edmunds (Strategic Planning), Cllr Yvette Gubb (Community), Cllr Mair Manuel (Performance and Procedures), Cllr Colin Payne (Regulatory Services), Cllr Malcolm Prowse (Economic Regeneration), Cllr Derrick Spear (Culture), Cllr Faye Webber (Housing), supported by Cllr David Worden (Co-ordination of Rural Services). I am covering Policy and Resources.

On the following pages we have set out our ambitions for the period 2011 to 2015. We may not have much money, but we can apply a strategic focus on issues important to North Devon and offer leadership together with partners to get things done.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mair Manuel', written over a white background.

Leader of North Devon Council

# Co-operation Agreement

CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN LIB DEM AND INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF NORTH DEVON COUNCIL TO PROVIDE STABLE ADMINISTRATION OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE FOUR YEARS 2011/15.

The agreement is for four years ending with the district council elections in 2015.

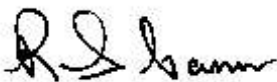
**1)** None of the participating members are bound by the agreement to support every item of business brought forward but are asked to advise the partners in advance if they are unable to support a particular policy position.

**2)** The signatories will meet as and when required to ensure the agenda for the council is progressed in a stable and businesslike manner.

**3)** Agree that the appointments on the attached appendix be supported at the Annual Meeting on May 19th 2011.

**4)** The following policy areas be taken forward and developed:

- a)** Improve the supply of affordable housing in the district
- b)** Give environmental policies greater priority especially improving recycling rates
- c)** NDC to take a greater role in economic regeneration
- d)** Build the capacity of North Devon Council working with partners when and where appropriate
- e)** Work on the overheads of the council to release resources for keeping council tax down and improving services to the public
- f)** Make North Devon Council more visible to the community
- g)** Improve the standing of, and communications with, all elected Members of the council through a designated all group Procedures Working Party, which will deal with all member related issues, constitutional matters and the operation of internal procedures.



Cllr R Cann



Cllr M Edmunds



Cllr B Greenslade



Cllr M Prowse



# A profile of North Devon

## Area

North Devon covers 425.6 square miles (1,102 km<sup>2</sup>) of some of the best countryside in the country. It is divided into 27 electoral wards and 63 parishes.

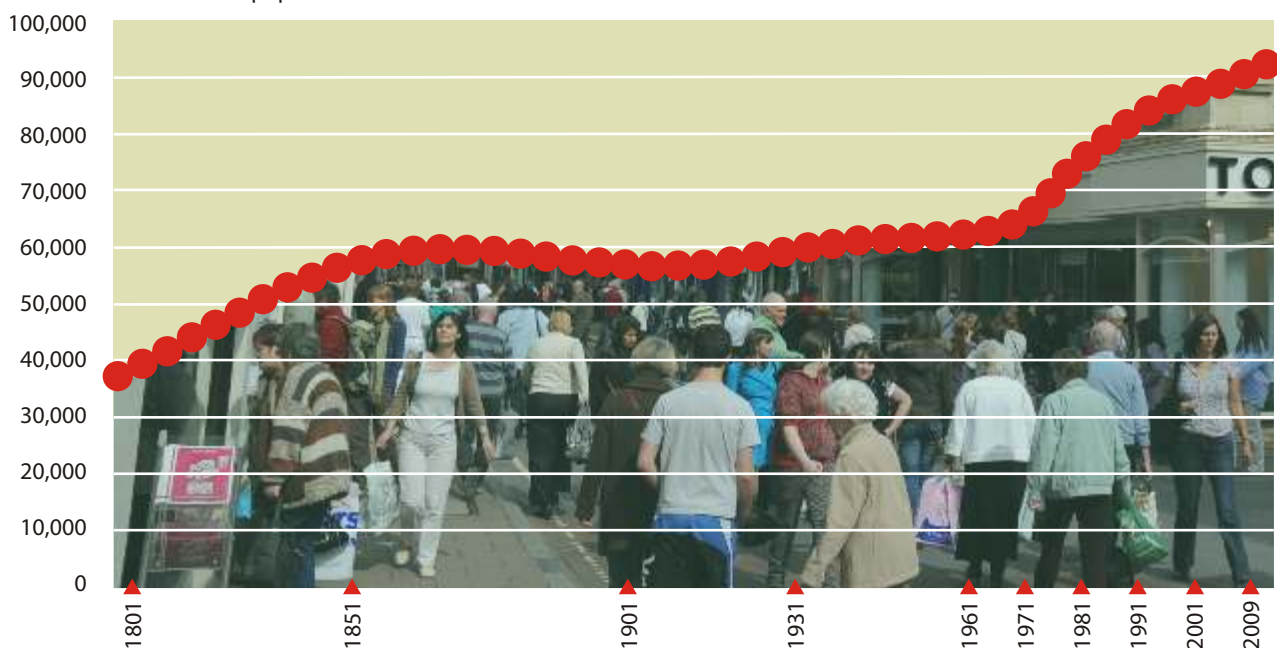
## Population

In common with much of the UK, we experienced rapid population growth in the first half of the nineteenth century. It then stabilised at around 60,000 until the mid twentieth century. Since then, there has been a steady increase, reaching 91,500 in 2009. A further increase of 10,000 is expected by 2026.

## Income

The national Annual Survey of Household Income (ASHE) shows that North Devon has some of the lowest wages in England. In both 2008 and 2009, North Devon was in the lowest 1% of the 351 areas of England. This shows why we need to do all we can to boost the local economy.

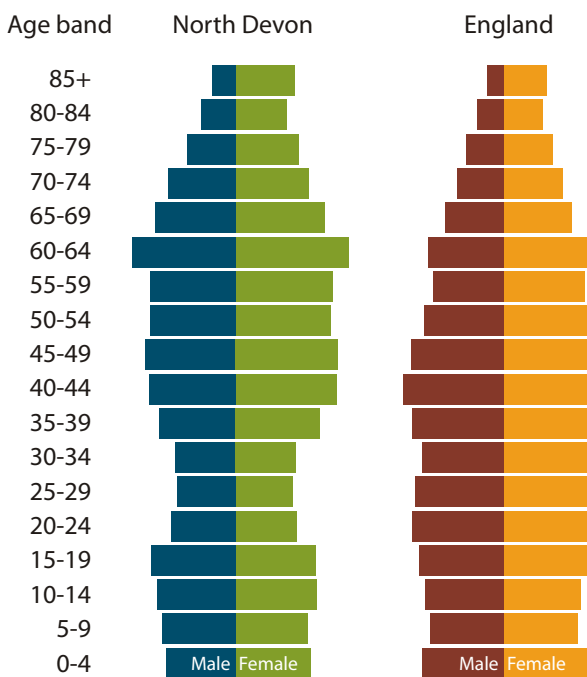
North Devon population 1801 to 2009



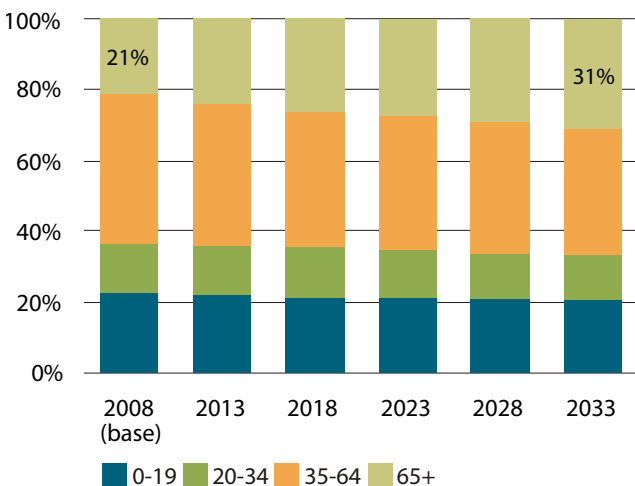
## Age and gender

North Devon has a low proportion of working age people compared to the rest of the country. This is because young people tend to leave the area after their secondary education, shown in the diagram, by the dramatic narrowing for people aged between 20 and 34.

There is also inward migration of older people. This is shown most noticeably by the difference between the size of North Devon's 60 to 64 age band and that of England.



The proportion of the population over 65 is expected to rise over the next 20 years from about a fifth in 2008 to nearly a third in 2033.



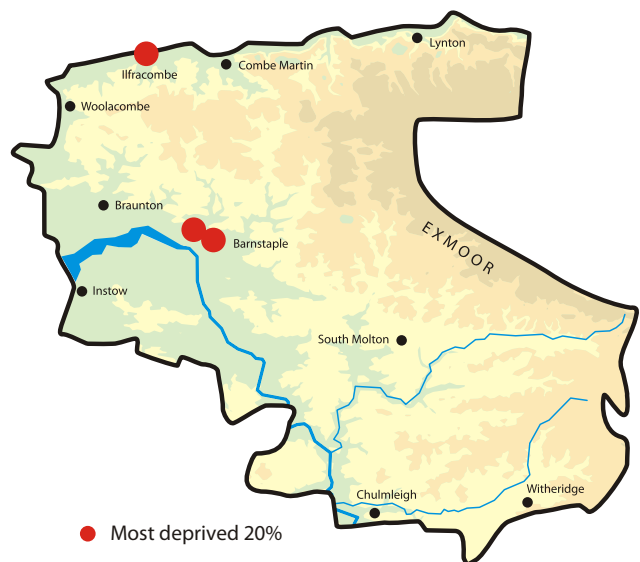
## Ethnicity

A very small proportion of people in North Devon come from ethnic minorities. At the 2001 Census only one person in 40 did not categorise themselves as white British.

## Deprivation

The government produces data showing relative deprivation, most recently in 2010. To do this they split England into 32,482 areas. The map shows how the 58 areas that make up North Devon compare to the national picture.

Our most deprived area is part of Ilfracombe Central ward, which is in the most deprived 5% of England, closely followed by parts of Barnstaple. The least deprived is part of Braunton East ward.





# Community leadership and **well-being**

## Why is this important?

North Devon's strong social and community networks make the area an especially satisfying place to live in. The council forms one part of that network and we will do everything we can to encourage and support the community and cultural life of the area.

We are committed to treating everyone fairly and will do all we can to eliminate inequality and to build stronger communities based on mutual respect and understanding for everyone.

To preserve this quality of life, we need to ensure people feel safe. We have low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and are working closely in partnership with the police to ensure this is maintained.

We work with communities to deliver projects they require using S106 developer contributions. We aim to use these contributions to enhance and improve existing leisure facilities, parks and play areas, as well as creating new facilities.

The cultural life of the area is rich. For example, we have:

- two theatres and a museum
- North Devon Leisure Centre, Ilfracombe Swimming Pool, international standard Tarka Tennis Centre, Park School Sports Hall and all weather pitch



Cllr Yvette Gubb  
Community



Cllr Derrick Spear  
Culture



Cllr David Worden  
Non-Executive lead  
for Rural Services

- nine formal parks, 22 council owned play areas, two skate parks, two local nature reserves, three community woodlands and informal open spaces such as Hillsborough.

These are special characteristics of the area that need to be protected and preserved.

As a council we support the voluntary sector and provide grants to key organisations, providing services to vulnerable people and providing valuable volunteering opportunities.

One problem faced by many in North Devon is rural isolation. As people live further apart from each other, it becomes more difficult to provide services to them. They might feel this in the extra distance to a supermarket, but it is even more important for people who need to see a doctor or claim a benefit. We have appointed a non-Executive lead member for rural services to coordinate services and address isolation.

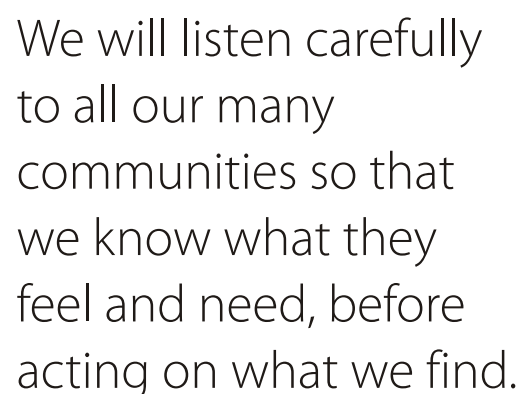
## What will we do?

- Listen carefully to all our many communities so that we know what they feel and need, before acting on what we find
- Put power in the hands of local people so that they can make more informed decisions and judgements. Examples include the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and a Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme
- Set up an integrated team of council officers, police officers and fire and rescue staff to deal more effectively and efficiently with anti-social behaviour
- Encourage cultural organisations in North Devon to work together to offer better cultural experiences that celebrate diversity and help promote strong and inclusive communities
- Improve opportunities for people of all ages to explore and develop their own creative potential and learn from their cultural experiences
- Promote North Devon's cultural life to strengthen the local economy
- Set up structures that allow our communities to have their voices heard in a wider arena
- Assess the impact of our decisions on groups at risk of disadvantage, such as disabled people and those at risk of discrimination
- Work with local communities and partner organisations to improve local services and facilities, particularly in disadvantaged areas
- Work with our partners to protect the public against a variety of harm, including poor air quality, unsafe food, poor housing conditions, pollution, unsafe workplaces, crime and anti social behaviour.

- Build on the success of our one-stop-shops in Ilfracombe and South Molton by improving access to our services in Barnstaple
- Protect and enhance existing parks, sports, culture and recreation facilities including open spaces
- Work with the voluntary sector to develop and provide services to vulnerable people in line with amended funding agreements.

## Our targets - how you will know we have done it

- An integrated council, police and fire team will deal with anti-social behaviour
- Complete the £1 million refurbishment of North Devon Leisure Centre
- Support the extension of Tarka Tennis Centre and the relocation of Falcons Gymnastics Academy to this site
- Maximise the use of external funding streams to support community and council projects for the betterment of communities
- Maintain the green flag status of Bicclescombe Park and Yeo Valley Community Woodland
- All money received from developers will be spent on projects desired by the local community
- Continual dialogue with our communities through our Community Sports Network and other associated partnerships
- Protect or increase existing grants to the voluntary sector.



We will listen carefully to all our many communities so that we know what they feel and need, before acting on what we find.



# Building a more robust local economy

## Why is this important?

North Devon is an ideal place to live, but not an ideal place to work because our wage levels are very low. In both 2008 and 2009 North Devon had an average weekly wage that was in the lowest 1% of the 351 areas of England. This makes it difficult for many to pay for things that are most important to them, such as decent homes and basic commodities.

The below average earnings can be put down to a variety of reasons. For example, economic growth is restricted by our fairly remote location in the country, poor road and rail links and poor broadband connectivity. While our environmental designations provide some opportunities, they can also restrict the growth of some sectors of the economy. There is very limited higher education provision in North Devon and the population's relatively low skills levels (in particular at and above foundation degree level) make the area less attractive to inward investment than it should be.

One effect of our low income levels is a "brain drain", as many of our best and brightest young people leave the area once they have finished their secondary education.



Cllr Malcolm Prowse  
Economic  
Regeneration

The high quality natural environment attracts inward migration of older people, which means a smaller proportion of our population is of working age than usual. Inward migration of retirees increases the demand for the limited supply of housing, leaving the working age population squeezed between low incomes and high house prices.

This explains why we need to do all we can to encourage the growth of the local economy.

## What will we do?

Strengthen the economic performance of Barnstaple, Ilfracombe and South Molton by:

- improving infrastructure to enable economic growth across the district, in particular employment space and broadband connectivity
- working directly with businesses to help them improve their productivity
- improving skill levels of the local workforce, ensuring potential employees are ready for work
- improving links between the employee pool, training providers and employers.

Working with our business partners we will:

- form new partnerships that both support business growth and secure public safety, for example, as a Primary Authority
- ensure we use North Devon Council's regulatory services, such as licensing and planning, to support and encourage local businesses, focussing on jobs and growth giving development primacy over other issues
- aim to maximise use of EU funding to help build a more robust economy.

## Our targets - how you will know we have done it:

- Economic growth will be in line with similar areas of the UK and above the Devon average
- Ensure 14 hectares of new employment land is available between April 2011 and March 2015
- Carry out a retail and leisure study that covers the whole of North Devon
- Complete improvement works at the North Devon Leisure Centre by April 2012
- Increase Barnstaple town centre retail floor space by at least 100,000 sq ft
- Working towards a regenerated cattle market and central car park area in South Molton
- Working towards improvements to Ilfracombe seafront.





# Protecting and enhancing North Devon's unique **environment**

## Why is this important?

In North Devon we enjoy one of the best local environments in the country. Our landscape's great natural beauty is nationally recognised and millions of visitors come to share it with us every year. So we need to make sure it is maintained and preserved.

Much of our area is so special that it is protected in one way or another. Nearly one fifth of North Devon is in Exmoor National Park, another fifth is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there is much more as well.

It is important to enhance our natural environment, recognising its significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of the local community and the role it plays in supporting sustainable tourism and the economy. With our beaches being a key attraction to both residents and visitors, we need to support initiatives to improve the water quality along the coast.

Perhaps the worst thing we could do to this wonderful place is cover it with rubbish. Burying thousands of tonnes of rubbish in a hole in the ground is bad for the environment and wasteful.



Cllr Rodney Cann  
Deputy Leader  
Environment

Waste collection and recycling is also the most visible and one of the most frequently experienced services that we deliver. Therefore, it is important we do it well and do it right.

During the period of this administration we intend to improve the council's environmental performance, increase the amount of domestic rubbish that is reused, recycled or composted, and reduce the cost of waste collection.

## What will we do?

- Improve the efficiency of our waste and recycling services, including exploring opportunities for joint working with neighbouring authorities, so that council tax payers benefit
- Replace our vehicle fleet when its lease ends in 2014, deciding on a new arrangement that allows us to improve our collection methods
- Use our services more effectively to promote our environmental stewardship responsibilities, for example in controlling fly-tipping and promoting energy efficiency
- Work closely with environmental groups and organisations to help support policies that protect and enhance our natural environment.

## Our targets - how you will know we have done it:

- By 2015 our recycling rate will be among the highest quarter of similar councils
- The cost of waste and recycling will decrease significantly
- We will maintain the appearance and cleanliness of our town centres.



By 2015 our recycling rate will be among the highest quarter of similar councils, and the cost of waste and recycling will decrease significantly.



# Improving North Devon's housing

## Why is this important?

We have low incomes compared to the rest of the country, but house prices and rents are high, meaning the housing market is unbalanced. As a result, some people that are born here can't afford to live here for the rest of their lives and some people that want to move here find it difficult. This is consistently shown in surveys.

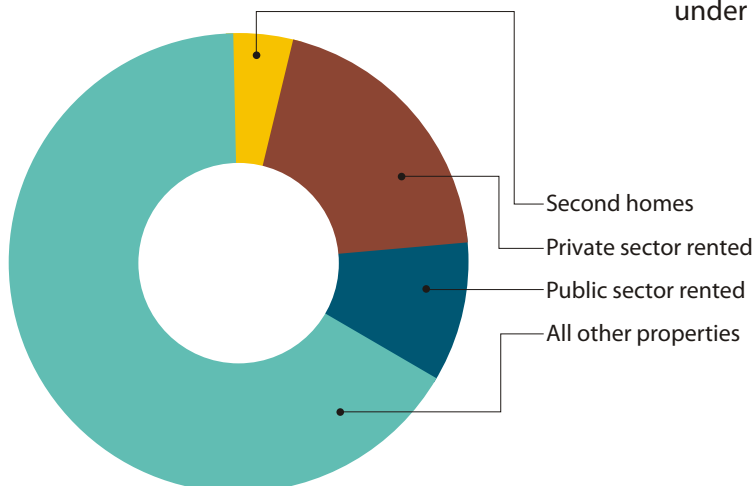
North Devon has a low proportion of public sector housing, such as housing associations, with only around half the national average. We also have about twice as many second homes as usual, up to 27% in some parishes. These are only used occasionally. This pushes up the cost of the available housing. We also have a large private rented sector, but it is sometimes expensive and of poor quality.



Cllr Faye Webber  
Housing

The number of new houses being built has been hit hard by the economic downturn. In addition, changes in government policy on housing and benefits are having an increasing impact on local people. For example:

- there is a dramatic decrease in funding available to housing associations
- benefit levels are being reduced by being calculated on a lower assumed rent
- public sector housing rent is increasing, which can now be as high as 80% of private sector rents, as a result our homelessness services are under increasing pressure.



In short, people's housing problems are increasing and we need to do all we can to help them. The council gives free advice on all housing problems to anyone that needs it and we are successful in many areas, such as preventing homelessness. We need to preserve and build on these areas of success.

The council is responsible for regulating the quality of all the housing stock in the area. Some parts of North Devon have a high proportion of poor housing. We address this by providing loans to landlords and sometimes by forcing them to make repairs.

We help disabled people through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). The size of this potential client group is significantly higher than the national average and the financial means of this group is lower than average, which increases the demand. We need to do all we can for this vulnerable group.

In summary, investing in increasing and improving the housing stock has social, economic and environmental benefits for our community. The social benefits include improved physical and mental well-being and more residents being satisfied with their homes and neighbourhood. Environmental benefits include greater fuel efficiency. There are also the economic benefits of work done on house building and repairs.

## **What will we do?**

- Make it easier for housing associations to deliver affordable housing schemes by doing the up front work early
- Use our own land to encourage more affordable homes to be built
- Allocate £3 million to housing projects to deliver affordable housing and support improvements to the private rented sector
- Work with our partners to develop a list of priority housing sites to be delivered together by 2015
- Prevent homelessness, support vulnerable people, help people move away from rough sleeping and provide improved access to settled homes
- Improve and strengthen the private rented sector by improving landlords' management of properties and tenancies and by improving the quality of properties
- Help bring empty properties back into use
- Continue to give high quality advice to all on any housing problems
- Examine the possibility to help first time buyers through loans for their deposits.

## **Our targets - how you will know we have done it:**

- Ensure land is available for 1,600 new homes between April 2011 and March 2015
- Of all new homes, a high proportion will be affordable (in the highest quarter of councils in the south west)
- To get value for money, a high proportion of those affordable homes will be provided without any public subsidy (in the highest quarter of councils in the south west)
- Work with North Devon Homes to improve their housing stock and create over 65 additional affordable homes
- Maintain our current high level of homelessness prevention in the face of increasing demand
- Introduce more financially sustainable ways of helping households obtain alternative accommodation
- Introduce a Landlord and Tenant Accreditation Scheme.



# Increasing the council's **capacity** to deliver what North Devon needs

## Why is this important?

Every organisation has a limit to what it can deliver. We will increase the council's capacity so that it can deliver more of what the people of North Devon want and need.

At the same time central government has committed to reduce local government funding by 28% over four years. This council's funding was cut by £1.3 million for 2011/12 and a further £0.8 million for 2012/13 and we have little indication on our future years grant levels. This reduction in our finances means that sometimes we will have fewer options than previous administrations. So we will focus on delivering more, but at a lower cost.

The present capital programme is £10.7 million, but the council only has £1.6 million in hand. As a result we are depending on £8.8 million of future receipts from the sale of assets. Without these receipts the programme could virtually cease.

There is a range of new initiatives from central government that will affect local government. These include a wide ranging review of how we are financed and a welcome drive for greater transparency.



Cllr Brian Greenslade  
Council Leader  
Policy & Resources



Cllr Mair Manuel  
Performance  
& Procedures

We will work with Torrington District Council and other partners to find ways of reducing costs without being forced to reduce our services.

## **What will we do?**

- Find new ways of working with Torridge District Council and other partners that will let us reduce costs without being forced to reduce our services. This includes improving our use of office space (especially through maximising the potential of the Brynsworthy site to give long term savings), and providing an integrated one stop shop service for customers
- Remove all unnecessary bureaucracy, while remaining fully accountable to you
- Invest in IT systems, such as document management, that can bring long-term efficiencies.

A combination of resolute action and the council's strong financial position should allow us to ensure council tax is kept down, whilst ensuring continuity of key services.

## **Our targets - how you will know we have done it:**

- Save £1.9 million over the next four years
- Council tax levels will be kept low.



# Shaping the **future** of North Devon

## Why is this important?

North Devon has a high quality environment and is a great place to live and work. The communities in which we live will change over time as new development occurs. Therefore we need to help shape individual settlements and North Devon as a whole to make them the places our communities want them to become.

This involves planning the scale and distribution of future growth, including new homes, job opportunities, shops, infrastructure, community facilities, open spaces and much more. We also need to preserve and protect the important environmental and heritage assets and cultural identity that makes North Devon special.

We will work closely with local communities, developers and partner organisations. The result will be the timely delivery of physical, social and green infrastructure to meet identified needs.

The council will set out its long-term plans to secure more sustainable development and shape North Devon over the next 20 years towards achieving community aspirations. These plans are known as the “Local Development Framework” and the “Core Strategy”.



Cllr Mike Edmunds  
Strategic Planning  
& Development  
at Ilfracombe

## What will we do?

- Work with local communities to identify the vision and priorities for their towns and villages
- Ensure all decisions that shape the future strategy for North Devon are based on firm evidence
- Adopt a Core Strategy to set out the objectives and policies to shape and secure sustainable development across North Devon over the next 20 years
- Work with neighbouring local authorities, including Devon County Council and Torridge District Council, to shape North Devon and plan key infrastructure that meets community needs and aspirations
- Secure redevelopment and delivery of key sites
- Secure high quality developments to complement and enhance the distinctive characteristics of North Devon’s communities

- Protect all our conservation areas by identifying what makes them special and the actions needed to preserve and enhance their special historic character.

### **Our targets - how you will know we have done it**

- Identify enough developable housing and employment land in appropriate locations to meet North Devon's needs over the next 15 years
- Adopt a joint Core Strategy for North Devon and Torridge by 2014 for the period up to 2031
- Adopt an Infrastructure Delivery Plan by 2014 that shows how and when key infrastructure requirements will be funded and delivered
- Secure funding for delivery of strategic infrastructure by implementing a Community Infrastructure Levy by 2014
- Prepare up-to-date character appraisals and management plans for all our conservation areas.

We will identify enough developable housing and employment land in appropriate locations to meet North Devon's needs.



# Delivering our plan - the tools

## PEOPLE

We are reorganising the way we work to make sure we can deliver our plan effectively and efficiently and that every member of staff is clear about the contribution they will make.

An Executive member and lead officer will be responsible for each of our priorities, overseeing performance, keeping track of progress, ensuring that robust plans are in place and that the line of accountability is clear.

Responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the strategic plan as a whole will rest with the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. Our Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor progress with the delivery of the plan to make sure we remain on track.

## FINANCE

The average household's council tax bill in North Devon is just under £30 a week. This pays for all the services provided by the district council, the county council, the police, the fire and rescue service and all town and parish councils.

In 2010/11 the council tax paid for 45% of North Devon Council's services, another 45% came from business rates, with the remainder from grants from central government. However, the amount of grant we receive has decreased each year and this will continue. Therefore, we need to be efficient and innovative to minimise any future increases in council tax.

We will give priority to the delivery of our strategic plan when deciding how our limited funding is used. We will also look to fund many of our improvements by becoming more efficient, working with partners and securing funding from other sources.

## IMPROVED REGULATION

Many of the council's core services are involved with regulating activity in the community. For example, the planning system regulates the way land is used. Similarly, we regulate some commercial activities and maintain safety standards through licensing.

Regulation enables businesses to trade, grow and compete fairly and safely. We have appointed a new wide-ranging Executive member. His role will be to ensure we improve our regulation so that it is a tool rather than a barrier, to make sure our regulation doesn't have an adverse impact on the lives of local people or stifle local business.



Cllr Colin Payne  
Regulatory Policy  
& Services

## INFORMATION

The priorities in our plan are based on analysis of information about the needs of North Devon's communities. We will use performance information to monitor the progress we are making with the delivery of the plan and the impact it is having on people's lives. We will adjust what we do depending on these details. We will publish information about our performance and progress on a regular basis so that the public and other interested parties know how well we are doing.

# Who is responsible

## YOUR COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS

A councillor is, first and foremost, a representative of the community that elected them and of the community of North Devon. All councillors need to understand and represent the needs of their ward, as well as contribute to the wider strategic representation and decision making for North Devon as a whole. They also need to participate in appropriate consultation exercises to ensure such knowledge is up to date.

As part of their daily work they will deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving particular concerns or problems. This will sometimes mean they must balance the needs of their individual ward with the wider needs of North Devon.

## THE EXECUTIVE

The council has appointed a Leader and eight Executive members to lead the political management of the council, taking most of the significant decisions relating to the delivery of this plan. In the interests of representative democracy the Leader has delegated all the powers he has to the multi-party Executive.

The Leader of the Council, Brian Greenslade, will oversee the delivery of this plan as a whole. Each member of the Executive has a special area of responsibility and is given the authority to deliver what needs to be done for the benefit of the people of North Devon.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews and scrutinises the council's performance and holds the Executive to account. The committee will monitor our progress in delivering the Corporate Plan to ensure the council remains on track.

This is only a part of the committee's annual programme of work. Other parts will include looking at specific packages of work that relate to the priority areas, as well as reviewing and scrutinising the discharge of the crime and disorder functions of the council, the police and other relevant organisations.



Cllr Frank Biederman  
Chairman of  
Overview & Scrutiny

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