

**Subject:**Frank Biederman report.

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Frank Biederman – Fremington Rural ward report to Parish Councils and Residents February 2024.

I hope you find this format helpful, if so I will try to keep it going each month.

Please don't wait for me to come to a Parish meeting to raise Questions or Issues you are facing in the Community.

My Contact Details are [Frank.Biederman@Devon.gov.uk](mailto:Frank.Biederman@Devon.gov.uk) Mobile number 07595988704.

My cllrfrank facebook page, I regularly update, so a good place to follow what am up to.

**Cedars Roundabout** – This has taken most of my time up, in the four weeks since the scheme started and know it will have affected you all.

Since the first few days, we have managed to find ways to improve the situation vastly, but I am still finding that at times, especially the pm peak, there are issues, which I continue to engage officers on. This dedicated webpage has been set up to answer many of the questions raised and details of the scheme.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/traffic-information/roadworks/cedars-roundabout/>

**Budget – This Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February is the Full County Budget meeting.**

You can see the papers and recommendations, via this link at item 8. <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/g4719/Public%20reports%20pack%2015th-Feb-2024%2014.15%20Council.pdf?T=10>

The Budget Book at this link <https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/documents/b15525/Budget%20Book%202024%2025%2015th-Feb-2024%2014.15%20Council.pdf?T=9>

**The Independent Group, have submitted the following amendments, which we hope will get cross party support.**

The Independent & Green Group Welcomes and supports:

1. The overall 6.3% increase in the budget, specifically the 10.4% in Children and Young People's Futures and 6% in Integrated Adult Social Care, while recognising this does not meet the Inflationary, National Living Wage & Demand pressures facing us and does not help with the years of cuts by government to our core funding.

We Support

(a) The £2.3 million increase in the internal and external fostering budget, and the increased number of in-house foster carers by 30, and £3.2 million investment in the development of three in[1]house children's homes reducing the reliance on out of county placements and independent fostering agencies, something we have pushed for, for many years.

(b) The increase of 525 places in Devon's Special School estate.

(c) The increase in Member Locality Budgets to £8,000 per Member, as local members can help support their communities.

(d) Welcome the extra £1.152m in cyclic Maintenance of the Highway. We have pushed for this in many years.

(e) We reluctantly support the 4.99% Council Tax increase, recognising that failing to do so, will put at further risk, the services that our communities rely on, particularly our most vulnerable residents.

We will support the Cabinets Budget, if the following amendments are accepted, as we believe if we are again asking the public to pay more, that they see an improvement or at least services maintained.

A – The £175,000 reduction proposed to Devon library Services are reversed, recognising the positive impact Libraries have on our communities.

B – An increase of £250,000 to the Public Rights of Way & Cycle Network budget from £750,000 to £1,000,000.

C – Increase PROW Wardens by 4, to cover the 3000 miles of footpaths, split 2 extra for North & South Team. Total Cost including on costs £180,000

D – An increase of £100,000 to £250,000 LTP Budget for 20mph Zones supported by Parish Councils.

E – The Administration commits to look at the management Structures across the council, to seek to reduce the number of Managers we currently have.

F – Commit to write to each Devon Conservative MP, outlining the severe underfunding Devon County Council gets for School Funding & High Needs Block funding, asking them why they voted for a settlement that continues to disadvantage Devon's Children. We are 114 out of 151 in the funding Table.

This has led to the severe situation the Council finds itself in, being the Authority with the biggest SEND accumulated overspend on its books forecast to be £163M by the end of the year.

Devon's Children are underfunded by £213 each per Year.

We have 94,302 Children, meaning Devon is short changed by £20,086,326 against the average.

High Needs Block Funding we are underfunded against the national average by £96.06 per head.

We have 9,401 children in this bracket, meaning we are down by £868,478.46 a year against the average.

Devon is underfunded for Schools & High Needs block by almost £21 million a year, meaning our children cannot get the support others get. This of course leads to children falling behind and needing expensive interventions later on. This has gone on for years, so we say Devon is not overspent, it is underfunded. We are now in this budget, asked to put £5m from capital projects to the safety valve for our negotiations with government to pay back the overspend, it will of course involve committing to not supporting so many children in the same way going forward. Which capital budgets will this come from, most probably our crumbling road network.

G – Public Health, we are worse off than School Funding, being 139 out of 150 that receive Public Health Funding. We receive £37 per head of population, whereas the

national average is £70-£80. Its hard to get the exact figure, but lets assume we have 800,000 residents and if its £70 that's a staggering £26.4 million we don't get against the average! Just imagine what we could do for our communities, if we just got the average. So we write to the Government & all Devon MP's asking why they see it fit that Devon is so badly funded.

We believe F & G proves that we are not being levelled up, but levelled down by this government and its an insult to the people of Devon, when we hear Devon MPs and Government ministers talking about how they are levelling up. The fact is, they are using money taken from us originally. £150m in Core Grant a year gone since 2010, meaning we now spend officer time and money on bidding for pots of money.

Our Budget Amendments A-D have been checked by the Finance Team and confirmed as Legal & Appropriate for consideration by Council.

They total £705,000 which will be paid for by:

A – The Citizen Engagement Budget , formerly known as Communications, is reduced by a further £500,000 from £1,061,000 to £561,000 as we do not believe we need 28 staff effectively acting as spin doctors for the administration. We have 60 councillors that regularly engage with our communities.

B - £205,000 is taken out of the Executive, Legal & Democratic Services , reducing it to £8,186,000 from £8,391,000. This could be done by reducing the number of staff from 111 – 106

A & B are moved into the relevant budget lines.

END

## **Reporting Highway Defects**

You can report Highway defects Including Potholes, Overhanging Vegetation, Trip Hazards, Faded Lines, loose Covers, Faulty Street Lights on the following link

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/report-a-problem/>

**Devolution Consultation** – A consultation has opened on the Governments Devolution deal for Devon & Torbay.

Details here <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/public-asked-to-have-their-say-on-devon-and-torbay-devolution-deal/>

I have serious concerns, over the governance of it, in particular.

I see it as another unwanted level of Local Government, with places like Northern Devon forgotten again, especially as Torbay with 1:6 of the population, will have equal membership and voting rights to the whole of Devon. You can see more on my Thoughts here <https://www.northdevongazette.co.uk/news/local-news/1406222/devolution-deal-to-give-devon-and-torbay-more-powers-gets-mixed-reaction-in-north-devon.html>

North Devon Link Road Project – You can find out the latest here, including road closures <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/last-big-push-as-link-road-upgrade-accelerates-towards-final-stages/>

**Locality Grants are now spent and Closed for 2023/24** – This will reopen in late April 2024

I welcome applications from across my parishes/community groups that support our communities.

Link for applications <https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/councillors-nav/locality-budgets/>

I have supported the following in 2023/24 financial Year.

Instow School Sand Pit & Cover.

2<sup>nd</sup> Fremington Brownies

Age Concern, North Devon

Families in Grief

Fremington Friendship Club

Fremington Parish Council (Equipment for Litter Picks, Tools for community clean ups, that can be shared across my Parishes and Community Groups)

Instow Parish Council for sand Clearance.

Instow School for reading Project (I did the same for H,NT & L in 22/23)

North Devon's Deaf Childrens Society

Barnstaple Rugby Club u12's Kit.

**Meetings Attended January 8<sup>th</sup> – February 14<sup>th</sup> 2024**

8/01/24 – Visited Barnstaple Link Centre

08/01/24 – DCC Governance working Group - Virtual

8/01/24 – Fremington Parish Council Meeting

9/01/24 – Board of Trustee meeting of Clarity Mental Health Charity

10/01/24 – Devon county Council Cabinet Meeting.

10/01.24 – Horwood, NT & L Parish Council Meeting.

12/01/24 – Devon & Somerset fire Authority Members Forum - Virtual

16/01/24 – Fremington Community Group Meeting.

17/01/24 – Full North Devon District Council Meeting

18/01/24 – Home Office Fire Fit for the future Briefing – Virtual

22/01/24 – Meeting with Officers about Old Torrington Road Bus Gate

22/01/24 – Meeting with National Fire Chiefs Council Chair – Virtual

24/01/24 – Devon & Somerset Fire Authority People Committee

24/01/24 – National Joint Council for Brigade Managers Pay - Virtual

25/01/24 – Fremington parish council – Finance Committee

25/01/24 – LGA Independent Group Executive - Virtual

26/01/24 – Site Meeting Cedars with officers of DCC & WSP

26/01/24 – Devon & Somerset Fire Authority Members Forum

30/01/24 – Fremington Parish council Strategic review Meeting

02/02/24 – Devon Council Cabinet Meeting

02/02/24 – North Devon Highways & traffic Orders Briefing – Virtual

05/02/24 – Devon & Somerset Resources Committee – Virtual

05/02/24 – Devon County Council Independent & Green Group budget briefing - Virtual

05/02/24 – Fremington parish council Meeting

07/02/24 – Fire Performance Overview Group – HMICFRS London

09/03/24 – Devon County Council Cabinet Meeting – Virtual

09/02/24 – Home Office Productivity & Efficiency Forum – Virtual

13/02/24 – LGA Fire Services Management Lead Members – Virtual

14/02/24 – Fire Rescue Services Emergency Response Group – Virtual

14/02/24 – Chief Fire Officers & Fire & Rescue authority roles – Virtual

14/02/24 – Chairs Briefing for Devon & Somerset Full Authority Meeting – Virtual

14/02/24 – Horwood, NT & Lovacott Parish Council

I finish by thanking you for all you do, to support our communities in so many ways.

Frank