

## Appendix 2

### **District Councillors Dennis and Long Report:**

The last Full Council meeting on 15th February approved the Council Plan for 2024-2028 and the delivery plan for the coming year to 2025.

The budget and expenditure for 2024/25 was also agreed and this includes an increase in council tax of 2.99%. (On a Band D property Council tax from £185.42 to £190.96, an increase of £5.54 per year or under 11 pence per week)

Also reconfirmed and approved was the premium (up to 200% council tax) for second homes, this will come into effect from 1st April 2025. It is the intention of the District Council that all the premium raised from this will be ringfenced for affordable and social housing, the District Council is pressing Devon County Council to look at doing the same for what they will receive from this premium.

Changes will also be made to Council Tax discounts and premiums from 1st April this year for unoccupied properties both furnished and unfurnished.

The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 100% for a maximum period of 1 month, for 1 month to 1 year is zero; the discount for properties that require major repair works to render them habitable is 50% for a maximum period of 12 months; the discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero.

An empty homes premium; of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and unfurnished for at least one year, but less than five years; an additional 200% for at least five years, but less than ten years; an additional 300% for at least ten years.

The Council also approved a local Council Tax Reduction scheme for 24/25, there was no change to the bands of the current banded scheme, removed the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for self-employed claimants, and disregards 100% of the 'Limited Capability for Work' element of Universal Credit.

Residents are reminded that the South Hams District Council website has information available as to where to find support.

The District Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee met recently; this meeting saw the General Manager of Fusion Leisure attending to answer questions on some of the issues regarding cleanliness/maintenance. They have not met several standards and have a programme over the coming year to increase cleanliness/maintenance levels and to increase employment levels to bring the four centres in the South Hams back to standard. South Hams District Council will be meeting with them every six months to monitor progress.

Town & Parish Planning training took place in January, this was a well-attended, three-hour session, with good feedback. Further training sessions will be organised, welcome any suggestions as to topics that Councillors feel could be covered to assist them in their work.

District Councillors have both a Sustainable Localities Fund and a new Climate Change and Biodiversity Fund - £2,000 each per fund to support projects in the local communities. Full details on are available on the District Council website.

South Hams Composting Pilots: With the support of South Hams District Council, Sustainable South Hams is conducting a series of compost pilots across the District. The pilots are starting at a small scale in a few locations, but if successful, will be rolled out more widely. Composting provides a valuable and easy way to reduce carbon emissions, increase soil fertility and encourage community engagement in climate and nature action. The objectives of the pilot programme are:

- To increase the knowledge and support for community composting schemes.
- To put redundant brown bins to good use
- To inspire and inform residents about home composting
- To explore ways to offer street level composting of food waste

This offer is also being made to Sustainability Groups across the South Hams so interested parties should liaise with your local group to avoid duplication

South Devon National Landscape (formerly AONB) has received a £2,246,965 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for an exciting project 'Life on the Edge' focussed along the South Devon coast. Made possible by money raised by National Lottery players, the multi partner project (Buglife, Devon Wildlife Trust, National Trust, SW Coastpath) will deliver a programme to help restore landscape and habitat to ensure thriving populations of some of the UK's rarest insects living along this coastal area between Berry Head in Torbay and Wembury.

The front office, the Public Enquiry Office of the Kingsbridge Police Station is now open to the public, Monday to Saturday 10am – 3pm.