

Berrynarbor Parish Council

County Councillors Report

November 2025

My apologies for not being with you this month, I am at a meeting in London.

Fighting for the Future of Our Libraries

At the October Cabinet meeting, the Devon County Council cabinet voted to launch a 12-week consultation on the future funding and provision of library services across the county. At the time of writing this consultation has not yet been launched.

I urge every resident to understand the immense value we stand to lose. Our libraries, currently managed by Libraries Unlimited, are cornerstones of community life, not just book repositories.

The Indisputable Value:

The data speaks for itself. Last year alone, our 50 libraries saw 2.3 million visits and hosted over 12,000 events, drawing in 218,000 people for everything from essential 'bounce-and-rhyme' sessions for young parents to Coder Dojos and digital skill workshops. With over 113,000 active registered users, 28% of whom are children, these buildings are central to lifelong learning and early childhood development.

The Disproportionate Impact on Rural Communities:

The threat of reduced hours or closure is particularly devastating for remote rural communities like ours. For many villages, the library is the last remaining warm, safe, and free public space. It functions as a vital social lifeline, combating loneliness and providing necessary human contact, especially for the elderly and isolated residents.

Any withdrawal of council support in these areas will lead directly to severe digital exclusion. Libraries often provide the only free access to computers and broadband, allowing residents—many of whom cannot afford home internet—to apply for jobs, access critical government services, and stay connected. Transitioning to a fully volunteer-run model or 'community hub' status without robust, guaranteed funding is effectively an abrogation of responsibility by the County Council and risks cutting off our most vulnerable citizens entirely.

Action:

The upcoming consultation (**proposed to be November- January**) will explore various proposals, including revised opening hours, extending access via volunteers and technology, and the transition of some libraries into community-managed hubs with limited DCC support.

We must not let our services be downgraded. This is the moment for all residents, community groups, and parish councils to raise a powerful and unified voice. I implore you to engage fully with this consultation. We must make it impossible for the Council to ignore the essential, non-

negotiable role these services play in preventing social isolation and inequality across our county.

Illegal money lending arrests in North Devon.

A man and a woman were arrested on suspicion of illegal money lending following an operation in North Devon on Wednesday September 24.

The suspects, both aged 23, were arrested at an address in Barnstaple and were taken into custody to be questioned by IMLT investigators. Two mobile phones were seized. There are up to 1.08 million people in debt to loan sharks in England, according to figures from the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ).

Many illegal money lenders are well known within their communities and are often introduced to borrowers through friends or family members. They are unregulated and give loans with no paperwork, charging extortionate interest rates. They often resort to threats, intimidation and even violence if repayments are not made.

Anyone who has been affected by illegal money lending should call the Stop Loan Sharks 24/7 Helpline on 0300 555 2222 or access support online at www.stoploansharks.co.uk. Live Chat is available on the website from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Local Government Reorganisation in Devon

[A stronger future shaped by communities: Devon unveils 'leading' option for local government change - News](#)

I have linked the press release above. Decon County Council will submit their preferred option for Devon by the 28th December, the final decision about what that will be will be made by the Devon County Council cabinet in November.

P3 Enquiry

I followed up this with the P3 team, a grant was made of £1620 made raised in June, I was told that BPC not appear to have invoiced yet according to DCC's finance system. If this is not the case can you let me know please, you may need to send another invoice over if that's the case.

Highway Defects

With the winter fast approaching it is more likely there will be defects in the highway network, this includes streetlights and signs.

[Report a problem - Roads and transport](#)

The DCC website is very useful for reporting problems and the reports go straight to the contractor. Alternatively the highway contact number is 0345 155 1004

If it's a river flooding the environment agency can be contacted on 0345 988 1188

Please do get in touch if you think I can help with anything; Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk

Andrea

County Councillor

Combe Martin Rural Division

Andrea.davis@devon.gov.uk