

Devon County has issued a press release indicating there will be a double digit increase in cash for children and more money for adult care, climate change and transport in the target budget for 2024/25.

New figures presented at Cabinet show a proposed 10.4% increase in the budget for children's services with a 6% rise in adult services and 4.7% extra for climate change, environment and transport. The 9.8% increase in the national living wage announced by the Government last year mean an additional £25.7 million has had to be added to the target budget to cover the cost, councillors heard.

Reductions in other departmental spending means an overall rise of 6.3% in our budget for next year with a total spend of over £743 million.

The full council are set to debate the budget in February and my CIRS Scrutiny debated the Budget last Thursday.

The director of finance, Angie Sinclair, said: "Local authorities across the country continue to face financial challenges due to high inflation and interest rates as well as demands on local service provision."

Cabinet Councillors have approved the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) which set out priorities for developing cycling and walking improvements in a number of areas of the county.

LCWIPs put us in the strongest possible position for bidding for Government funding for walking and cycle schemes, as well as leveraging external grants and for negotiations with developers.

While supporting increased walking and cycling levels across Devon, the plans also support the County Council's response to the climate crisis, improve health and wellbeing, access for all, as well as delivering economic benefits in the county.

Schemes have been prioritised based on where the greatest impact can be made in increasing the number of people who choose to walk or cycle. Factors taken into account include whether an alternative route exists nearby, how the links serve key journey types such as travel to school, work and for leisure, and where the potential is greatest to attract developer funding due to planned growth in these areas.

The plan for Teignbridge, covering Newton Abbot, Kingsteignton and Kingskerswell, sets out walking and cycling proposals along five key corridors.

At the same meeting the Cabinet approved plans which set out priorities for electric vehicle charging in Devon.

The EV strategy outlined plans to Reduce carbon emissions in Devon; accelerate the uptake of EVs in Devon, with an overall shift away from private cars; help ensure that the transition was accessible for all and equitable; maximise social value and community benefit; maximise the contribution EVs could make to our local economy, including through increased tourism and contribution to the Council's goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Devolution for Devon and Torbay took a big step forward with the publication of Government proposals for a deal that could re-draw the future relationship between local government in Devon and Torbay, and Whitehall.

The proposals announced by Levelling Up Minister Jacob Young at an event in Paignton would enable more decisions to be taken locally by people who know their areas best and on things that matter to local people such as building more affordable homes, investing in new quality jobs and skills, and improving public transport.

The Government has chosen Devon and Torbay as one of only a small number of local authority areas in the country to form a Combined County Authority (CCA), that will not require an elected Mayor.

The new powers would be devolved to a proposed CCA – a partnership comprising Councillors representing the councils of Devon and Torbay, including District Councils, and representatives from business and education.

Under the proposals a new body would have direct control of adult education to create up to 50,000 new training and retraining opportunities by 2030.

Through Local Skills Improvement Plans, the proposed CCA will work with business and education leaders to create a stronger, joined-up relationship between employers and schools, colleges and universities to provide the skilled workforce the local economy needs for the future.

The Government is proposing to transfer over £16 million of new funding to invest in new green jobs, homes, skills, and business growth and accelerate Devon and Torbay's transition to a net-zero economy, capitalising on the area's world-leading expertise in green science and technology.

The Government is offering a stronger partnership with Homes England, capitalising on the Affordable Housing Programme and Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund to create a joint action plan for affordable housing schemes for local people and reduce homelessness. The proposal includes additional land assembly and compulsory purchase powers and would facilitate greater Community Land Trust-led delivery.

The CCA would be responsible for working with Devon County Council, Torbay Council, District Councils and the business and education sectors to support high growth business sectors such as advanced marine engineering, defence, photonics and digital, and improve the look and feel of local communities with street and town centre enhancements.

Alistair Dewhirst - [alistair.dewhirst@devon.gov.uk](mailto:alistair.dewhirst@devon.gov.uk) / Tel 07836 704127