

PC REPORT DECEMBER 2023

Corporate Strategy invite

WDBC have invited Town and Parish Councils to an online meeting regarding the draft Corporate Strategy for the Council. The session will be led by Cllr Ewings. It is scheduled for Tuesday 5 December 5. p.m. -6. p.m.

It is intended as an opportunity to set out the draft aims and ambitions that have been shaped through Advisory Groups and will be considered by Hub on Tuesday 21 November. Once Hub have considered the draft Corporate Strategy at that meeting, we will circulate it to all Town and Parishes in advance of this session.

Single Person Discount Review

The Council is conducting a Single Person Discount Review of those receiving a 25% reduction in their Council Tax because they are the sole adult occupant of their property.

Just over 8,700 occupants in the area receive a 25% Single Occupancy discount which reduces 2023/24 Council Tax bills by over £4,500,000.

The Single Person Discount Review is being carried out Devon wide and funded by Devon County Council. Due to the numbers involved, it is being performed by a company called Capacity Grid, part of a larger company called Liberata, who have matched Single Person Occupancy data to other information and identified cases where there may be the potential of a second occupant.

Those residents have been sent a review letter and directed to a page on our website (and only our website) www.westdevon.gov.uk/spd-review to complete the review form and provide confirmation that they are the sole occupant. The form asks details about the potential other occupant(s), but in most cases we expect the resident to still be eligible for the single occupancy discount, as there are various reasons why there may be links to others at their address – adult children studying away at University etc.

Where there is a second occupant, the online form will enable residents to provide the details needed to remove Council Tax Single Person Discount. For those that do not respond to the review, follow up letters will be issued and where appropriate the Single Person Discount removed on the assumption of ineligibility.

For residents who are not able to get online or need additional assistance, they can **call Capacity Grid on freephone 0808 168 8923** where someone will be happy to help with completion of the form. As mentioned, there is no assumption that the Council Tax Discounts will be removed, and hopefully the review is robust enough that those genuinely entitled will be able to confirm that, and those where there is a

second occupant, will have to provide us with the information needed to adjust their Council Tax accounts accordingly.

Thermal Imaging Camera Hire Service

As part of our commitment to help reduce carbon emissions in our area and help people improve the energy efficiencies of their homes, we have four thermal imaging cameras available for use by town and parish councils, or local communities on a free to borrow basis.

Following a successful trial undertaken by Bigbury Net Zero over the winter of 2022/2023, we have been using the result to develop a thermal imaging camera hire scheme.

Applications to hire one can be made by Town and Parish Councils or organised community groups only.

Cameras are available to borrow for up to two weeks. It's expected that applicants will use the cameras with local residents to survey several homes within the hire period.

To access our hire service page.

www.westdevon.gov.uk/housing/housing-support/thermal-imaging-camera-hire

Free Skills Training for Residents

Having up to date skills in an ever-changing workplace jobs' market is a great way to stand out from the crowd! For residents looking to kickstart a new career, upskill or change roles the Skills Bootcamp might be the thing for them.

The Skills Bootcamp offers FREE, flexible training in a range of exciting sectors for those aged 19+ living in Devon, so our residents automatically apply for the scheme.

Find out more from our partners and help spread the word.

<https://www.train4tomorrow.org.uk>

Vision and Strategy for West Devon

Difficulties finding affordable housing, the increasing cost of living, the new transport hub in Okehampton and supporting business to adapt to the climate crisis are just some of the challenges and opportunities facing West Devon.

We want everyone who lives in West Devon to have their say on what matters to them.

The 'Let's Talk' consultation will run from Monday 27 November to Friday 12 January

and there are a number of ways for residents to get involved:

- An online survey
- A series of 'quick polls' on social media
- Conversations with key partners, including town and parish councils
- Face to face attendance at several locations across the Borough to gain views from residents on our priorities
- A paper survey will be made available on request for anyone not able to provide their thoughts online

The consultation will be open for four weeks. We'll then look at each and every comment and see if we need to adjust our proposals.

Residents can take part online here:

westdevon-ourcorporatestrategy.commonplace.is

Cllr Malcolm Calder December 2023