

Good evening.

The Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) agency has given the go-ahead for Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) to increase access to its planned ultrafast (up to 1,000Mbps) broadband with Gigaclear to over 3,000 more homes and businesses in hard to reach areas of Devon.

Gigaclear is already building a new full fibre broadband network on behalf of CDS for over 41,000 homes and businesses initially. This work is due to be completed by December 2019. This will extend the network even further by December 2020.

Information about the Gigaclear roll-out timetable will be updated regularly on the web at [www.gigaclear.com/connecting-devon-and-somerset-rollout-schedule](http://www.gigaclear.com/connecting-devon-and-somerset-rollout-schedule). Residents and businesses can also expect to receive news and information from Gigaclear and CDS by post.

CDS connects some of the hardest to reach communities in England, where the commercial market will not provide the infrastructure. To date, more than 250,000 homes and businesses have access to superfast broadband thanks to CDS investments. CDS does this by awarding public subsidised contracts to companies through competitive tender to build the infrastructure needed, such as fibre or wireless connections. CDS is only able to invest where suppliers have no declared and credible plans to invest their own resources to extend their networks.

So far, over 400,000 km of fibre cable have already been laid, enough to circle the Earth ten times, in a programme that has taken over 2 million-man hours to date. CDS is backed with funding from the EU's European Regional Development Fund, the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, local authorities and the private sector.

I was pleased to be asked to join Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, Patron of Northbrook Community Trust, in formally opening the new two storey extension of the Atkinson Unit a therapeutic secure children's home in Exeter. She said that she felt honoured and delighted to be associated with the home and that the home does a wonderful job and is such a positive and important influence on the lives of many very vulnerable young people.

The £1.1million improvements to the current building provides a new reception area where young people are welcomed when they arrive, visitor rooms and conference facilities.

The home is one of only seven welfare-only accommodation facilities in the country. Trained staff work closely with the young people to help them return to having a positive lifestyle within the community. I was asked to join Baroness Butler-Sloss because I have visited the home every month for four years on behalf of the Council's monitoring of this facility – this facility is probably the highest Risk on the Council's Risk Register and I am part of a team that includes professionals, educationalists and of course Ofsted who visit every six months.

The budget scrutiny process started today with the examination of the Children's Directorate budget of £125.487million this morning. We heard that despite an additional £7.5 million for schools this year the government is underfunding Devon's schools by £268 per pupil. It seems that primary schools in Westminster have much lower levels of additional needs yet they receive 19.6% more funding per child than Devon's schools.

This is followed on Thursday by Adult Services and Health's budget of £227.851 million and CIRS Scrutiny looking at the Communities, Environment, Corporate Services and Highways budget of £124.053 million next week. Sadly the Communities and Highways budgets are scheduled to reduce by 2.7%. It would appear that the Executive will be recommending an

eye watering 3% plus 2% Adult Social Care increase taking the total budget to £477.391 million.

Finally at Cabinet I am pleased to say that the first Task Group Report, on the Impact of Changes to Local Policing, under my Chairmanship of Scrutiny was approved, published and forwarded to stakeholders. I am pleased to give you a copy and have attached a link to the report for those of you who wish to view it online. The Police have faced nearly seven years of cuts in funding under the stewardship of the then Home Secretary Theresa May and her successor Amber Rudd and this has led to dramatic increases in reported crime both locally and nationally. I hope you agree with our findings and if you have any comments to make please report them to our Scrutiny Officer. The report can be found [here](#).