Report to Saltash Town Council November 2026

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CASE FOR CORNWALL DEVOLUTION CONFIRMED

The Autumn Budget brought very welcome news for Cornwall: Cornwall Council will become a single Foundation Strategic Authority on a Cornwall-only footprint without the need for an elected mayor, recognising what ministers have called 'Cornwall's unique cultural status'. Under Leigh's leadership, Cabinet has worked hard to make the case for a Cornwall-only approach. His vision throughout has been for a stronger Cornwall, with more decisions about our future made here, and I am pleased to have played my part in bringing us to this point

Foundation status gives us a stronger platform to seek more control over decisions in areas like housing, transport, skills and economic development.

There is more work to do, but this is a significant step forward for Cornwall. The next stage will be the Government's Rewiring the State Delivery Plan, which is expected before the end of the year. Cornwall Council response to the devolution announcement

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANCELLOR'S AUTUMN BUDGET

The Budget contains some measures that will support high streets: from April 2027, retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with a rateable value of up to £18,000 will receive 100% Small Business Rates Relief. Pubs, social clubs and most live music venues will receive 35% relief. Cornwall has around 5,170 retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, 98% of which are small or micro businesses, and I hope these changes will offer support to traders and venues here in Saltash.

The wider picture for councils is less encouraging, though. The Local Government Association in its assessment of the Autumn Budget says there is no meaningful overall increase in local government funding. There is no new money for children's social care, and the Budget does not explain how future SEND deficits will be addressed. There are very difficult financial choices facing Cornwall Council.

SETTING CORNWALL COUNCIL'S BUDGET

We are working hard to set Cornwall Council's budget for 2027/28. Early modelling has identified a gap of around £22 million. This is an early estimate, but it illustrates the scale of the challenge, with particular pressures from adult social care, children's services and home-to-school transport.

As a Foundation Strategic Authority, Cornwall will receive £2.66 million from the new Good Growth Fund for 2027/28, as well as a share of the £150 million capacity fund for strategic authorities. But other national funding decisions have added to our budget pressures. The Rural Services Delivery Grant was removed in 2025/26 and remains absent from the current three-year settlement, and the Recovery Grant is weighted heavily towards urban authorities.

Budget planning is made harder by a national loophole allowing some second homes reclassified as holiday lets to claim Council Tax refunds going back 30 years. This has already cost Cornwall Council around £10 million this financial year, and Adam Paynter, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources, said it "seems criminal" that the Council has to repay the money. Cornwall Council and Cornwall's MPs are pressing the Government to change the rules.

Our budget figures are being updated following the Autumn Budget before draft proposals come to Cabinet on 11th November.

f40 CAMPAIGN FOR FAIRER EDUCATION FUNDING

f40 brings together 43 local authorities which are among the lowest funded for education. In 2026–27, Cornwall will receive £1,115.42 per pupil through the High Needs Block. This is the 11th lowest allocation of 151 local authorities and less than a third of the highest allocation. (Camden will receive £3,831.71 per pupil, and Westminster will receive £2,851.66.) These figures are stark, and they matter because they affect the support schools can provide to children with additional needs.

The f40 group is calling for a review of the National Funding Formula, fair and sufficient funding for schools and for SEND, and greater local flexibility to support early intervention and inclusion. On 2nd November, I will attend f40's Executive Committee meeting in Westminster and join colleagues in making the case to MPs for fairer and sufficient education funding across all the areas we represent.

CORNWALL COUNCIL CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Following the resignation of Cornwall Council's Chief Executive, Kate Kennally, the recruitment process for her successor is now underway. Shortlisting will take place before Christmas and interviews are planned for early January, with the aim of bringing the appointment panel's recommendation to Full Council later that month.

JUBILEE GREEN COASTAL DEFENCE

Jubilee Green is a well-used and much-valued local space, so I am pleased that Cornwall Council's work to strengthen the coastal defences is now substantially complete. The deteriorating revetment has been replaced with approximately 140 metres of rock armour, helping to protect the seawall, riverbank, boat park, public open space and car park from coastal erosion. Jubilee Green Coastal Defence update

DEVONPORT NAVAL BASE VISIT

In October, I had the privilege of visiting HM Naval Base Devonport along with Cornwall Council Leader Leigh Frost, as guests of China Fleet Trust and at the invitation of Commodore Jane Roe. The scale of the work was striking, and the visit brought home just how directly the investment will impact Saltash and South-east Cornwall.

There are opportunities for local businesses, apprentices and young people, but growth at Devonport will also add pressure to transport and housing. I will continue to be a champion for Saltash and SE Cornwall, working to make sure that our communities share in the opportunities and that the pressures on our roads, housing and public services are properly planned for.