

Devon County Council

Elections '09

The battle for control of the
South West's biggest Council



Media Briefing Pack
June 4 2009



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Contents

1. Background
 - 1.1 County Council elections 2009
 - 1.2 Why is this election important?
2. Current position
 - 2.1 Political make-up
 - 2.2 Democratic structure
3. Election arrangements
 - 3.1 Key dates
 - 3.2 Procedures for declaration of votes
 - 3.3 Central results service
4. Past election results

Appendix

- Devon Fact File 2009/10
- Useful Contacts

1. Background

1.1 County Council Elections 2009

On **Thursday 4 June 2009** nearly 500,000 people over the age of 18 in Devon will get the chance to go to the polls to determine who will lead Devon County Council and be responsible for key local services.

County Council elections in England take place once every four years and all **62 seats** in Devon are up for grabs.

On the same day elections will take place to select local representatives to the European Parliament. Elections to unitary councils in the area such as Plymouth and Torbay and to the city and district councils do not take place this year.

Devon County Council is the largest local authority in the South West and is responsible for 85 per cent of all local public services in the County including key services such as schools, roads and social care. Its total annual budget is over £1 billion per year.

The County is divided into 62 electoral divisions with one County Councillor representing each division. The average population represented by each Councillor is 9,000 people.

The election process is administered on the County Council's behalf by Devon's eight District Councils. The County Returning Officer, who is the County Solicitor, appoints Deputy Returning Officers, who are senior District Council staff, to manage the elections within their respective districts.

1.2 Why is this election important?

Devon County Council touches the lives of thousands of people throughout Devon. It is responsible for spending a huge public budget to provide key local services to children and families, the elderly and vulnerable and to support communities. It is also responsible for key infrastructure such as the massive County road network and is the **ONLY** democratically elected voice for the whole County on issues such as the economy and sustainability.

Helping the local economy to weather the recession, investing in a sustainable future for our communities, protecting the environment, caring for our growing number of older people, ensuring a good future for our children... These are all key issues facing the County over the coming years. With a major economic downturn and huge pressure likely to be brought to bear on all future public spending this particular election takes on an added significance.

This is the chance for local people to have a real say and influence the future direction of the County and our local priorities over the next four years.

2. Current position

2.1 Political make-up

The last Devon County Council elections took place on 5 May 2005 and since then there have been several by-elections. The current political composition of the Council as at May 2009 is:

- | | |
|--------------------|----|
| • Liberal Democrat | 32 |
| • Conservative | 23 |
| • Labour | 4 |
| • Independent | 2 |
| • Vacancy | 1 |

For the past four years the County Council has been led by a **Liberal Democrat administration**. Prior to this, from 2001 – 2005 no party achieved a majority and the Council agreed a power sharing arrangement with the first ever all-party administration in the County Council's 120-year history.

For more details of current County Councillors and electoral divisions see: www.devon.gov.uk/county_councillors

For details of 2005 election results see: www.devon.gov.uk/last_election



2.2 Democratic Structure

Devon County Council operates with a '**cabinet-style**' **Executive**. This is the key decision making body.

It is made up of a Leader and no more than nine other senior councillors each with lead responsibility for a particular area of work such as Economic Regeneration, Environment, or Children's Services. The current Leader is Brian Greenslade, Leader of the Liberal Democrats.

The Executive meets regularly (usually at least once per month) in public at County Hall, Exeter and its meetings are broadcast via the internet. Members of the public and other elected members can also attend this and other council meetings and put questions direct to the Executive and Full Council.

The **Full Council** meets five times per year and continues to be the body ultimately responsible for setting Devon's policy framework, budget and council tax.

To keep a close check on the work of the Executive are four influential **Overview and Scrutiny Committees**. These cover *Policy and Resources*, *Children and Young People's Services*, *Environment, Economy and Culture*, and *Health and Adult Services*.

These all-party committees operate like Parliamentary Select Committees and can examine Executive decisions in more depth, investigate key issues of public concern, and recommend action to the Executive and the Council.

A number of other committees report directly to the Full Council. These cover statutory or quasi-judicial functions such as Development Control, Public Rights of Way, and Appeals.

The **Chairman of the Council** is a non-executive position and the holder fulfils an ambassadorial role on behalf of the County Council. This position changes each year.

For details of all meetings, committee agendas and minutes see:
www.devon.gov.uk/decision_making

To view webcasts of meetings either 'live' or in archive see:
www.devon.gov.uk/webcasting

3. Election arrangements

3.1 Key dates

April 28	Publication of Notice of Election
May 7	Deadline for Nominations
May 11	Publication of Candidates details
May 21	First issue of Postal Ballots
May 27	Notice of Poll and deadline for applications for postal and proxy votes
May 27	Final issue of postal ballots
June 3	Opening of postal ballots
June 4	POLLING DAY
June 5	Counting of Votes

3.2 Procedures for declaration of votes

The results will be announced by the local Returning Officer in each of the eight district areas. The Counts will all take place on **Friday 5 June** at the following venues:

East Devon	09.15am East Devon District Council Offices The Knowle, Sidmouth EX10 8HL
Exeter	10.00am County Hall, Exeter EX2 4QD
Mid Devon	09.00am Tiverton School, Sports Hall
North Devon	10.00am Barnstaple Leisure Centre
South Hams	10.30am Totnes Pavillion Leisure Centre
Teignbridge	10.00am Newton Abbot Leisure Centre
Torridge	09.30am Langtree Village Hall
West Devon	10.00am West Devon Borough Council Offices Kilworthy Park

3.3 Central results service

The central point for ALL results across the County will be the **Devon County Council Election Centre** at County Hall, Exeter.

This will be open from **9.30am** on **Friday 5 June** and will provide a complete election results service.

All results from the local counts will be telephoned/faxed through immediately. These will be displayed on a giant screen to provide an 'as it happens' service. They will also be immediately posted to the election 2009 website at www.devon.gov.uk

The website and giant screen will show the state of the parties and a colour-coded graph will instantly show the changing political landscape.

Members of the media who wish to attend the Election Centre at County Hall and get instant reaction from political parties should contact the For other counts around the County, members of media should contact the deputy returning officer at the appropriate city/borough/district council.

A full round-up will be provided as a media release after all the results are in.



4. Past Election Results

Traditionally, Devon has higher than national average turnout with over 67% voting in 2005.

Past results are given here as background information although boundary changes and an increase in the overall number of seats from 54 to 62 in 2005 prevent like for like comparison.

ELECTION RESULTS - Devon County Council – 1993-2005

	1993	1997	2001	2005
Conservative	10	13	22	23
Independent	4	4	4	2
Labour	6	4	5	4
Liberal Democrat	33	31	21	33
Liberal	1	2	2	0
Total	54	54	54	62

OVERALL SHARE OF VOTE - May 2005

Conservative	38.00%
Liberal Democrat	37.90%
Labour	12.10%
Independent	4.40%
UK Independence	3.90%
Green	2.50%
Liberal	1.10%
Other	0.02%

There have been three by-elections since May 2005 in Yealmpton (March 2006), Alphington & Cowick (13 July 2006) and Exminster & Kenton (November 2008). Each seat was retained by the existing Party (two Liberal Democrat and one Conservative).

One seat is currently vacant due to the sad death of Councillor Des Shadrick in Holsworthy Rural in April.

For full analysis of 2005 election result see:

www.devon.gov.uk/last_election

Appendix 1

Devon Fact File 2009/10

Devon County Council is the largest local authority in the South West serving a **population of over 750,000**. It is rated by the Audit Commission as a four-star and improving authority.

The annual budget (excluding capital programme) is **£865 million**

The County Council is responsible for:

- 96,000 pupils in 364 schools
- 61 Libraries and mobile libraries
- maintaining 8,000 miles of roads and 3,000 miles of public rights of way
- Helping 19,000 adults to live at home
- Caring for over 3,500 people in nursing and care homes
- Looking after 550 vulnerable children
- 20 recycling centres (with a recycling rate of over 49%)

Key investments include:

- £359 million on schools
- £121 million on children and young people's services
- £255.8 million on adult social care and community services
- £55 million on road maintenance and other environmental services
- £31 million for waste disposal and recycling

Other important County Council support in the coming year includes:

- £175 million capital investment programme to build new schools, roads, family centres, care centres and recycling facilities
- Extra £5.75 million on economic regeneration

Efficiencies:

Over the past three years the Council has cut spending on administrative and support services by £37.6 million. In the coming year further efficiency savings of over £20 million are planned.

Appendix 2

Key Contacts

The political leaders of the major political parties in Devon are:

Conservative Group Leader

Councillor John Hart (Bickleigh and Wembury)

Tel: 01752 403554

email: john.hart@devon.gov.uk

Labour Group Leader

Councillor Saxon Spence (Pinhoe and Mincinglake)

Tel: 01392 271785

email: saxon.spence@devon.gov.uk

Liberal Democrat Group Leader

Councillor Brian Greenslade (Barnstaple North)

Tel: 01271 372065

email: brian.greenslade@devon.gov.uk

Other contacts:

Devon County Council Chief Executive

Phil Norrey

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communications@devon.gov.uk

Chief Returning Officer

Roger Gash

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