

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED: TO AVERT A MAJOR PLANNING CATASTROPHE

FOR THE ATTENTION OF: CEO Devon County Council: Donna Manson

Copy to: Head of Devon Audit Partnership, Tony Rose

Copy to: Monitoring Officer, Maria Price

Copy to: Section 151 Officer, Angie Sinclair

Our correspondence address: Cranleigh House, High Street, Coombe Martin, Ilfracombe, Devon, [EX34 0EP]

Our electronic correspondence address: information@sevenconcernedcitizens.co.uk

Date 7th July 2025

DEFAULT NOTICE - MAJOR ORGANISATION FAILURES (our REF: CC/01 Devon)

RELATING TO: REGIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSES

Dear Donna,

A. ESCALATION & DEFAULT NOTICE

This is a formal letter notifying you, your Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, and Audit Officers of **escalation measures** subsequent to (a) our original 'rectification notice' dated 31st October 2023, (b) our 'escalation notice' dated 4th March 2024, (c) response from your **litigation team** on 11th March 2024 (d) our response on the 17th March 2024.

Your response indicates **very serious issues** concerning leadership / senior management hubris and avoidance of responsibility, together with a lack of awareness of how to engage appropriately with the gravity and nature of the issues being notified. This demonstrates an **organisational culture without the 'maturity'** to deal openly and effectively with strategic risk warnings, strategic re-appraisal and dynamic 'critical' feedback which are necessary characteristics of 'process developed' or 'mature' emergency planning and execution type organisations.

We re-affirm that the issues being notified to you concern multiple failures in advisory, organisation design & development, audit, governance, strategy making process and decision making. These are **NOT THE PURVIEW of a litigation team** and the nature of your response presents a heightened indicator that your current organisation is **NOT DESIGNED or FIT FOR THE PURPOSE of EMERGENCY PLANNING & EXECUTION that it is undertaking**. Left unchecked these issues pose imminent and potentially catastrophic threats to the wellbeing and prosperity of this region and its citizens from your organisations policies, plans and system.

Our current escalation includes:

- This **notice of default**
- Establishment of a regional **Concerned Citizens Advisory Assembly**

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These escalation measures are necessary to address SERIOUS ORGANISATIONAL FAILURES & GAPS, previously demonstrated and reported to you, in regard to:

- Advisory (multiple gaps, unchecked bias and pre-determination)
- Scrutiny, audit and governance
- Strategic planning processes, rigour and approaches
- Leading to bias & pre-determination in decision making

Furthermore, your responses not only reinforce the previous findings but **heighten the level of threat and strategic risk** to this region from your organisation and its practices.

All previous correspondence which includes the rectification notice letter, the accompanying report and explanatory videos can be found on our website.

<https://sevenconcernedcitizens.co.uk/devon>

B. REGIONAL STRATEGIC RISK - WARNING

Please note that 170 people attending a 'Concerned Citizens Advisory Assembly' endorsed these escalation measures and evaluated the adverse Strategic Risk from your organisation systems at the **highest ranking of 25 = Likelihood is Certain (5) and Impact regionally critical (5) (5 x 5 = 25)**. *The recording of this 1 hour assembly can be viewed on:*

<https://ccadvisoryassembly.co.uk/1-notice>

We therefore advise you: that this strategic / institutional risk should be elevated and actively included within your emergency planning priorities, audit, advisory and governance systems.

C. RECTIFICATION MEASURES

We remind you of the rectification suggestions presented to you in the previous notice. These are explained and qualified through a 56 page report with accompanying videos that can be found on our websites.

To address the organisational failures, strategic risks and deficiencies it is necessary to undertake informed and urgent strategic re-appraisals of:

1. The climate emergency & net-zero policy
2. Council advisory and audit needs
3. An open & independent validation of our report and its findings
4. The emergency planning, capability & execution system
5. Effectiveness of DCC advisory, audit, governance and scrutiny system

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Suggestions and an initial pathway towards fast-track rectification were previously advised, which include:

- Appointment of an independent & 'process mature' inclusion advisor / facilitator
- Engaging advisors with opposing views relating to climate change
- Scenario planning
- Commissioning thorough risk, value, impact and option assessments

These are necessary and critical precursors to rigorous strategic planning and decision making that then properly inform balanced public / councillor consultation.

In addition, and as part of the escalation measures, we now confirm the establishment of an independent *Concerned Citizens Advisory Assembly* (CCAA). **The primary purpose of the CCAA is to address the short falls in your advisory system, which may be considered as being at the root of your institutional / organisational failure.**

D. PUBLIC DUTY OF CARE

We take this opportunity to remind you that as public servants; you have **a responsibility first and foremost to CAUSE NO HARM, to act objectively using the best evidence without discrimination, bias or pre-determination solely for the public interest and the needs of the people of Devon.** There is a duty of care on public authorities and their officers to consider or think about how their policies, organisation systems and decisions affect the people and the wellbeing of this region.

Informed by this and our previous notice, we trust that you will NOW as a primary council consider engaging independent, non-biased and balanced advisory perspectives in-order to inform ANY AND ALL emergency declarations and supplement strategy making with transparent, rigorous and balanced approaches such as scenario planning. Similarly, we assume that Audit and governance practice, will NOW seek to assure such practices and additionally treat decisions, impact assessments, risk and value management with a heightened degree of impartiality, scrutiny and rigor.

We furthermore expect that Councillors and Scrutiny Committees will be appropriately informed and supported, by your Officers, to act and observe with such a heightened degree of scrutiny. This would include a full strategic re-appraisal of the 'declared climate emergency' together with all related policy and strategy frameworks.

We affirm that our objective, as a '*concerned citizens movement*', is to inform and support the councils, their officers, councillors and partners. Our intention is to avert an imminent planning and organisation related catastrophe associated with public sector led emergency declarations, strategic planning and execution.

On behalf of the rapidly growing numbers of informed and concerned citizens across this region, **we look forward to receiving a mature, appropriate and well-intentioned response.**

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Signed by seven concerned citizens living in Devon:

K.L. Armitage
KATHERINE ARMITAGE

T. Brice
TREVOR BRICE

Daniel Bell
DANIEL BELL

Peter Whitehart
PETER WHITEHART

Istvan Elzias
ISTVAN ELZIAS

John Yates
JOHN YATES

Vanessa Coxon
VANESSA COXON