

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Ocean Suite, Ocean, Queens' Drive, Exmouth EX8 2AY on 7 December 2022**

#### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 9.00 pm

#### **46 Public speaking**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that it was being held at Ocean in Exmouth following the decision made at the last Council meeting on 19th October that Council and all committees and sub-committees would be returning to physical meetings, unless current legislation permitted the holding of virtual meetings.

The Chair then started the meeting by doing a roll call of those present, and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

During the meeting the public would be able to participate if they had pre-registered to speak.

Three members of the public had pre-registered to speak at this meeting, and one Ward member acting in a personal capacity.

Ian Priestley was Chair of the CVRA (Colyford Village Residents Association), and wanted to address the Council on the matter of the Colyford Community Governance Review. He thanked the Cabinet and officers who had helped the cause of local democracy by making the decision to create a new council in Colyford. He went on to say that land had been sold to developers over the years and the population of the village was now over 800 people, the largest village without a dedicated Parish Council (PC). The status quo of the village had been wrecked by developments and Colyton PC was no longer able to manage Colyford as well.

Juilan Thompson thanked Cabinet for approval to the Community Governance Review (CGR) so far, and hoped the Council would vote to support the will of local people to restore local democracy by confirming the creation of a new Parish Council. The CVRA had become the voice of local people, who believed they had the skills and experience to operate a new council. The challenge was affordable and 76% of residents wanted to have their own PC and their own identity.

Alison Stenning speaking as Vice Chair of Colyton PC, referred to the fields which would be transferred to Colyford if the new PC was approved, which provided rents which support the cemetery and many other amenities shared between the two PCs presently. Colyford would enjoy the amenities without contributing to them in future, while Colyton residents would have to have an increase in Council tax and be worse off as a result. She said that Colyford Cllrs have never been refused their say at Colyton PC and could have more Cllrs representing the village if they were elected, and urged the Council to reject the CGR and not to split the two villages.

Joy Gardner read a statement from the Chair of Colyton PC, who was unable to be present. There was concern about the acrimonious split between two communities who had collaborated for 120 years, and that Colyton would pick up all the financial responsibilities for the maintenance of twenty two assets while Colyford had two. She raised the question of why a transfer of assets would need to happen. The fields to be transferred were worth £140k and generated an annual income of £3k which would be handed to Colyford. However, having two PCs would increase admin costs, Council Tax,

and cause divisive outcomes which were not justified. There were less than 29% of local residents who showed an interest in the CGR.

Ken Clifford said that an EDDC Cllr had commented at Cabinet earlier in the week that what was happening in Colyton and Colyford was happening across the country. So he wondered if it was worth considering a move towards their neighbours West Dorset Council.

The Chair invited Cllr Paul Arnott to speak in a personal capacity on the Colyford Governance Review. Cllr Arnott said that this would be the first time he had spoken on this matter, and that he had not spoken to any officers hitherto. He went on to say that he had been a Colyton Parish Cllr since 2007 and could understand why Colyford wanted their own PC. Colyton had only ever had two out of thirteen women Cllrs but there were many landowners who sat on the PC. He said that he considered that Colyford Cllrs had been treated poorly, and in relation to the issue of the fields which seemed to be vexing some people, and which were worth a lot of money, Colyford PC were happy to walk away from them.

He clarified that every household in Colyton and Colyford had received a questionnaire on the CGR in February 2022, and many hundreds of people responded. As could be seen from the report, full due process had been carried out at every stage leading to the decision. Whilst assets were worth a lot of money, Colyford had shown it would walk away, and the reason Colyton were so anxious on this matter was because of their concern to be able to influence future land developments. In this regard, Colyton PC did not represent local people but only the landowners on the PC.

Cllr Skinner queried why Cllr Arnott had been speaking at the meeting when he had declared an interest at Cabinet.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the interest declared at Council was the same as given for Cabinet earlier, so it would be acceptable to speak at this point and retire from the debate later in the meeting.

The Chair clarified that Cllr Parr had called the minute of this meeting (item 9c refers), which would be picked up later in the proceedings.

## 47 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Chair invited comments on the minutes of Council held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

Cllr Armstrong wished to raise Minute 44, 'Temporary continuation of virtual meetings', specifically Recommendation 3, 'Council requires a report to Decembers meeting presenting a hybrid solution for members to consider'.

Cllr Armstrong said that she had spoken to Cllr Thomas prior to the meeting but her view had been that Recommendation 3 had not been carried out as agreed by Council and that this was unacceptable. She considered that the issue had not been followed up since May this year, but there had been no indication of when a hybrid solution would come into effect. She asked for an explanation as to why the instruction had not been carried out.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken already on this matter, and was still ongoing. One of the issues was that the project had become a larger corporate project over the summer covering a lot of technical information and research which remained below the radar, but acknowledged that communications with members could have been better.

The Chair said that he intended to raise the issues under agenda item 6.

Following a vote of those present, the Chair confirmed that the minutes and recommendations contained therein, were recommended for approval.

#### 48 **Declarations of interest**

53a. Minutes of Cabinet held on 2 November 2022 Minute numbers 88 & 98.  
Councillor Alan Dent, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of LED and the LED Monitoring Forum.

53a. Minutes of Cabinet held on 2 November 2022 Minute numbers 88 & 98.  
Councillor Paul Millar, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of LED.

53a. Minutes of Cabinet held on 2 November 2022 Minute numbers 88 & 98.  
Councillor Tony Woodward, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of LED.

53c. Minutes of Cabinet held on 5 December 2022 Minute numbers 111 - 115.  
Councillor Paul Arnott, Directly relates Other Registerable Interest, Colyton Parish Councillor.

53c. Minutes of Cabinet held on 5 December 2022 Minute numbers 111 - 115.  
Councillor Paul Hayward, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Clerk to Axminster Town Council.

#### 49 **Matters of urgency**

There were none.

#### 50 **Announcements from the Chair and Leader**

The Chair had two announcements to make.

The first was to welcome a new colleague to the ranks of EDDC. Cllr Chris Burhop was elected at the recent by-election in Newton Poppleford & Harpford on 10th October to replace the former Vice Chair. On behalf of member colleagues he wanted to wish him well and help him as he took up his new Council duties amongst the Council members.

Secondly, he wanted to address the fact that Council does not yet have a report as intended at this meeting about a hybrid solution for running future council committees and meetings in the Council Chamber at Blackdown House in Honiton. He went on to say that time had made it difficult to produce a report, but he had attended two demonstrations recently of possible solutions from potential suppliers. The first had appeared to be expensive and unsuitable for the needs of the Council. The second looked as if it could be a good solution, but there was presently no costed proposal for members to consider, and there were also other possible proposals from different suppliers to look at.

The Chair said that following receipt of costed proposals and further work by Strata, Officers and members, it would be important that any solution had the confidence of all members and officers, so he would be proposing to arrange for a representative group of members to see the system in action before making a decision. He said that it was worth considering what was working at this meeting, which was a simple secure two camera system.

It fulfilled the criteria of providing an official record, being recorded and being seen; it enabled the public to view the meeting live; it enabled Cllrs to take part in meetings, however, the local government legislation of 1972 was still in force, which meant that remote participation was allowed on a contribution only basis and members not in the meeting in person would not be able to vote. He said that the possibility of legislative change in future meant that the system procured by the Council needed to be future proofed, and so more members should be involved in the process to start with.

Cllr Armstrong was concerned that instructions given to officers at Council were not being carried out, and asked who was leading on the project. She said that she understood at the last meeting that the Monitoring Officer would be supervising it. The Chair said that it was an officer led project with Cllrs assisting, and it would be likely to be at some point in January 2023 when a report could be collated. He went on to say that he did not want to agree to a new system without adequate preparation or testing or if there was insufficient confidence in it.

The Monitoring Officer said that the project had moved to another officer group, specifically the Communications Team, under his general supervision, and become a wider corporate project. Whilst he had intended to bring the report to Council, he had not been driving the efforts in the background. There was no definitive date for a report because there was no date for a presentation to members, although he would anticipate early in the New Year. However, the next Council meeting was February when the Council Tax Resolution would be debated, so it would not be ideal to have discussion on a hybrid solution on the same agenda.

Cllr Bailey wanted to point out that whilst what Council had at the meeting was good, members of the public wanted to participate remotely and were not able to. Also when looking at the voting profile of the debate on extending temporary arrangements, an overwhelming majority of women Cllrs wanted to be able to participate remotely and could not do so.

In response, the Chair confirmed that he understood all the issues and supported the views expressed but Council had made the decision it had, to return to in person meetings. Subsequent to that decision a few swift strides by officers had enabled the current system to be put in place which responded to 80% of Council requirements and so it should take the credit for remaining in the vanguard of local authorities who had been trying to record everything.

The Chair made another announcement brought to his attention in relation to a former colleague. Elisabeth Hart, a former EDDC Cllr had passed away on 2<sup>nd</sup> November at the age of 86. Her funeral would take place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December at the East Devon Crematorium at 10.45am.

Cllr Arnott made a Leader's announcement relating to the Levelling up initiative. He reminded members that two weeks previously he had written to the local MPs about revisiting the Levelling up Bill. Secretary of State (SoS), Michael Gove, had now made a statement which may have advantages for East Devon, since the district already had a local plan in place. It appeared that the SoS had also been suggesting that local plans would have a life span of five years rather than two, and that the required target of 940 homes per year might decrease, and the housing target would not be as sacrosanct as hitherto thought.

Cllr Arnott advised that the detail of the White Paper needed to be seen to understand what would actually be required. However, he stated that the people of East Devon were being consulted on the Local Plan in a transparent manner, and over 1000 responses had been received so far. He urged people to respond, and to await clarity on the White

Paper and proposed legislation before trying to take advantage of any benefits for the area.

51 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no confidential or exempt items.

52 **To answer questions asked by Members of the Council pursuant to Procedure Rules No. 9.2 and 9.5**

Three questions had been received and had been responded to in writing and published prior to the meeting. The Chair asked for any supplementary questions from the relevant Cllrs.

Q2 Cllr Bruce De Saram asked if the Council would do further benchmarking in 2023 or 2024 so that the cost of memorial benches could be monitored, since EDDC had about 1000 of them?

In response the Chief Executive said that it would be doing this as part of the regular pattern of reviewing charges.

Q3 Cllr Jess Bailey asked the Leader if he had yet received a response from Simon Jupp MP since a response to her original question had been submitted.

In response, the Leader confirmed that he had not heard from Simon Jupp MP.

53 **Reports from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees and questions on those reports**

This item is to receive the minutes of Committees, and invite members to vote in favour or against agreeing them with any recommendations contained therein.

The Chair invited the Leader and Chairs of Committees to present their minutes.

(a) **Minutes of Cabinet held on 2 November 2022 Minute numbers 79 - 98**  
The Chair invited Cllr Arnott to move the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record and recommendations contained therein agreed.

(b) **Minutes of Cabinet held on 30 November 2022. Minute numbers 99 - 110**  
The Chair invited Cllr Arnott to move the minutes.

Relating to the Minutes of Cabinet held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, there were called minutes from Cllr De Saram and Cllr Millar.

Called minute from Cllr De Saram and issues arising

- 1) Minute 110 of Cabinet held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, 'Review of free car parks and charging hours', with specific reference to Littleham Cross – Jarvis Close, Car park in Exmouth.

Cllr De Saram requested that Cabinet reconsider its decision not to choose option B and lose car parking space in this area.

In response the Chair clarified that it was within the remit of Cabinet to make this decision and accordingly there was no scope to resolve this issue at Council.

Called minute from Cllr Millar and issues arising

- 2) Minute 110 of Cabinet held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, 'Review of free car parks and charging hours', with specific reference to comments made by Cllr Loudoun relating to zed pods and social housing.

Cllr Millar said that social housing was needed across the district and that car parks were the best assets held by EDDC which could make a difference, so he asked Cllr Loudoun to bring the decision back to be reconsidered.

In response, Cllr Loudoun said that he was not the relevant Portfolio Holder, but was the Ward Cllr, and stood by the comments he had made at Cabinet on the issues raised.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(c) Minutes of Cabinet held on 5 December 2022. Minute numbers 111 - 115**

The Chair invited Cllr Hayward to present the minutes as Cllr Arnott had left the room.

The Monitoring officer brought an error to the attention of members in the form of a superfluous 'K' in the last bullet point under recommendations to Council, so that the figure referred to as £12,350K, should have the 'K' deleted. The correct figure was £12,350.

Relating to the Minutes of Cabinet held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022, there was a called minute from Cllr Parr and issues arising:

- 1) Minute 115 of the Extraordinary Cabinet held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022, 'Colyford Governance Review'.

Cllr Parr said that she wanted to put on record that she considered the comments of Cllr Arnott as offensive and disrespectful, casting a slur on Cllrs and landowners involved in Colyton PC.

She stated that she could not support the recommendations of Cabinet. She was grateful for the additional meeting which had taken place to allow people to have the chance to read the papers, but for Council she had only received the papers the day previously and as a late item, so this again did not allow much time for people to read the papers or ask for an opportunity to speak at the meeting. Information had only been made public at a Cabinet meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July, which would be like asking people to give

their opinion blind. She said that she felt that there had been an undemocratic process where people were given little information, and accordingly she would not support the recommendation of Cabinet and hoped Council would not do so either.

The Chair clarified the options available to members of Council bearing in mind that a recommendation from Cabinet to Council was under consideration. The options were that;

- a) An amendment to the recommendation is proposed and presented for voting purposes, or
- b) The recommendation is taken as it stood, so that it could either progress or fall.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the process used and questions asked in the CGR at Ottery St Mary and West Hill were very similar to those adopted for Colyton and Colyford.

Comments or questions raised during the debate on this issue included the following;

- Cllr Arnott had declared an interest and left the room during the debate but the Cllr calling the item was in the same position, living in the ward, paying Council tax and being on the PC, and had continued to speak when they might be considered to have an interest.
- Local democracy meant everyone having an equal say, and if a majority of people in one community wanted to split from another, why should the Council have a view on this.
- Having lived in an adjoining parish to Colyton and Colyford, nothing had been done in Colyton to disinvest Colyford.
- The split between villages should not go ahead until all information, including finance, had been made available to local people.

The Monitoring Officer clarified that a period of 12 months was available from publishing the Terms of reference to concluding the review. The review is effectively concluded when the recommendations are published which would be at this meeting. So the suggestion to have a ballot of local people would be outside the time limit, and would, therefore, not be possible.

- All local residents had had the opportunity to take part in a democratic process, which had been carried out properly and in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- The issue of a CGR was not just about amenities, structures and assets but importantly about the concept of identity, and two different villages. However, amenities were visited by people from people across the district and not just a neighbouring village.
- The CGR at West Hill and Ottery St Mary had not been straightforward.
- If the wish of the local people was to create another PC then Cllrs at this meeting should not be swayed by a few people who had attended to speak, without knowing all the other contextual details. Council should support the wishes of local people, the results of the CGR and work of officers and support the recommendation

proposed.

- The differences between Ottery St Mary and West Hill were quite significant, respectively, the former being a town and the latter a village, whereas Colyton and Colyford were very similar.
- The principle of why villages would want to separate was established early in the review and covered in the papers. Cllrs should consider the impact of not supporting the results of the review in the recommendation against the clear wishes of many people who lived in those villages and taken part.
- Members of Cabinet had now been involved in this debate on three occasions and so had given the issues due consideration. This was not a challenge to the process carried out or the decision of Cabinet, but a distraction by other issues. Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> December agreed an amicable settlement and should be standing by it.

Following considerable debate, the Chair invited those present to vote on whether they were in favour or against the recommendation proposed by Cabinet.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the recommendations of Cabinet was carried by a majority of those present.

Cllr Hayward moved the minutes of Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> November. Following a vote, the Chair confirmed that the minutes were agreed as a true record and the recommendations contained therein were agreed.

**(d) Minutes of Scrutiny Committee Briefing meeting held on 2 November 2022. Minute numbers 39 - 41**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny, the Chair of council moved the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(e) Minutes of Scrutiny Committee Briefing meeting held on 3 November 2022. Minute numbers 42 - 44**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny, the Chair of council moved the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(f) Minutes of Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 November 2022. Minute numbers 45 - 53**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny, the Chair of council moved the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(g) Minutes of Housing Review Board meeting held on 11 October. Minute numbers 18 - 32**

In the absence of the Chair of Housing Review Board, the Chair of council



moved the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(h) Minutes of Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 7 October 2022. Minute numbers 43 - 49**

Cllr Arnott had rejoined the meeting and the Chair invited him to move the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(i) Minutes of Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 1 November 2022. Minute numbers 50 - 59**

The Chair invited Cllr Arnott to move the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(j) Minutes of Planning Committee meeting held on 25 October 2022. Minute numbers 53 - 61**

The Chair invited Cllr Wragg to move the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(k) Minutes of Planning Committee meeting held on 15 November 2022. Minute numbers 62 - 63**

The Chair invited Cllr Wragg to move the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(l) Minutes of Licensing and Enforcement Committee meeting held on 26 October 2022. Minute numbers 10 - 16**

The Chair invited Cllr Whibley to move the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(m) Minutes of Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 17 November 2022. Minute numbers 14 - 26**

The Chair invited Cllr Hawkins to move the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record.

**(n) Minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 28 November 2022. Minute numbers 48 - 57**

The Chair moved the minutes.

The Chair said that with the imminent departure of the Monitoring Officer, a replacement would be required, and the Personnel Committee wanted to appoint an Interviewing sub-committee to deal with the recruitment process, and had asked Cllr Thomas to chair it. This sub-committee would have to be politically balanced so the Democratic Alliance Group and Conservative Groups would be asked to nominate three members each, which would be from the membership of the Personnel Committee, so that a total of seven members would form the Interviewing sub-committee.

The Chief Executive said that he would like to receive nominations by the end of the week, and would be designing a process for interview which would include the wider involvement of other Cllrs, although the interviews would be conducted by the Interviewing sub-committee. He confirmed that Group Leaders should be mindful of gender equality on the sub-committee and those Cllrs who may have relevant experience to offer.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were agreed as a true record, and recommendations contained therein agreed.

#### 54 **Report: Changes to governance arrangements**

This short report from the Monitoring Officer requested that Council agree proposed changes to the Audit & Governance and Strategic Planning Committees following recent membership changes.

The Chair invited members to vote in favour or against agreeing the report and its recommendations.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the report from the Monitoring Officer and recommendations contained therein were agreed.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

1. The Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee shall be Cllr Dan Ledger;
2. The Vice Chair of the Audit & Governance committee shall be Cllr Tony Woodward.

#### 55 **Motion: Local government needs adequate immediate and longer-term government funding**

The Chair invited Cllr Rowland as the proposer, to speak to the motion.

Cllr Rowland read some contextual information behind the proposals in the motion. According to a recent comment by the Local Government Association (LGA) "Local government is the fabric of our country. It provides more than 800 services and positively impacts the daily life of every person in every community. However, the future financial sustainability of councils is on a cliff-edge, and the scale of the pressures cannot be met by reducing costs, making efficiencies or raising council tax.

Many now face the prospect of having to make severe cutbacks to local services. This would not only damage our communities but massively undermine Government ambitions to boost economic growth, level up the country and help residents through the

cost-of-living crisis. Inflation is not going to come down overnight. Reserves can only be spent once. A local service cannot be cut twice”.

In October James Jamieson, Conservative Chair of the Local Government Association said “Councils are now having to try to find ways to meet these costs this year and limit the damage to the local services that so many people rely upon.

In the past decade, councils have done more than their fair share of the heavy lifting when it came to putting public finances on a more sustainable footing, having faced a £15 billion real terms reduction to core government funding between 2010 and 2020.

The Government needs to ensure councils have the funding to meet ongoing pressures and protect the services that will be vital to achieve its ambitions for growth and to produce a more balanced economy, level up communities and help residents through this cost-of-living crisis”.

All of this provides a backdrop to the current financial difficulties facing local authorities as the LGA has calculated that rising inflation, National Living Wage and energy costs have left councils facing £2.4 billion in extra cost pressures this year (2022/23), with estimated funding gaps of £3.4 billion in 2023/24 and £4.5 billion the year after.

Indeed, the LGA has warned against further cuts to local government funding, in addition to their cumulative loss of £15 billion of central government during the decade from 2010. Underfunding local services also has a knock-on effect on the wider economy, businesses and residents, and other public services.

To reinforce the difficult financial challenges facing local authorities on 1 November Conservative Leader of Devon County Council, John Hart said "I have been a county councillor for more than 30 years and leader of Devon County Council for nearly 14 years during which time we have been through the austerity years and the pandemic, but our financial situation has never been so bleak as it is now."

Indeed, this council has lost, £51.8 million in government financial support since 2010. This has held back service development, investment in key infrastructure, including building our own homes and led to local residents and businesses having to pay more as a result.

However, with adequate funding, councils can protect and invest in local services, deliver for our communities, support economic growth and level up everywhere.

This is why the LGA is calling for a long-term government plan to manage the crisis in councils’ finances and has warned against cutting their funding. We have to, by law, balance our books each year, which means when costs rise, we must find equivalent savings in our budget elsewhere.

To save the local services we all rely on, councils need adequate funding, in line with inflation and the demand for services, and certainty to plan their budgets to minimise service disruption. Which is why the LGA is running its Save Local Services campaign <http://www.local.gov.uk/save-local-services>.

He went on to explain the particular pressures facing EDDC, which included, reduced central government grant, constraints on the amount which can be raised via Council Tax (currently at 1.99% or £5 per annum) and via Planning applications fees which are also set by central government, and current inflationary pressures. He also gave examples of financial support EDDC has given to support services to the community, such as LED, or via small capital grants to maintain vital local assets.

Cllr Rowland concluded by reading the proposals of the motion as follows;

This Council resolves to –

- (i) Endorse James Jamieson and John Hart's quoted concerns about the poor local government funding of the past decade and the need for the government to now adequately fund this sector;
- (ii) Register its support for the LGA's Save Local Services campaign;
- (iii) Publicly promote implications of the poor local government funding of the past decade and the need for the government to now adequately fund this sector;
- (iv) Work with other Devon local authorities, preferably through Team Devon, to lobby for adequate local government funding both in the immediate and longer term;
- (v) To invite our local MPs to support this council's local government funding concerns and to work with it and other Devon local authorities in lobbying for adequate local government funding both in the immediate and longer term.

Cllr Loudoun as seconder did not wish to speak at this point.

Cllr Rowland requested a recorded vote.

The Chair requested a vote of those in favour of a recorded which was carried.

Cllr Skinner asked for clarification on the timing of the Government's review of Local Government and whether it affected the necessity of this motion.

The Chief Executive said that the Government's announcement was expected on 21<sup>st</sup> December, but was not relevant to the motion because the motion was being encouraged by the LGA nationally. The LGA is currently under Conservative control, so it is not a party political issue but one about fairer funding for all Local Authorities.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the announcement to be made on 21<sup>st</sup> December would be about keeping within the overall levels announced in the autumn statement, so there would be no increases, and it was likely to be static next year. Only the level of funding for each individual local authority was unknown at present.

Cllr Bonetta said that the motion was an excellent one and was pleased that it had received support of high level Conservative leaders. However, he reminded members that those from whom we were asking for support in government were the ones responsible for a real time cut of 37% between 2010 – 2020, without taking into account Council Tax or Business rates, so it was surprising that such a campaign had not occurred before.

Cllr Loudoun said that regardless of the impending financial settlement, the impact on the local situation over the last ten years needed to be understood. He went on to say that this motion was significant because it was about supporting the LGA, of which EDDC is a member, and which was saying to government that 'enough is enough'. This had become a cross-party issue about the fact that short term and long term changes to funding were required, and so he hoped that all members present would give their support to the motion.

Cllr Rowland did not wish to comment further after all the comments already made.

The Chair accordingly asked for the recorded vote to take place.

**Recorded vote:**

Councillors Megan Armstrong, Paul Arnott, Jess Bailey, Denise Bickley, Kevin Blakey, Kim Bloxham, Jake Bonetta, Chris Burhop, Fred Caygill, Maddy Chapman, Andrew Colman, Bruce De Saram, Alan Dent, Peter Faithfull, Cathy Gardner, Steve Gazzard, Sam Hawkins, Paul Hayward, Nick Hookway, Stuart Hughes, Ben Ingham, Sarah Jackson, Vicky Johns, Geoff Jung, John Loudoun, Dawn Manley, Paul Millar, Helen Parr,

Marianne Rixson, Jack Rowland, Eleanor Rylance, Philip Skinner, Brenda Taylor, Ian Thomas, Joe Whibley, Tony Woodward, Eileen Wragg, Chris Wright, Tom Wright - voted in favour – 39.

Councillors – voted against – 0.

Councillors – abstained – 0.

Following a recorded vote the Chair confirmed that the motion had been carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

that this Council will –

- (i) Endorse James Jamieson and John Hart's quoted concerns about the poor local government funding of the past decade and the need for the government to now adequately fund this sector;
- (ii) Register its support for the LGA's Save Local Services campaign;
- (iii) Publicly promote implications of the poor local government funding of the past decade and the need for the government to now adequately fund this sector;
- (iv) Work with other Devon local authorities, preferably through Team Devon, to lobby for adequate local government funding both in the immediate and longer term;
- (v) To invite our local MPs to support this council's local government funding concerns and to work with it and other Devon local authorities in lobbying for adequate local government funding both in the immediate and longer term.

56 **Motion: Voter identification**

The Chief Executive left the meeting due to his separate role as Returning Officer. The Chair invited Cllr Bailey as the proposer, to speak to the motion.

Cllr Bailey said that the introduction of photographic voter id is a fundamental and unprecedented change to the electoral process, which is unfair, unjustified and unworkable. She went on to say that it was skewed in favour of older voters who would probably be Conservative. It represented a sledgehammer to crack a non-existent nut and would disempower many people. In the elections of 2021, only two people were considered to have personated another person's identity.

The electoral commission had expressed their concern that it was too late to test the scheme with staff adequately before the elections of 2023 and was likely to prove an embarrassment to the government. There were many people who did not have a recognisable form of photographic id and who would have to apply for a certificate. However, the certificates and guidance have yet to be developed. In East Devon, there would be about 3,000 people who may need to apply for a certificate. She queried how electoral staff would be able to cope with a range of demands from the public at the polling stations.

The Chair invited Cllr Whibley as the seconder, to speak to the motion.

Cllr Whibley said that the Electoral Reform Society had long argued that voter id was unnecessary. It was an unnecessary distraction which runs the risk of going badly wrong. Potential discrimination was built in to the scheme because it would be easier to vote as an old person rather than a young person. He gave examples of acceptable forms of ID currently, which include Blue badges, bus passes, and Over 60 Oyster cards. An amendment to the bill suggested adding student ID cards, library cards and bank

statements, all of which would be accessible to young people, but the amendment was repealed. Presently, young people would need a Passport or driving licence. They could apply for a voter certificate but the issue was about why they should have to. This would put up unnecessary barriers to voting and be divisive between young and old people. EDDC has an opportunity to support the LGA on this motion, as with the previous one, and to make its voice heard.

Cllr Bonetta said that he was pleased that the Conservatives had picked up on an idea for ID cards proposed originally by the Blair government, aimed at enabling young people having better access to services, and given without qualification.

However, this was a half-baked version trying to solve a problem of fraud which did not exist and about which the public should have huge reservations.

Cllr Arnott said that electoral staff would have to be trained before May 2023 in how to run a quasi-passport office. He went on to say that it was pure gerrymandering designed to deny the vote to people who were not natural Conservatives, and would cause a crisis for EDDC in trying to prepare for elections.

Cllr Hayward said that the cost of introducing the scheme had been estimated at about £180m.

Cllr De Saram said that despite voter fraud being low, any measures should be taken to protect democracy.

Cllr Skinner said that he could not support measures that would undermine democracy but also could not support fraud if it was possible to prevent it.

Cllr Burhop stated that as the most recent Cllr to be elected, he had been humbled by the fact that 800 people turned out to vote for him, but was concerned that in future people may turn out, only to be turned away because they did not have the right forms. This would be a costly way to disenfranchise people. Having spoken to his constituents he said that all of them had been oblivious to the scheme being introduced.

Cllr Tom Wright said that he was supportive of preventing fraud, which could occur through the Postal Vote system amongst other ways, but would support the motion because he did not believe that the scheme as laid out would be effective in preventing fraud.

Cllr Jackson said that the democratic process should be inclusive and easy to engage with. The expense involved with introducing this is disproportionate and could be used much more constructively.

Cllr Rylance said that there were likely to be up to 20,000 people in East Devon without passports or driving licences and the Returning Officer had been concerned that he had received no information yet about the scheme. He had also expressed concern about staff being exposed to angry people who would be refused the ability to vote at polling stations, so the impact on the local process would be great.

Cllr Bailey did not wish to make further comment.

The Chair invited members to vote in favour or against the motion as it was presented. Following a vote he confirmed that the motion was carried by a majority of those present.

## **RESOLVED:**

That this Council agreed;

- 1 To ask the Local Government Association (LGA) and the District Councils Network (DCN) to raise the matter with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities expressing its great concern about the proposed use of photographic identification for May 2023 elections.
- 2 In particular the Council stresses its concern about the procedures to be introduced, which will have a disproportionately detrimental impact on younger voters for whom

the procedures will be more challenging than for older voters. The Council asks the LGA and the DCN to press the Government to actively seek to encourage young people to participate in elections, **not** to place obstacles in the way of young would-be voters.

- 3 Asks the LGA and the DCN to press the Secretary of State not to introduce voter photographic identification for the scheduled 2023 elections. The Council also asks the LGA and the DCN to urge the Secretary of State to engage in debate with the LGA and DCN about the need for voter photographic identification, and should it be concluded that it is necessary that a more acceptable system be considered.
4. The Council agrees to send a copy of its message to the LGA and the DCN to its three MPs.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the last Council meeting of 2022.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

M Armstrong	J Loudoun	B Ingham
S Jackson	D Bickley	G Jung
P Arnott	J Bailey	H Parr
K Blakey	P Hayward	M Rixson
K Bloxham	S Hawkins	E Rylance (Vice-Chair)
F Caygill	A Moulding	B De Saram
A Colman	C Gardner	P Skinner
P Millar	D Manley	B Taylor
T Woodward	C Brown	I Thomas (Chair)
N Hookway	M Chapman	E Wragg
C Wright	I Chubb	T Wright
J Whibley	A Dent	S Hughes
V Johns	P Faithfull	J Bonetta
J Rowland	S Gazzard	C Burhop

#### **Officers in attendance:**

Mark Williams, Chief Executive  
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance  
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)  
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

#### **Councillor apologies:**

J Kemp  
P Jarvis  
S Chamberlain  
R Lawrence

O Davey  
D Key  
M Allen  
I Hall  
M Hartnell  
M Howe  
C Pepper  
G Pook  
G Pratt  
P Twiss

Chair .....

Date: .....