

Our Council Plan

2020-2024

Updated -8 October 2019 following Scrutiny

Our Council Plan sets out our strategic direction until 2024 and beyond – what we plan to do and how we plan to do it, so we can achieve our ambition.

East Devon at a glance

East Devon District Council is a local authority providing great value services to our local residents.

Since 2014 our planning policies have facilitated the building of over 1,640 new affordable homes

We have spent £590,000 on improving play areas

Facilitated 400 new jobs and £30m of public sector investment in Exeter Science Park

Secured £20m of funding for new schools at Cranbrook

£30m invested in new transport infrastructure (fact check required)

We collect nearly 6,000,000 bins a year

Welcome

Ben Ingham

Leader

I am delighted to have been elected Leader of the Council at a time when local people are expecting a fresh approach from their local councillors. We are deeply committed to developing its reputation as welcoming and inclusive. East Devon is a fantastic place to live, work, invest and play.

The Independent Group has accepted the challenge of providing leadership at a time when our district is facing unprecedented challenges brought about by climate change, Brexit and reduced central government funding, which has a real impact on our services. This will continue and unless we act now, the Council faces a funding gap of at least £2.7 million over the next four years.

Despite these challenges, we are committed to running an outstanding council. We must provide great services and create new opportunities for East Devon; now and for future generations. Our new Council Plan 2019-2023 is our top level strategy, which sets out how we will achieve our ambition. The Plan addresses the key challenges for the district. It focuses on our resources and activities, encouraging us to capitalise on key opportunities that will serve the needs of all residents and our communities.

We will continuously improve the built and natural environment in our towns and villages. We must protect our communities and precious environment now and for future generations.

In the face of huge financial challenges, we will improve our self-financing plans so we can protect the key Council services that matter most to our customers. We cannot do this alone. We need strong partnerships with our town and parish councils. We need robust relationships with our businesses, community groups and local people who are already helping us to deliver services.

We are absolutely committed to accelerating our delivery of the right homes in the right place for people in housing need. In addition, we must focus on dealing with all the issues of rough sleeping and homelessness.

We will focus on improving health, wellbeing and quality of life. As we go forward, we will look at new ways to help people to help themselves and others throughout our communities.

It is essential to have the right partnerships in place to help communities grow and for people to thrive. We will be focusing on attracting businesses and jobs to East Devon so local people can take up new opportunities.

Using common sense and common values we will work with our residents, communities and businesses to deliver the very best for everyone in East Devon.

Our ambition

To be an outstanding and well-run council which provides great services and outstanding opportunities for East Devon – now and for future generations.

Our guiding principles and values

Our guiding principles and values underpin everything we do and set out how we will go about our day to day work.

We will:

- Promote equal access and inclusivity for everyone in East Devon.
- Regularly consult and engage with our communities on key issues and service changes; and particularly when we run regeneration projects and activities that involve our tenants.
- Support initiatives which specifically promote the health and well-being of our residents and provide help and advice at the earliest opportunity.
- Deliver quality, accessible services - a great service, first time and every time
- Be open, clear and transparent
- Treat others and their opinions with respect at all times
- Work towards reducing our carbon footprint and enhancing our environment
- Operate as one council team.

People and place

Location and geography

The district of East Devon lies at the east of the county of Devon between Exeter to the west and bordering Somerset and Dorset on the east. It is one of eight Devon districts and in population terms, it is the largest in the county.

The district has a dispersed and largely rural population. The rural nature of the area is emphasised by the low population density of 175 per square km (the England average is 427).

East Devon is renowned for its beautiful countryside

Of our 30 wards 21 of them have a population density below the England average. We do however also have a mix of market and coastal towns with much higher population densities including towns such as Exmouth, Seaton and Honiton.

East Devon is renowned for its beautiful countryside. In fact two thirds of the district are recognised as being nationally important for its high landscape quality and designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - the East Devon AONB covers some 270sq km of beautiful landscape between Exmouth to Uplyme and up to Honiton, whilst to the north of Honiton you will find the Blackdown Hills AONB.

East Devon also has a stunning coastline that runs the length of its southern border. Almost the entire coastline is part of a World Heritage Coast that starts at Exmouth and runs to Swanage in Dorset.

The main settlements are the coastal resorts of Exmouth (one of Devon's largest towns – population 48,613), Budleigh Salterton, Sidmouth and Seaton and in land are Honiton, Ottery St Mary, and Axminster.

Transport

East Devon is connected to Bristol and the north of the country by access to the M5 via Exeter and London and the South East by the A30/A303. London can be reached in about three hours by road.

There are two main rail routes from the district to London. One is via the Honiton to Waterloo line which takes on average three hours. The main Great Western line to London Paddington via Exeter St David's station and can take two hours to reach the capital city. The rest of the rail network can be accessed via Honiton, Axminster, Exmouth and Exeter stations.

The district contains the main airport for the south-west region with Exeter International Airport at Clyst Honiton. The airport offers both scheduled and holiday charter flights within the UK and Europe to destinations such as Manchester, Edinburgh, France, Austria, Italy, Spain and Turkey.

Our communities

East Devon is home to over 142,000 people. The overall population is expected to increase by 14,300 people between 2017 and 2027, a rise of 10%.

The population of East Devon has an older age profile with the average age of its residents being 50.7 years (national average is 40.1 years). The 65+ age range looks set to grow more than any other over the next 10 years growing from 30.1% of the population in 2017 to 32.5% of the population in 2027.

An ageing population will have an impact on the provision of health care, housing requirements, the labour market and economic growth.

The average household size in the district is 2.2 residents.

Predominantly East Devon residents are from a white British background, with just 1.59% of the district's population coming from an ethnic background.

About us

East Devon covers an area of 814.3 km². We proudly have two areas designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), the East Devon AONB and the Blackdown Hills ANOB.

60 Councillors

30 Wards

68 Parishes

East Devon covers 814.3 km²

495 council staff employees

Awarded Investors in People Gold award for the second time

A year in the life of East Devon District Council

5,911,495 Bin collections

82,600 calls to our Customer Service Centre

2,125 planning applications processed

Total revenue carpark transactions was £3,339,275

596 Food Hygiene Rating Scheme inspections

233 Pest control treatments

2,685 PNC issued

Processed 4,875 parking permits totalling £579,170

237 affordable homes provided

The Councils Housing Allocations Team housed 289 families

Eight play areas upgraded with new equipment and £590,000 invested

Our plans

Our plans and strategies fit together so that everyone understands how their contribution fits in with the Local Plan and the Council Plan – we call this the golden thread.

Our corporate priorities

We have four corporate priority areas which outline where we focus our efforts, activity and resources.

East Devon is an area of outstanding natural beauty and has a World Heritage coastline. At the same time we have thriving economies in our towns and villages and increasing high quality commercial growth in major sites to the west of the District. Consistent with this important mix of characteristics, the Council aims to deliver against four priority areas.

We will deliver an:

1. Outstanding place and environment
2. Outstanding homes and communities
3. Outstanding level of economic growth, productivity and prosperity
4. Outstanding council and council services

Council priority one

Outstanding place and environment

Our commitment to addressing the climate change and ecological emergency is a key priority for our Council. Our focus will be on achieving carbon neutrality by 2040 and taking care of and enhancing our built and natural environment in our towns and villages now and for future generations.

This work already includes:

- Working collaboratively with the communities in the West End towards the future expansion of Cranbrook, whilst maintaining the identity of the other communities in the area.
- Monitoring extant planning permissions which have not yet been built out.
- Continuing our support of the East Devon and Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnership, as nationally important landscapes covering two thirds of our district. Work with Natural England and assess the results of the Glover Review.
- Working collaboratively with the South West Coastal Path Association to promote the East Devon section of the South West Coast Path with a view to supporting tourism and wider access.
- Continuing outreach programmes with Community Development Workers to develop learning and improve health and wellbeing.
- Supporting the programme of Health Walks and Green Gyms with Active Devon, LED Leisure and Public Health using Sport England Funding.
- Protecting, valuing and increasing our treescape.
- Supporting Devon County Council in their work in relation to understanding and managing the ecological threats to trees with a view to ensuring trees are being replaced throughout the District.

- Working with Natural England and assessing the results and other agencies to protect Exe Estuary SSSI, Ramsar, SPA and other similarly designated sites.

Summary of our profile

60% of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting

Over 10,000 households using our green waste scheme

66% of the district is covered by Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOBs)

5,911,495 bin collections every year

Green flag awards for Connaught Gardens and Manor Gardens

Blue flag awards for Exmouth, Budleigh, Sidmouth and Seaton beaches

Overall levels of CO2 produced in East Devon have been falling – check fact

Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)

Planning and development

- Deliver a coherent strategy towards carbon neutrality development.
- Start preparatory work on the next East Devon Local Plan immediately. This will include working with Exeter, Teignbridge, Mid Devon and Devon County Council on the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP). The Plan will seek to protect and support the interests and ambitions of East Devon. The Local Plan will provide enable opportunities for sporting, culture and leisure activities.
- Support infrastructure and commercial projects in Exeter and East Devon Growth Point and prepare Local Development Orders to speed projects in the Enterprise Zone.
- Support and facilitate communities to complete any outstanding neighbourhood plans.
- Review Community Infrastructure Levy charging structure to facilitate the delivery of critical infrastructure.
- Publish Brownfield Land Register and update this annually.
- Develop a Heritage Strategy for build areas and a heritage list to safeguard listed buildings and other heritage assets within the District. Encourage all communities to complete a local list of non-heritage assets.
- Develop a plan for Green infrastructure in our new urban developments and identify Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) to mitigate the impact of residential development.
- Identify potential Gypsy and Traveller sites by April 2021.

- Continue to improve the management of the Council's extensive asset portfolio to ensure a good community experience alongside well planned maintenance, income generating and energy efficient approach within an overall continuous strategy of asset review.

Environment

- Commit to a Climate Change Declaration to include the Council, and encouraging all our communities, businesses and visitors in a commitment to carbon neutrality by 2040.
- Publish a Climate Change action plan for East Devon to include challenging targets to achieve a carbon neutral Council at the earliest opportunity.
- As part of our engagement with Greater Exeter Strategic Partnership (GESP) and our Local Plan review, seek to identify locations for the right homes in the right places.
- Implement the Green Space Plan to ensure that our open space contributes towards the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- Ensure provision of high quality, accessible green space in Cranbrook, commensurate with a growing, healthy new town by delivering **additional green space**.
- Promote our ability to manage open spaces within the District on a commercial basis.
- Explore options for the financial sustainability of Seaton Wetlands, Clyst Valley Park and similar sites to help secure financial security and sustainability of sites.
- Progress Beach Management Plans for Exmouth, Seaton and Sidmouth including East Beach to maintain coastal defences and reduce the rate of coastal and cliff erosion.
- Implement the Green Travel Plan and expand the opportunities for green travel in our car parks and other assets.
- Explore self-generation for electricity for EDDC uses including East Devon's leisure centres.
- Increase the number of trees planted on Council owned green spaces following the adoption and implementation of the Climate Change Strategy, Devon's response to trees and community orchard schemes.
- Deliver Countryside outreach work programmes that will deliver work with Switch groups and children's centres with annual target of 80 sessions across district green spaces and working with 2000 people.
- Deliver new core Outdoor Learning package scheme that delivers 25 school visits to Seaton Wetlands and 20 outdoor learning experiences across the district to a variety of organisations (that achieves full-cost recovery) & work with 3000 young people and attract £10,000 of income.
- Countryside Team to develop new income streams to meet Transformation Strategy objective to include Higher Level Stewardship grants for Seaton Wetlands and Trinity Hill Local Nature Reserves delivering £18K per annum. Charcoal production to deliver £4000 income per year; donations target from Seaton Wetlands to deliver in excess

of £4000 income per annum and a business case to develop a café/retail offer on the Seaton Wetlands to deliver £15K per annum.

- Work towards ensuring that the standards set out in the Construction Sites Code of Practice are consistently delivered by contractors to minimise the impacts and maximise the benefits of construction.

What success will look like over the next four years

- Carbon neutral development in the West End of the district.
- Gypsy and traveller sites established.
- Reduction of carbon footprint for the Council and our businesses, communities, residents and visitors in accordance with our Climate Change Action Plan.
- Countryside Team to implement measurable improvements in health and wellbeing with people staying healthier longer by delivering second phase of Connecting Actively to Nature pilot project - Wild Swimming club for Over 55s in Sidmouth and Exmouth, delivering with LED Leisure Health Coaches opportunities for GP referral patients and further Outdoor Clubs across the district.
- Increased footfall on our Nature Reserves to achieve target of 70,000 visitor footfall per annum at the Seaton Wetlands, 15,000 footfall target for Holyford Woods LNR, 10,000 target for Trinity Hill LNR, 15,000 footfall target at Knapp Copse LNR all challenging but achievable.

Council priority two

Outstanding homes and communities

This means making the most of every opportunity to enhance the quality of life for our residents by ensuring good, quality homes in good neighbourhoods and happy and healthy communities. A key part of our work will be to develop a shared understanding of poverty and deprivation in all our towns and to develop strategies to mitigate these impacts. The Council is committed to using its powers, resources and influence to eliminate poverty in the district.

This work already includes:

- Working with communities to develop community led housing schemes such as Community Land Trusts or community schemes in conjunction with the Council's own housing company.
- Supporting rural communities to deliver new affordable homes.

- Building housing stock by purchase of former Council and similar homes and considering building Council homes using Right to Buy receipts supported with additional funds.
- Investing in and maintaining all council houses to ensure they are always safe for our tenants and their visitors.
- Actively involving our tenants in all matters that relate to the management of our housing stock including maintenance and improvement of their homes.
- Working with partners to make residents feel safe in their communities and to tackle tenancy fraud.
- Supporting community development initiatives to enhance health and wellbeing particularly the SWITCH job club to ease people of all ages into work.
- Helping our tenants and residents to manage their household income by providing independent financial advice and affordable rents.
- Working to build relationships with private letting agents and landlords to help promote healthy landlord/tenant relationships and improvement in the management and condition of private rented homes.
- Providing adaptations for people with disabilities through Disabled facilities Grants and adaptations to Council homes.
- Contributing to the work led by Devon County Council which analyses and assesses deprivation and poverty in the District; working with independent social change organisations and charities to identify ways we can improve outcomes for individuals and families.
- Supporting LED Leisure in delivery and maintenance of leisure and entertainment facilities and parks.
- Operating a proactive community safety programme to build community resilience, address anti-social behaviour and support safeguarding in order to protect vulnerable children and adults.
- Continuing to address issues of social isolation to strengthen and build community resilience.

Summary of our profile

68,950 homes in East Devon

75% of homes are owner-occupied

Largest rise in homes built in Devon since 2000 (fact check required)

Average house price is £277,000

2,125 planning applications processed

East Devon is one of the safest districts, in one of the safest counties to live in

237 affordable homes provided in 2018/19

Draft Council Plan V5 Tracked changes to include comments from Overview Meeting and Scrutiny

10,000 new homes built since 2000

Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)

Housing

- Increase the supply of affordable, quality housing options for those in housing need.
- Provide more high quality rented homes through East Devon Homes Ltd; a new and wholly owned Council company..
- Work towards having no homeless individuals, households or rough sleepers.
- Lobby for the suspension/removal of the 'Right to buy' as a way of protecting our social housing stock.
- Recognise Central Government policy and indicate an intention to apply council house increases of Consumer Price Index plus 1% from 2020 for five years.
- Continue to collect a high proportion of tenants' rent and service charges due (currently 99%) to ensure the housing revenue account can continue to deliver high quality services.
- Expand the Home Safeguard community alarm service, securing more customers and offering a wider range of technologies that support independent living.
- Upgrade Council homes and reduce tenant running costs with energy efficiency measures.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a Council Letting Agency.
- Ensure that all housing assets are captured within a corporate asset register to ensure corporate management of all Council assets.

Communities

- As a departure from using specific income streams for specific assets, use income from the Manor Pavilion car park to fund a refurbishment and upgrade Manor Pavilion as a key Council asset.
- Scrutinise and implement the Culture Plan 2017-2022.
- From 2020 encourage innovative new methods of funding, including Crowdfunding to deliver capital investment or revenue support.
- Prepare a bid for the Capital Programme to improve facilities at Warren View.
- Consider the business cases presented by Town and Parish Councils in relation to the transfer of assets. This includes actively engaging - Town and Parish Councils to develop assets and services as they determine what is most appropriate for the locality.
- Review the Playing Pitch Strategy and its implementation as we recognise that participation in regular sport confers important health and other benefits.

- Thelma Hulbert Gallery to develop and deliver phase 2 of the Art on the East Devon Way project and secure Heritage Lottery Fund grant and East Devon AONB funds of £23,000
- Combine art, environment and social prescribing as part of the new Thelma Hulbert Gallery Business Plan to be written and adopted for 2020-2024.
- Manor Pavilion theatre to improve its customer experience by installation of on line ticketing facility, bid for Sanditon development Section 106 funds along with car parking revenue to improve its customer infrastructure and achieve target of £200,000 ticket sales for the Summer Season production. Work in partnership with others ranging from Public Health England and other tiers of local government and directors of public health, to the local NHS, the voluntary and business sectors and communities, in order to promote public health.
- Complete our research into the causes and extent of poverty in East Devon, and propose changes to Council policies and practice which contribute towards reducing and ultimately eradicating poverty in the district.

What success will look like over the next four years

- 300 new affordable homes provided per annum including an increase of Council housing stock.
- All Council homes well maintained and 100% compliant with Health and Safety requirements.
- East Devon Homes acquiring property in accordance with its adopted Business Plan.
- Rent collection performance exceeding 99% of rent due.
- Improved energy efficiency of Council homes.
- High levels of tenant satisfaction with the Housing Service.
- A self- sufficient, income generating Home Safeguard service.
- A full events, arts and culture programme.
- Financially sustainable theatre and gallery facilities.
- Effective safeguarding measures that are protecting the most vulnerable in our communities
- Delivery of the THG's Arts Council funded outreach programme will deliver £49,900 for a 21 month project to deliver: learning programme with schools & community groups, community consultation to create cross-sector social engagement, part-fund exhibition programme Inc. guest curator and develop visual impairment accessibility

Council priority three

Outstanding economic growth, productivity and prosperity

This means working with local businesses, inward investors and partners to develop East Devon as a strong and competitive economy and a significant regional economic force while ensuring that the benefits of productivity and prosperity are shared with our communities.

This work already includes:

- Working with partners throughout Devon and the South West to improve our economy and promoting East Devon widely to ensure that the District receives the maximum benefit from national, regional and sub-regional programmes.
- Creating high-skilled and better paid jobs and opportunities across East Devon's towns and in the Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone (Science Park, Skypark, Exeter Airport Business Park and Cranbrook) and ensuring residents have the skills to access the job market at all levels. Supporting local small and start-up businesses through advice and support coupled with promotion of employment and relevant skills.
- Utilising investment capital to develop employment opportunities in the District.
- Continuing to take an innovative approach to promote tourism within the District to make the most of the visitor and tourism economy including the development of a strategy and delivery plan for the Council and East Devon to become a much stronger place for events, attractions and entertainment.

Summary of our profile

Home to over 7,000 businesses

97% of businesses employ up to 49 employees

Our business closure rate at 9% is one of the lowest in the country

43,700 jobs in East Devon

61% of pupils achieve five or more A* to C GCSEs

36% of the working population are educated to a degree level

Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)

Outstanding economic growth, productivity and prosperity

- Lobbying for and working with others to achieve full Broadband access for all in rural areas to support our small businesses to prosper within a world-class digital infrastructure.
- Supporting infrastructure providers, such as Ultrafast Broadband and mobile telecommunications so that these services are extended across East Devon to enhance our urban and rural economies, improve service delivery and promote social inclusion.

- Identifying and delivering projects that address issues around clean growth as defined in the emerging Local Industrial Strategy.
- Identifying the best strategic sites for future employment opportunities within East Devon's towns.
- Completing Exmouth Seafront Regeneration including delivery of a Phase 3 development which must appeal all year round and be attractive to tourists and visitors. The Exmouth Seafront must include areas affordable to young working families and open community consultation will form a critical part of Phase 3.
- Building out Cranbrook Town Centre to deliver facilities needed for social cohesion and employment growth in the new town.
- Examining the viability of extra East Devon Business Centre space and delivering additional business units in the majority of East Devon's towns
- Examining potential for development of existing Council assets to support employment especially start-ups and businesses that increase our economic diversity, increase the attractiveness and reputation of East Devon as a place to live, work and visit.
- Developing a clear and agreed set of principles for commercialism and investment to ensure that we can generate income to help protect key services and re-invest in further business growth and new jobs.

What success will look like over the next four years

- An increase in employment land development/end-use accelerating
- New business activity and an increase in job numbers
- Non- domestic rates increased receipt to the council as a result of growth in business investment/new development to help fund future delivery of council services
- Measurable per capita productivity increases
- Acquisition of commercial assets and associated growth in employment, economic activity and productivity
- New town centre and high street investment generating new footfall and reduced retail and other shop front vacancy rates
- Strengthened reputation of Enterprise Zone and wider district economy as places to invest and a council to do business with.

Council priority four

Outstanding council and council services

This means operating as an outstanding organisation with the highest standards of organisational development, governance, statutory compliance and financial management. Our focus will be on increasing our ability to be self-financing to support those services that matter the most to residents.

This work already includes:

- Being responsive, effective and consistent in our communications by providing residents with regular communications on all council activities using social media, digital options as well as traditional communications.
- Continuing to enhance the Council's digital offer for the customer – improving and developing our website and delivering more digital services so that customers can easily access reliable information and resolution of service requests.
- Promoting greater levels of Green Waste collection to increase recycling rates that offer our customers a valued service.
- Ensuring we stay in the 10 most efficient areas in the county for waste which goes for disposal or energy regeneration.

Summary of our profile

95% of invoices paid by us in ten working days

714 Freedom of Information requests received and dealt with

957,134 visits to our website

18,767 total downloads of the East Devon App

Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)

Outstanding council and council services

- Continuously improving the customer experience in relation to the Council's telephone system based on customer and stakeholder feedback.
- Exploring the feasibility of extending and promoting the Council's in-house pest control service.
- Improving utilisation of new Materials Recovery facility opened at Greendale on A3052 East of Exeter.
- Using the Residents' Viewpoint Survey April 2020 to enable us to deliver an action plan listening carefully to what our residents need and using this information to improve our services.

- Developing organisational knowledge and skills in the area of community engagement and ensure this features in our training plans.
- Achieve the Investor in People accolade at platinum level by 2020 as an external endorsement of East Devon as an exemplar of organisational management, learning and development opportunities and leadership and acknowledged as a high performing council. This will ensure a high performing Council across the 9 indicators outlined in the Investor in People Standard:
 - Leading and inspiring people
 - Living the organisation's values and behaviours
 - Empowering and involving people
 - Managing performance
 - Recognising and rewarding high performance
 - Structuring work
 - Building capability
 - Delivering continuous improvement
 - Creating sustainable success

What success will look like over the next four years

- Investor in People High Performing (Platinum) award.
- Continuous improvement in our residents' survey.
- 14,000 green waste customers.
- Improved customer journeys with those who wish to transact with us online able to do so across key services.

Finance

The over-arching impact on the council's finances and the ability to fund services has been the reduction in central government funding to a position where the Council receives no government money to support core service delivery.

The reduction in Government funding has resulted in the Council having a funding gap of £2.1m by 2021

The cost of services we provide are now met only through Council Tax, Business Rates, charging for services and doing things differently. The reduction in Government funding has resulted in the Council having a funding gap of £2.1m by 2021 which will continue to grow unless we take action now.

This pressure will have impacts across our Council Plan as we meet this challenge.

We are meeting these challenges by:

- Protecting key public services by generating income such as our new green waste service in reducing costs
- Relocating to save £1.4m over 20 years
- Going digital to deliver services cost effectively
- Focusing on commercial property investment opportunities to generate income for new jobs and increased productivity in the district
- Using our own land and property assets more efficiently
- Finding innovative ways to help places change and meet our communities' expectations