

**Agenda for consultative joint meeting of the
Overview and Scrutiny Committees
Thursday, 16th September, 2021, 6.00 pm**



Members of Overview Committee

Councillors V Johns (Chair), D Barrow, S Gazzard, I Hall,
M Hartnell, B Ingham, D Manley, P Millar,
A Moulding, G Pook, V Ranger and
T Woodward

Members of Overview Committee

Councillors T Wright (Chair), V Ranger, M Allen, A Bruce,
M Chapman, A Colman, O Davey, C Gardner,
S Hawkins, T McCollum, P Millar, H Parr,
C Pepper and E Rylance

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Blackdown House
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Venue: Online via the Zoom App

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(or group number 01395 517546)
Tuesday, 7 September 2021

Important - this meeting will be conducted online and recorded by Zoom only.

Please do not attend Blackdown House.

Members are asked to follow the [Protocol for Remote Meetings](#)

This meeting is being recorded by EDDC for subsequent publication on the Council's website and will be streamed live to the Council's Youtube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmNHQruge3LVl4hcgRnbwBw>

Public speakers are now required to register to speak – for more information please use the following link: <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/have-your-say-at-meetings/all-other-public-meetings/#article-content>

Between 27th July 2021 to 17th January 2022, the Council has delegated much of the decision making to officers. Any officer decisions arising from recommendations from a consultative meeting can be found here – [Senior Officer Decision notices - East Devon](#).

1 Public Speaking

Information on [public speaking](#) is available online.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 7)

3 Apologies

4 Declarations of interest

Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#).

5 Matters of urgency

Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online.

6 Confidential/exempt item(s)

To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including press) have been excluded. There are **no** items that officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

7 Draft Updated Council Plan 2021 - 2023 (Pages 8 - 23)

[Decision making and equalities](#)

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held online via the Zoom App on 12 November 2020****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.10 pm

66 Public Speaking

Three members of the public had registered to speak and were called in the order in which they registered.

Mr Richard Eley was of the view that the Our Towns Study should be abandoned and be replaced with a smaller, nimbler initiative which could react faster and attract Government funding. There was a real need to help town centres and many within communities were willing to contribute on an ad hoc basis and enable communities to work together.

Mr Barrie Hedges of Totally Locally Axminster provided an insight into the impact on the town centre of various recent events such as the closure of Axminster Carpets and the Trinity House store. There were signs of revival and the Covid-19 pandemic had fostered community spirit. However, there was a pressing need for a vision for Axminster and for action led by EDDC in order to seize opportunities to support towns in East Devon.

Mr Ian Styles of Axminster Property outlined the commercial investment in the town which had also enabled the purchase and revival of Trinity House, with all nine units now let. Mr Styles agreed with the need for a plan for Axminster and emphasised the need for urgent and considerable investment in the town. Mr Styles invited EDDC to work with the commercial sector and investors which would result in a more decisive and realistic way of working.

The Chair thanked the public speakers for their contributions.

67 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2020 were agreed as a true record.

68 Declarations of interest

Minute 72 High Street TAFF & Our Towns Scheme update.
Councillor Ian Hall, Personal, Devon County Councillor, Axminster Division. Member has made a Localities Grant of £1,000 for IT improvements.

Minute 72 High Street TAFF & Our Towns Scheme update.
Councillor Marcus Hartnell, Personal, Member runs a business in Seaton.

Minute 72 High Street TAFF & Our Towns Scheme update.
Councillor Tony Woodward, Personal, Member of the Green Party.

69 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential or exempt items.

71 **Draft Financial Strategy 2021 - 2031**

Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance, presented the draft Financial Strategy 2021 – 2031. The purpose was to provide background information and set the scene in advance of the Overview Committee considering the more detailed budget for the next financial year at its meeting in January.

The Draft Strategy outlined how the Council would structure and manage its finances over the next ten years to deliver services in accordance with the objectives set out in the Council Plan. The Strategy, which was updated annually, covered the general fund (all services except housing which had its own financial plan) and capital.

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was explained, and the following points were highlighted:

- Reduction in funding from central Government had severely impacted on all local authorities
- Renegotiation of the refuse and recycling contract for 2022/23 would require significant capital investment
- The ongoing commitment of £323k per annum for the carbon reduction programme would need external funding if the Council was to meet its objectives in full
- The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on income generation in the current financial year. Despite Government funding to reimburse the loss of various income streams, the Council would need to find £1.2 - £1.3million of its own funds to make up the deficit
- Timing of the Government's proposed re-basing of business rates was uncertain which made financial planning difficult. The likely loss of business rate income as a result of re-basing had been taken into account in future years
- Income from the New Homes Bonus scheme had been reducing year on year and would disappear completely from 2023/24. As yet there were no details from Government as to a replacement for the New Homes Bonus

The MTFP showed a projected deficit for 2021/22 of £0.694m, which increased annually, reaching £5.653m in 2030/31 as a cumulative deficit. In order to mitigate the uncertainty surrounding the timing of the loss of the New Homes Bonus and the reduction in business rates income, the Council had set aside £2 million into a MTFP risk reserve which would enable the Council to support service delivery and then react when there was greater clarity and certainty.

The MTFP also showed the projected capital expenditure and funding position. Capital expenditure was considered on a scheme by scheme basis and, through a rigorous assessment process, was balanced against the funding available.

The following points were discussed:

- The Overview Committee suggested that it would benefit the Scrutiny Committee to have the same presentation on the Draft Financial Strategy
- It was vital to adhere to the Climate Declaration and to maintain the commitment to the carbon reduction programme

RECOMMENDATION:

That Cabinet adopts the Financial Plan and commits to endorse the sum of £323,000 allowed in the Plan to ensure that the carbon reduction programme is met and that the Council endeavours to secure the shortfall still to be found from other sources.

72 **High Street TAFF & Our Towns Scheme update**

Rob Murray, Economic Development Manager, introduced the report which provided an update on the reasons for the deferment of the Our Towns Study. It was noted that there was now the need to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions and to re-cast the brief of the Study due to the recent changes in the economy.

The following points were discussed:

- Members noted the points made by the three public speakers at the start of the meeting
- Energy and action were needed now rather than waiting several years for service plans to address the issues
- It was requested that Cranbrook be included in the Study moving forward as, following the recent decision by the Strategic Planning Committee, it was likely that there would need to be significant investment in Cranbrook town centre
- Support for towns would require a combination of approaches with commercial investors and local government working together with others
- EDDC could help businesses to create or improve on a digital presence
- There should be a balance between support for a digital presence and support for community contact and interaction
- Data on high streets / towns would be commissioned as part of the policy development for the Local Plan
- The High Street TaFF in its current form should be closed and the £50k set aside for the Our Towns Study work diverted to economic development with partners and stakeholders to support town centres, including Cranbrook
- Work on the Our Towns Study should not continue

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommended to Cabinet:

1. That £50k is diverted to assist the Economic Development Team to work with our key coastal and market towns, including Cranbrook, to include councils and key business stakeholders and investors to better understand challenges,

opportunities and aspirations of each town and work collaboratively to attract funding and support businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond

2. That the High Street TaFF is closed
3. To not continue with the Our Towns Study and that the high street and town centre data gathering underpinning the Our Towns Study is incorporated into the evidence base development for the new Local Plan and planning policies, with an equal focus on a digital and traditional presence in town centres.

73 **Forward Plan**

It was agreed to monitor the item on assisted housing needs pending the outcome of the work by John Golding, Strategic Lead for Housing, Health and Environment.

The Forward Plan was noted.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

N Hookway (Chair)
V Johns (Vice-Chair)
B De Saram
I Hall
M Hartnell
T Woodward
K Blakey
V Ranger

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Arnott
S Chamberlain
P Faithfull
P Hayward
G Jung
D Ledger
A Moulding
H Parr
C Pepper

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer
Robert Murray, Economic Development Manager
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Service Lead - Growth Development and Prosperity

Councillor apologies:

M Allen

F King
S Bond
S Gazzard

Chair

Date:

Report to: Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting 16th September 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Council Plan 2021-2023

Report summary:

This report provides an updated draft of the new Council Plan for 2021-2023

Recommendation:

That the committee consider this draft of the new council Plan 2021-2023 and provide feedback on it including that of the priorities and actions before it proceeds to Cabinet and Council in October.

Reason for recommendation:

To assist with the ongoing development of our new Council Plan

Officer: Mark Williams, Chief Executive – mwilliams@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergencies
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Culture, Tourism, Leisure and Sport
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications requiring comment.

Legal implications:

There are no direct legal implications requiring comment.

Equalities impact Low Impact

If choosing High or Medium level outline the equality considerations here, which should include any particular adverse impact on people with protected characteristics and actions to mitigate these. Link to an equalities impact assessment form using the [equalities form template](#).

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; A failure to have a robust Council Plan would impact on the strategic planning for our services

Links to background information:

- [Appendix A – Draft Council Plan 2021](#)
- [Appendix B – Priority actions spreadsheet](#)
- [Appendix C – Full draft of the outcome of the Planning workshops](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
- Outstanding Homes and Communities
- Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
- Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

The council plan sets out the strategic direction of the council over the next few years. The plan looks at our priorities and actions to guide the effective use of all council resources.

The council plan workshops in April and May gave an opportunity for all councillors to put forward ideas and suggestions for priorities and actions for the new council plan. Following this work all of the actions put forward were collated onto a spreadsheet which aimed to review each action by cost, timescale and priority. Each action was assessed and costed by the Service Leads working with their portfolio holders. The actions were then grouped into priority categories one to three, which was then reviewed at a joint cabinet and SMT+ meeting. See [Appendix B – Priority actions spreadsheet](#) for more information.

A draft copy of the council plan has been pulled together using the outcome document from the workshops, the category one actions from the spreadsheet and the Cabinet project priorities from the £500k fund.

This draft has been submitted for consideration by the joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee before it progresses to Cabinet and Council in October as per the timetable set out below.

Political process for adoption of the new Council Plan:

| Step | Start | Finish |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| Statement of Intent | November 2020 | December 2020 |
| First Draft Council Plan | January 2021 | |
| Cabinet/SMT+ Consideration | February 2021 | March 2021 |
| Member Workshops and Public Engagement | March 2021 | May 2021 |
| Priority actions costing and review work | June 2021 | July 2021 |
| Informal Cabinet | 23 August 2021 | |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Overview/Scrutiny Committee | 16 September 2021 | |
| Cabinet adoption | 6 October 2021 | |
| Council adoption | 20 October 2021 | |
| Final Version of Plan Published | October 2021 | |

Council Plan 2021-2023

Message from the Leader –

To be drafted and inserted

Our vision and values

Our vision is “**to make a positive difference to residents’ lives and our environment in East Devon**”.

The way we will make a positive difference to residents’ lives and our environment will be influenced by our values. These include:

- seeking continuous improvement of our high performing Council.
- listening to and learning from our residents and caring for them.
- adapting as a Council to new ways of working and refreshed priorities whilst recognising the pressure on resources.

Our [Vision and Values Commitment](#) sets out more detail about our core vision and values and how they underpin everything we do.

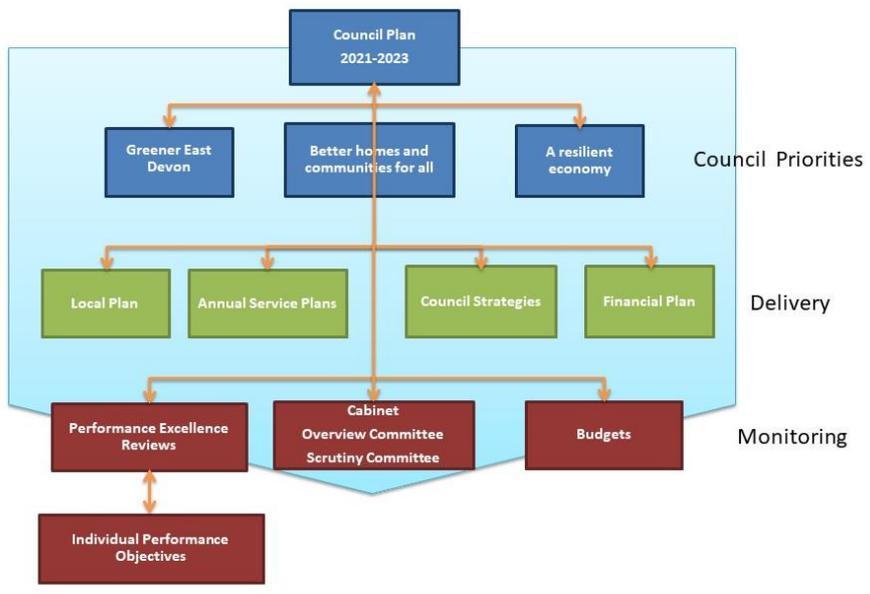
Our priorities

Our vision is integral to our Council Plan and the delivery of it and we believe that EDDC can achieve it through our three priorities:

- **Better Homes and Communities for all** with a priority on the importance of good quality, affordable housing suitable in size and location. Poverty caused by the loss of employment, illness or disability is an increasing issue and will also be a high priority for EDDC to tackle through all means available to us.
- A **Greener East Devon**, which prioritises issues arising from climate change and supports our natural environment. This issue affects and informs all of our objectives and services.
- A **Resilient Economy** bringing prosperity to the district, notwithstanding the current challenging circumstances.

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 suite of plans and strategies includes [Service Plans](#) as well as a [Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy](#); [Housing Strategy](#) and a [Climate Change Strategy](#).



Council priority one

Better Homes and Communities for All

We want to increase access to social and affordable homes as one of the Council's highest priorities.

We want to ensure better build quality of new homes, more social and affordable housing and a good standard of maintenance to ensure homes are fit for purpose across all sectors. To us, delivering better homes is about so much more than bricks and mortar; it is about using our resources and influence to keep people healthy and safe. It is about the quality of the setting of the homes, whether that is town, village or countryside and the amenities, the open space and infrastructure that serve the houses and contribute to the wellbeing of residents.

We believe that as the planning authority we have a crucial role to play in delivering better quality homes, ensuring the right homes in the right places and enforcing high build standards. Through our enabling activities we intend to drive the delivery of much needed social and affordable housing. We will be pressing harder than ever for the ending of the Right to Buy which deprives the council of crucial housing stock.

As a council we also wish to reduce poverty and deprivation and intend to use our resources to achieve this.

Recognising the significant contribution of the voluntary sector to building community, we will seek to strengthen the sector and support volunteering and the third sector.

A portfolio has been introduced to cover leisure and culture, recognising the importance of these sectors for our local economy, our communities, tourism and health and wellbeing.

Our priority actions for Better Homes and Communities for All

Promoting better homes and stronger communities

- Prepare and promote robust policies in our local plan to address the need for increased better homes and communities for all.
- Deliver more social housing and explore new ways to build more affordable homes.
- Deliver on the commitments in our Housing Strategy and Housing Service Plan.
- Implement our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to assist those in greatest housing need, providing options through our own housing revenue account, by working with our partner housing associations (Registered Providers) and by responding to the consultation of Devon Homes relating to their banding of property and assessment of those in need of housing.
- Promote Home Safeguard services and develop our supported housing offer.
- Ensure that Council homes are well-managed, in good repair, fit for purpose and safe for our tenants and that we obtain high performance and value for money from our Integrated Asset Management contract for repairs and maintenance and continue to invest in tenants' homes, guided by stock condition data.

- Engage with and involve tenants in decisions affecting their homes and to improve communications between tenants, the council and its contractors.
- Apply for grants to promote energy efficiency and promoting access to grants through greater publicity to residents of available options.
- Advise on and enforce standards in the private sector to attain suitable management and safety standards, including affordable warmth, houses in multiple occupation, mobile homes and private water supplies.
- Through our planning policies and the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy monies seek to secure the timely delivery of new infrastructure to support new development.
- Continue to work with our communities to support them in developing Neighbourhood Plans that reflect the community's future aspirations and where those include community-led housing schemes work with them to progress their proposals through the planning process and towards delivery.
- To acquire a site to facilitate self-build plots and support their delivery
- To research the ability for local communities to control the number of second homes in their communities.

Promoting health and wellbeing across the community

- Implement our anti-poverty strategy designed to reduce hardship and inequality in the district.
- Implement the actions in the Public Health Strategic Plan designed to improve public health, wellbeing and the quality of life of our residents.
- Ensure that our services and facilities are Covid-19 secure. And that the community support hub continues to be supported.
- Promote our natural environment, culture and leisure opportunities as part of our plans to deliver public health (including mental health) projects.
- To take forward the agreed recommendations of the strategic leisure review in a timely manor
- Work with Devon County Council and the Devon Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that a model of place-based care is in place to make the best use of all the existing space in community hospital sites, better to serve the communities of East Devon; this will reduce travel requirements to Exeter and assist in meeting the targets on carbon reduction as a by-product.
- Review our public toilet requirements including their location to ensure they are fit for purpose, working with town and parish councils.
- Ensure that developers pay the required contributions towards infrastructure through CIL and Section 106 agreements and that where monies are available to be spent by the community that they are supported in public engagement on spend and given easy access to funds.

Promoting culture and community

- Develop a stronger commitment to and offers in arts and leisure through the development of a Culture Strategy and an Events Strategy for our own land.

- Encourage Town and Parish Councils (and the third sector where appropriate) to protect and support their community spaces.
- Promote community wellbeing programmes through a culture and activities offer, led by the Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Seaton Wetlands, Wild East Devon, and expand our community development activities.
- Promote the links between arts and culture and climate change through the Creative Cabin and other initiatives, raising awareness of the public and seeking to change behaviours.

Council priority two

A Greener East Devon

Our commitment to addressing the climate change and ecological emergency is a key priority for the 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, countryside and coastline now and for future generations. The details of this work is included in our [Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan](#).

The Council will change all their current working practices, to reduce our carbon emissions to the minimum.

The objective for the whole district will be: To work with all residents, businesses, and partners to:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings through low carbon development and retrofitting.
 - Apply for funding to encourage energy reduction and promote green energy.
 - Implement carbon offsetting schemes within the district.
 - Reduce further the waste generated and increase the percentage of recycling
- Prepare the community for climate change and become more resilient.

In recent times, we have seen the value of green and open space for recreation and health and wellbeing. We will be implementing re-wilding, nature recovery and conservancy schemes to enhance our precious environment.

Covid-19 has resulted in changes to work and lifestyle patterns in the district. We need to explore and understand the impact of new ways of doing things, such as working from home and the impact of online meetings on carbon emissions.

We recognise the importance of working with others on this journey; we will work with partners and contractors, town and parish councils, businesses, visitors and community groups to support them in reducing their carbon footprint.

Greener East Devon for us also means placing the highest emphasis on the natural capital of our stunning environment – coast and countryside - and the value and importance of biodiversity within it. As custodians for future generations, preserving and enhancing our natural environment is key.

We want to provide a healthier, more beautiful natural environment that inspires, educates and involves residents who live in and visit East Devon.

This commitment to Greener East Devon comes at a price. It needs to be appropriately funded and resourced. However, we believe this to be essential for the future of our District.

Recently there has been a staffing shortage effecting our recycling teams that has started to be addressed which we will keep under review. We will also need to respond to any future contractual tipping point that could be triggered by further local property growth as this would lead to higher contract costs. We will also need to respond to anticipated Government changes to the National Recycling requirements that may affect our collection policy and costs.

Our priority actions for a Greener East Devon

Carbon Reduction

- Fulfil the actions and commitments in our [Climate Change Strategy](#) (aimed at reducing the Council's carbon footprint and that of our partners, contractors, businesses, communities, residents and visitors through green procurement, reducing carbon use in our supply chain and seeking to influence the businesses from whom we purchase) and update our Carbon plan which will be the primary vehicle for delivering our intentions.
- Develop a Local Plan Policy that protects the existing biodiversity and to improve and add to it significantly, to provide for communities to be more sustainable and provide improved interconnecting greener routes with cycle and foot ways

Meeting high environmental standards

- Using the Council's investments and bank accounts to support the green economy.

Planning in our environment

- To work with landowners, and developers to deliver habitat mitigation on site with new developments or to provide mitigation close to the development site.
- To ensure that we are giving appropriate protection to our built heritage, including developing policies for the new Local Plan to continue to conserve and protect our listed buildings and conservation areas.
- To work with our communities to review our conservation area boundaries and their management plans, to develop a list of locally important heritage assets and progress the other actions in our Heritage Strategy.
- Develop planning policy to protect the nature corridors with new developments; protect and enhance our natural habitats, green spaces and the existing treescape

across the district; increase tree planting and replacement schemes; review our tree management policies and promote best practice.

- Complete the review of the Playing Pitch Strategy and develop policies in the new Local Plan to protect existing playing pitches and support our sports clubs and communities to deliver new and enhanced facilities.

Promoting recycling and reducing waste

- Continuously striving to increase recycling rates and reduction of residual waste tonnages so we are amongst the highest recyclers nationally and the lowest council in England for residual waste disposal per household and continuing the promotion of the green waste collection service and home composting.
- Improving on street recycling including starting a programme of replacing older dog waste bins with dual mixed waste/recycling bins.
- To continue working with all Districts and Unitary Councils in Devon with a Keep Devon Litter Free Campaign and other Countywide Recycling projects and exploring ways to further reduce on street littering

Protecting and enhancing our natural environment in coast and country

- Continue to develop our nature reserves including the award-winning Seaton Wetlands. And to work with landowners and groups on projects that will benefit to climate change and biodiversity net gain.
- Continue to work with Partners to deliver the important Clyst Valley Regional Park
- Address the risk of flooding and erosion by strengthening community resilience and extending flood prevention measures.
- We will monitor carefully the progress of the Environment Bill 2020 and prepare appropriate plans to address the implications for East Devon District Council

Council priority three

A Resilient Economy

Covid-19 has had a significant and detrimental impact on the economy of East Devon. Before the pandemic, the District was in almost full employment. Through the pandemic one third of employees across the district were placed on furloughed and longer term the unemployment rate has been forecast to increase.

During the first half of 2020, over 1,000 jobs were lost due to companies going into administration or relocating, including the collapse of Flybe. Many jobs that have been lost have been high value and skilled engineering roles but just as many are in the lower paid sectors of our local economy.

We understand the shift in patterns of behaviour including more working from home and the importance of improving access to and the speed of broadband, especially in rural areas.

We have witnessed the increase in occupation of second homes through the move of people out of cities in response to the pandemic and the impact on our local economy and infrastructure.

We also recognise the impact on our town centres of the loss of footfall through people working from home and the increase in the use of home delivery rather than local shopping. This might require us to review our planning policies in relation to the conversion of retail and secondary shopping areas to residential or live-work use.

It is our overriding priority to strive for a resilient economy in order to promote prosperity and reduce hardship within the District. Not only will we seek to increase the levels of employment, but we will also seek to improve the quality of employment to raise wages levels across East Devon.

We will consider the use of our assets as a council and our planning policies to support regeneration and create employment opportunities.

We recognise the economic as well as the social value of tourism, art and culture to the local economy and the wealth that is generated in those sectors.

We also recognise the importance of working as a part of Team Devon in order to drive recovery for the East Devon economy. We will continue to promote the development of the Enterprise Zone as key to the prosperity of our district.

Promoting the Green Economy

- Support working from home to reduce carbon emissions through unnecessary travel and facilitate the economic sustainability of our local towns and communities.
- Deliver a tourist strategy with emphasis on the on the green economy.

Our financial stability

- Maintain an active approach sourcing and securing available funds to help with asset management and the promotion of the districts economy.
- Provide in-house commercial services such as pest control and food safety training that provide value for money to residents and local businesses, whilst creating new and valuable revenue streams for the Council.

Supporting employment

- Work with the Department of Work and Pensions, regional and local partners to develop and co-ordinate an effective redundancy response network to respond to the serious economic challenges that the pandemic has brought to our district and our residents.
- Work with our Growth Hub to support local small and start-up businesses through free access to tailored advice and guidance, progressing that support as businesses grow and develop and addressing barriers to business growth and innovation.
- Ensure that all our assets (including car parks) are used in the most effective way and that their development potential is evaluated to support employment and create economic growth and prosperity for all.

Supporting our local economy

- Develop the infrastructure needed to support our local economy, including transport and housing.
- Use the procurement power as a Council to support local businesses.
- Provide support and advice to business through investment in our Environmental Health department
- Explore the use of the Doughnut Economic Model to guide policy and decision-making and ensure that ethical, socially responsible, and financially-sound decisions are made in an open, transparent and democratic manner.

Financial stability for a better future

We recognise that the Council Plan needs to be affordable. However, councils in England face acute financial challenges, especially as Central Government financial support for Councils has been reducing over the past decade and demand for some services has been increasing.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan shows that existing service costs and expected income leaves a budget gap of £3 million in 2022/23 and a further gap of £1.2 million in 2023/24. This is against a net budget of £15.8 million. Difficult decisions will need to be made in respect of prioritising and delivering services and operating as an organisation.

In response to declining government grant, some authorities invested heavily in commercial property by borrowing via Public Works Loans in the hope that the rental yield would cover the loan costs and realise a profit to pay for services. However, over the last nine months, rental yields have plummeted. In some cases, this has resulted in the local authority being banned from any new expenditure except for statutory services. Fortunately, East Devon District Council has not had a commercial exposure to this extent, but despite Government assistance regarding the impact of Covid-19, we are still faced with challenges to balance the books for the foreseeable future.

Planning to address the identified funding gap has started, but we still need to look at ways of increasing our income and reducing costs to be able to sustain our current services, meet new requirements and needs and benefit from new opportunities.

Several our services are statutory like our recycling and waste collection. Other services are discretionary, but no less valued by residents such as public toilets and parks. Looking ahead the challenge is to get the balance right between the cost to residents and businesses and the benefits provided in terms of the quality of our environment, the health and wellbeing of residents and the strength and resilience of our local economy.

We also realise there will be a long-term impact of the pandemic on the local economy, both on businesses and on individuals, that will influence the Council's priorities, resources and services.

There are a number forthcoming decisions that impact on our budget. There is a refuse and recycling contractual tipping point that will be triggered by further property growth that will lead to higher costs plus the Government changes to the National Recycling requirements that may affect our collection policy and costs. We also need to implement the review of car parking charges plus and to install electric vehicles chargers to prepare for more green travel. Through 2021/22 we are undertaking a review into the provision of public toilets.

In the light of these pressures, we will need to focus on statutory services that we must deliver and discretionary services that the public value to help us to prioritise services through the Council Plan.

To deliver the vision through our Council Plan, we will refocus our resources and efficiently utilise our assets, invest to save and innovate, ensure a sound return on investment (both financial and social), keep our Council Tax within Government guidelines and agree legally required balanced budgets.

We will identify new funding streams as they become available and ensure we bid for additional income where possible to secure the income needed to implement the Council Plan.

Where necessary we will lobby the Government for changes in policy and funding so that we can implement our priorities, securing the resources required for delivery.

About us

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

We are a Council with no overall political control but a strong and productive coalition between the Democratic Alliance Group and Independent Progressive Group has formed an administration. The Leader Cllr Paul Arnott was elected as a member of the East Devon Alliance which is part of the Democratic Alliance Group within the Council. For more information about the political makeup of the Council and to access minutes from our committee meetings see [our Council and Democracy webpages](#).

Our Council comprises of –

- 30 Wards
- 68 Parishes
- 509 Council staff employees
- 60 Councillors

Our Councillors

- Each Councillor represents the residents living within a ward in our district.
- Our Councillors are committed to making East Devon one of the best places to live and work in the district delivering the services that our residents value the most.

Find out more about East Devon's Councillors see our, [Who is my councillor?](#) webpage

To find out more about the great place we service see our [Knowing East Devon profile](#)

Our services

We are proud of the wide range of services that our Council delivers whether by itself or in partnership with others. We are especially proud of our staff's continuing and additional delivery of services over recent challenging months during the global pandemic.

We have good news to share about how well we do as a Council in recycling waste and delivering other services. We are the custodians of ten nature reserves and responsible for the South West Coast Path in our district and the East Devon Way.

We are also proud of our external accreditation – our Green and Blue Flags, our platinum award from Investors in People - and we strive for continual improvement beyond what has already been achieved. This means operating at the highest level as an organisation - to deliver excellent services first time and every time.

East Devon District Council will improve communications to highlight the services we provide and what we do as a Council, including the day to day work of our staff for our residents.

Our services range from the delivery of grants and benefits on behalf of the government through to environmental health, street cleansing, toilet provision, award winning parks, beaches and open spaces, recycling and waste collection. They are visible and make a big difference to the quality of life and the attractiveness of our local environment.

Behind the scenes we also deliver so much more; complex and bespoke engineering projects typically linked with climate change and based around flood protection; a planning department that determines applications large and small and oversees building control; leisure services to meet the needs of East Devon residents through our partners in LED (Leisure East Devon); cultural services both independent of and in conjunction with LED and a finance department who efficiently supports our customers, some of whom may be struggling financially.

We strive to evolve continually for the benefit of all our residents now and in the future. This will require us to consider how we maintain and fund our assets such as toilets and car parks, which matter to the public. It also will require us to consider how we fund and deliver services in future, especially in the light of the recovery from the pandemic, the climate emergency and changing demographics, patterns of work and emerging technologies. We also will need to be clear about the capacity we have and the financial pressures facing local government and be alert to securing new sources of funding and taking up new opportunities to secure resources for our activity.

External evaluation matters to us and we will continue to value that especially where it, as often is the case, provides positive endorsement of our services processes and staff.

In support of our three corporate priorities and behind the scenes we will,

- Improve our communications with residents so that they are better able to contact elected members and officers, find out information about the Council and access the services we provide.
- Looking after our exist assets, expanding access to them and improving the return on the Council's investment in them, giving both value for money and providing social value to our communities.
- Continuously review the services we provide, the performance and funding of those services and the partnerships we require to expand the services and the most effective delivery of them.
- Expand the resources available to support regulation and enforcement activity to ensure a good quality of life and a safe and attractive environment for our residents.
- Develop a new and enhanced performance management system to monitor the efficiency of our services.
- Explore innovative digital ways of consulting our residents to establish snapshot views in order to improve our services.
- Continuously improve the customer experience of our telephone system based on customer and stakeholder feedback.
- Identify and implement improvements and upgrades to our website to enhance our digital offer and delivering more digital services so that customers can easily access reliable information and resolution of service requests.
- Provide responsive, effective and consistent communications through traditional media and social media.
- Listen to feedback via our residents' Viewpoint surveys and developing an action plan to improve our services.

A year's activity by this council

This is a snapshot of what this council did during the last year, 2021/22, despite operating in a difficult Covid environment –

We undertook:

- 6,000,000+ Bin collections
- 158,036 calls to Home Safeguard
- 123,054 calls to our Customer Service Centre
- 55,539 calls to our Revenues & Benefit Service
- 9,998 repair jobs completed on our own housing stock of xx properties
- 4,875 parking permits processed, totalling £579,170
- 2,685 parking penalty charge notices issued
- 2,125 planning applications processed
- 972 pest control treatments
- 596 food hygiene rating inspections
- 356 affordable homes provided during 2019/20

- 289 families housed

We handled:

- £151.2m was collected in Council Tax and Business Rates revenue
- £52m was distributed as Covid19 response grant funding to almost 4,000 businesses
- £36.9m was paid out in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction to low-income households
- £3,339,275 was received in revenue from car parking charges
- £590,000 was invested in new equipment for eight play areas

We delivered to residents and businesses by:

- Maintaining over 1.5 million sq. metres of grass in our green spaces.
- Undertaking annual cliff inspections of over 8km of cliffs this included 1.1km of cliffs inspected by rope access to make seafront areas as safe as possible.
- Managing and maintaining 465 land assets, 434 buildings, 411 leases and licences, as well as collecting £0.9m in rents from our assets and a General Fund asset value of £103m.
- Inspecting and maintaining over 177 public spaces to ensure they are safe for the public to use.
- Inspecting and maintaining over 80 play spaces to keep them safe and fun. These spaces incorporate multi use games area, skate parks, large and small play areas and outdoor gyms, as well as places to learn, exercise and socialise.

Add reference to our nature reserves?

Conclusion – end text to be inserted