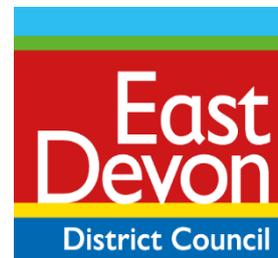


# Agenda for consultative meeting of the Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 8th September, 2022, 6.00 pm



## Members of Scrutiny Committee

Councillors M Allen (Chair), J Bailey, J Bonetta, A Bruce, M Chapman, O Davey, C Gardner, S Hawkins, J Kemp, D Key, H Parr, E Rylance, J Whibley and T Woodward

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**Venue:** Online via the Zoom app

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(or group number 01395 517546)

Wednesday, 31 August 2022

**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>

Until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022, the Council has delegated much of the decision making to officers. Any officer decisions arising from recommendations from this consultative meeting will be published on the webpage for this meeting in due course. All meetings held can be found via the [Browse Meetings](#) webpage.

### 1 Public speaking

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

### 2 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 12)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2022 – referred back to the Committee from the [full Council meeting 20 July 2022](#) [minute 22 (e)] as follows:  
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes [9 June 2022 minute 7, car parking petitions] would be referred back to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting for further consideration.

### 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 the press) have been excluded. There are no items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

7 Decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

There are no items identified

8 Planning for waste water, water supply and water quality (Pages 13 - 18)

9 Reviewing economic development policy in rural areas - report by the Chair (Pages 19 - 31)

10 Forward Plan (Pages 32 - 39)

Proposal forms received:

1. Agricultural land – food production v energy production (submitted by Cllr Mike Allen)
2. East Devon's health strategy (submitted by Cllr Mike Allen)

[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 Scrutiny Committee held Online via the Zoom app on 7 July 2022****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.01 pm and ended at 8.36 pm

**10 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

**11 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2022 were accepted.

**12 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**13 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential / exempt items.

**15 Decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules**

There were no decisions by Cabinet called in for scrutiny.

**16 Update on Poverty Dashboard**

The Benefits Manager and the Information and Data Analysis Manager, Revenues and Benefits, presented an update on the Poverty Dashboard. It was noted that this had been re-named to the East Devon Social Resilience Dashboard, as the information does not solely relate to poverty.

The following key points were made:

- Work was continuing on creating public facing pages which it was hoped would be ready towards the end of the summer. Following further information received 11 July 2022, it is likely that the public facing dashboard will not be available until the end of the year or early 2023 due to licencing of the software that the dashboard uses.
- Historical data can be analysed for trends in the future.
- Key headlines shown were for Finance, Housing, Health and Employment and the Dashboard included the number of people living in relative or absolute poverty in the district.
- Data also flagged those at risk of falling into poverty.
- The root causes of hardship were identified with the top three causes being budgeting, mental health and physical health.

- The interactive timeline provided information on caseloads such as council tax and housing benefits and enabled the comparison of different caseloads over time.
- Data on council tax arrears was shown on a month by month basis and was broken down by council tax bands and the top ten wards.
- Energy Performance Certificates data provided information to assist residents with reducing their energy bills and could be linked to other caseloads.
- The information on the Dashboard assisted with designing policies and working practices such as the Discretionary Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme and can help identify and solve underlying issues faced by residents.
- The Dashboard also enabled partnership working with external organisations such as local schools and local groups. The dashboard has also been shown to the LGA and other councils.
- Work was on-going to provide further datasets and to bring in other tools to support low-income households including the vulnerable debt tool-kit and wider use of the standard financial statement.

Comments and questions from Councillors included the following points:

- Work was on-going to produce a simpler version of the Dashboard for use by Members, taking GDPR requirements into account.
- The Dashboard had been developed solely by Revenues and Benefits Officers at EDDC.
- There was concern that recent meetings of the Poverty Working Panel had been cancelled and Members were advised that this was due to insufficient business. The next meeting would be held in September.
- Definitions of relative and absolute poverty were included on the main page of the Dashboard and could be found on other websites such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Currently the data was split between working age and pension age residents and there was scope to explore further breakdown by age groups to identify whether any particular group was more affected than others.
- Voluntary and community groups could benefit from using the data.
- Regarding assisting with budgeting, the Financial Resilience Officers would work with residents to look at their circumstances in depth in order to educate people with monthly budgeting of income and expenditure.
- It was noted that approximately 70% of data is imported automatically into the Dashboard with the remaining manual work inputting data from external databases such as the DWP, although there was the potential to link directly to the DWP data in the future.
- Concern was expressed at the resources available to Citizens Advice East Devon, particularly over the difficult summer holiday period, and Officers would look into this and advise Members.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That options are explored to provide local voluntary and community groups with access to the data.

The Committee thanked Officers for their excellent work in developing the Dashboard.

## **17 People Data Annual Report 2021/22**

The Corporate HR Manager introduced the People Data Annual Report 2021/2022 and advised that this comprised the Annual Report for the 2021/22 financial year and the more frequent report which is presented to the Personnel Committee and explained how this links with the Quarterly Performance Report presented to the Scrutiny Committee.

The following key points were noted:

- The reports are work in progress, with further improvements, for example a Dashboard similar to the Poverty Dashboard, planned in due course. The vacancy data reporting is also very new.
- Data will be helpful to assess the impact and effectiveness of various HR interventions, for example the impact of the Reward Review on recruitment and retention.
- The number of vacancies was currently high and had increased over recent months, which was also reflected in a projected increase in voluntary turnover and work would be needed to mitigate against this, including the current Reward Review.
- There was currently an increase in Covid-related sickness cases among staff, but this did not reflect all Covid cases, as some staff who felt well enough have been able to use the Worksmart provisions and work from home.
- Work was on-going to increase the use of apprenticeships, develop career pathways and engage with local schools and colleges in order to feed into a Grow Our Own approach and replicate work which the Corporate HR Manager had developed successfully in a previous role at Devon County Council. This would support longer term recruitment and retention as well as mitigate against the Council's age profile (with a current average age of 49 years).
- Equality and diversity data was now included in reporting.

Comments and questions from Members included the following:

- It was noted that with regard to gender and pay, there were more men in senior positions, which impacted on the Council's reported Gender Pay Gap and which the 'grow our own'/career pathways work would aim to mitigate against.
- The Corporate HR Manager would look into up to date information regarding ethnicity figures for the workforce compared with local district population figures when information was available from the latest census.
- Long term absence due to work related stress was a concern and it was noted that robust systems were in place to identify and implement support for staff in this situation.
- The number of apprenticeships was currently below target, the Council is required to work towards ambitious target levels set by Government and the 'grow our own' work will support this.
- It was noted that the number of vacancies across all sectors of the economy was unprecedented in recent times and all options were being considered to mitigate against staff turnover and to fill job vacancies.

The Committee noted the various concerns and expressed confidence in the Corporate HR Manager to address the issues raised.

## 18 **Quarterly performance report**

Comments and discussion of the Quarterly Performance Report included the following points:

- The percentage of planning appeals lost was noted and a question was raised as to how many of those were cases where the Planning Committee had gone against Officers' recommendations.
- It was noted that the Development Manager was looking into the data for planning appeals and was due to report to the Strategic Planning Committee.
- The Committee requested information regarding comparisons with other local planning authorities so as to better gauge how EDDC was performing with regard to appeals.
- The Committee noted the excellent work done in the west end of East Devon with particular reference to the heat network investment programme and work undertaken by the Growth, Development and Prosperity teams.
- Incidences of fly-tipping were noted and the Committee questioned how many had led to prosecutions. Incidences were in line with previous years and the number of prosecutions would be followed up and provided by the relevant Portfolio Holder.

- It was noted that numbers of prosecutions would be a useful addition to the report.
- Concern was raised that economic development should not be focussed solely on the west end of East Devon with the rural and coastal economy being over-looked.
- With regard to concerns relating to the rural and coastal economy, the Committee noted that a levelling-up bid was currently live for Seaton and Axminster. It was further noted that the deadline had been postponed and there was uncertainty regarding the new deadline due to recent events at Government level.
- It was noted that the Council needs to keep pushing for Government funding for towns and high streets.

## 19 **Forward Plan**

The Chair advised that a simplified proposal form had been put forward for consideration by the Committee. Once agreed, Officers could scope the issue and the detailed scoping form could be referred to the Chair and Vice-Chair for screening to ensure it was in line with the decision of the Committee.

Discussion on the amended proposal form included the following points:

- The outcome of any proposal put forward by Members should be agreed by the Committee rather than set out by an individual Councillor.
- Rather than asking Members to state the outcome of a proposal, the form could ask what it was that Members wished to see achieved.

The Committee was in agreement that the wording on page 2 of the amended proposal form should read 'please describe as precisely as possible what you would like to see achieved' and that the form as amended would be used going forward.

Discussion on the Forward Plan included the following:

- It was noted that car parking now came under the Finance Portfolio.
- The Committee noted the constitutional requirements and powers of the Scrutiny Committee with regard to the attendance of Portfolio Holders.
- The brief for what was required regarding Portfolio Holder reports needed to be clarified well in advance and it was noted that, currently, there is a lack of officer resource and time and difficulties with recruitment.
- Portfolio Holder reports could include an update on key current work and issues in line with what was already set out in the Council Plan.
- Members were invited to email the Chair with suggestions for what should be included in upcoming Portfolio Holder reports and the Chair would clarify in each case what the Committee is proposing.
- Concerns were expressed with regard to the handling of Portfolio Holder reports at previous meetings and assurances were given that the role of Scrutiny Committee was to be a critical friend.

The Committee was in agreement that Portfolio Holders should write reports on whatever matters are of interest or of current importance in their Portfolio and that the reports would be circulated in advance to all Councillors to provide a framework for Members to ask questions.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

M Allen (Chair)

J Bonetta (Vice-Chair for this meeting)

A Bruce

M Chapman  
J Kemp  
D Key  
H Parr  
J Whibley

**Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

M Armstrong  
P Arnott  
B Ingham  
V Johns  
G Jung  
D Ledger  
D Manley  
P Millar  
A Moulding  
J Rowland  
P Skinner

**Officers in attendance:**

Sharon Church, Benefits Manager  
Joanna Fellows, Corporate HR Manager  
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer  
George Whitlock, Data Analyst  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

**Councillor apologies:**

V Ranger  
J Bailey  
O Davey  
C Gardner  
S Hawkins  
E Rylance  
T Woodward

Chair .....

Date: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Committee held at Online via the Zoom app on 9 June 2022**

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.48 pm

#### **1 Public speaking**

There was one member of the public registered to speak.

Mr Mike Goodman spoke concerning car parking petitions (item 7 refers). As part of his statement, Mr Goodman called into question the grounds on which some signatories had been excluded from the petition. He also thanked the Monitoring Officer for his work in trying to resolve the matter but understood that senior unnamed Cabinet members had decided that the petition would not be heard at Cabinet, on the grounds that a decision had already been taken. He argued that this was undemocratic and unconstitutional.

The Monitoring Officer responded that with the car parking strategy having reverted to Cabinet, the car parking petition was a matter for Cabinet to deal with. Senior members had felt it was not an appropriate time for the petition to be considered by Cabinet given that the budget had already been set, and there was in any case a commitment to review the matter later in the year. This decision did not constitute a breach of the rules.

The Chair thanked Mr Goodman for his contribution to the meeting.

#### **2 Minutes of the previous meeting**

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 April 2022 were received and noted as a true and accurate record.

#### **3 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

#### **5 Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There was one item to be considered in private session (minute 9 refers).

#### **6 Decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules**

There were no decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny.

#### **7 Car parking petitions**

The Monitoring Officer introduced his report detailing a petition submitted in relation to car parking charges in Sidmouth and the Council's formal response. One of the organisers of the petition had requested a review of the way it had been handled in accordance with the Council's petition scheme rules, and the Committee was asked to determine whether there were any recommendations that it wished to make in relation to the specific petition or the Council's petition scheme or handling of petitions generally.

Discussion of the report included the following points:

- Some members expressed a view that the petition submitted in relation to car parking charges ought to have been accepted for Council debate, on the basis that:
  - at 1469, the number of valid signatories was only just shy of the threshold of 1500;
  - there had been a lot of noise around the issue of car parking charges and it was important to demonstrate that the voices of local people were being listened to;
  - it was possible that some of the signatories that had been discounted on the grounds that a postcode was missing or incomplete might nevertheless work or study in the district and therefore been eligible to sign the petition;
  - given that visitors to Sidmouth were affected by car parking charges, it was argued that they should legitimately be able to sign the petition and not be discounted.
- Other members expressed support for the position taken by the Monitoring Officer in response to the petition, given that:
  - The Monitoring Officer had taken a pragmatic view and erred on the side of generosity in considering the petition; he had done his due diligence in accordance with the rules in place at the time the petition was submitted;
  - It was important that the threshold of 1500 was adhered to because to let some petitions through and not others could leave the Monitoring Officer open to allegations of bias. Parliament also have clear thresholds concerning petitions and the Council should follow the example. If Members want to move the threshold for Council debate, then this should be done by changing the policy.
  - The Council is answerable to its tax payers including those who have businesses in East Devon, which is why only people who live, work or study in East Devon are able to contribute to East Devon petitions. To extend petitions beyond the boundaries of the district would dilute democracy for the people of East Devon.
  - The onus is on the organiser of the petition to ensure that signatories live, work or study in East Devon, and that they supply their full postcode for the purposes of verification; the petition concerning car parking had contained some signatories with only partial postcode, and some signatories that had been discounted were from elsewhere in the country, and overseas.
- Some members indicated that the Council should have its own platform for electronic petitions, with a field directing signatories to input their postcode. It was suggested that the data could be cross-referenced against the electoral roll, for the purposes of verification; a counterview was offered that this would not be appropriate since not everyone eligible to sign a petition would be on the electoral register.
- Other members suggested it was important the Council accepts paper petitions, in the interests of equal opportunities and ensuring the system was accessible to all.
- It was important to promote awareness among the people of East Devon of the ways that they can make their voices heard including by means of petition or public speaking at meetings.

In a vote of Committee members, the following recommendations were made.

### **RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

- To consider a petition platform within the Council's website.
- To publicise the council's petition scheme via the Council's weekly press release.

The following statement had been submitted in advance of the meeting by a member of the public, Mr Richard Eley, by email to Scrutiny Committee members; the Chair asked that the statement be set out in full in the meeting minutes. It was highlighted that the statement has not been seen by the Monitoring Officer, nor discussed by the Committee, and may contain claims that are incorrect.

*Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce is referenced in tomorrow's agenda with regard to car parks and our petition on that subject. We don't have anyone available to appear at the zoom meeting.*

*However, we would like to comment briefly as follows:*

*We are described as 'accepting' the ruling that the petition was rejected, but in fact this is not the case. On the contrary we were disappointed and perplexed by the decision, and said so very clearly.*

*The petition was submitted to three senior Cabinet members and they apparently decided that it would not be allowed to go forward.*

*We were perturbed by the explanation for disqualifying the petition. The reason given was that the petition sought to change a decision that had already been taken. This seems odd, and we doubt this is acceptable under the current rules.*

*The decision to double car park charges in most seaside car parks was a big departure from normal practice: no consultation was undertaken, no benchmarking or comparisons were provided, and no schedule of the proposed charges was presented to Full Council. A lot of misinformation emanated from the District Council.*

*As we have said in the past: bad procedure leads to bad policy. As we all know, regardless of whether it turns out to be a good decision or not, it was handled and presented very badly.*

*We note that no recent petition has made it through the byzantine and obstructive system that currently operates at EDDC. This is perhaps indicative of something more serious which we would urge the Scrutiny to consider: why does our District Council often seem hostile to the people it represents - the residents of East Devon?*

*We would respectfully encourage a more conciliatory, kinder, outward-facing approach, and we think there would be big benefits in efficiency, performance and general wellbeing at EDDC if this was introduced.*

*The decision, to disqualify the petition because a council decision had been already taken, is invalid and should be corrected and withdrawn. But this will achieve little, unless it is accompanied by a sea change in the wider way in which EDDC interfaces with East Devon residents.*

*We are well aware that our petition was unlikely to change minds at senior level within the Council, but we did think it was important that the overwhelming public opposition to the car park price hike should be made clear to members. We have probably achieved this, regardless of the shabby treatment that the petition received.*

## 8 **Forward Plan**

The Committee considered a proposal form received from Cllr Mike Allen concerning economic development and employment quality in rural and coastal areas. In

discussion, it was clarified that the proposal comprised two issues; the first being a strategic review of policy formulation and the second being a procedural matter about how people can put alternative strategic policies forward. These would be added to the Forward Plan as two separate items for scoping.

Discussion of the Forward Plan included the following:

- Members felt that it was not appropriate for meetings of the Scrutiny Committee to be cancelled or postponed.
- The Committee expected to meet with Portfolio Holders as a critical friend and to hold them to account.
- Some Members expressed disappointment that a further meeting with South West Water (SWW) would not take place until 8<sup>th</sup> September, given that sewage discharges are a live issue, and asked that the Committee seeks to bring the meetings forward. Others indicated that it was more important that the Committee is fully informed and that there is time for SWW to prepare good quality reports. The Chair clarified that the Committee should expect to meet with SWW on or before 8<sup>th</sup> September.
- Some Members were concerned that the use of scoping forms together with the wait for an officer report and subsequent debate is a convoluted process and not an effective way of getting important items onto the Committee's agenda quickly enough. One Member felt it was inappropriate for individual Members to specify on the form what the outcome should be. The Chair expressed it was important to have crisp objectives to ensure good use of officer time, and indicated that he would undertake to look into the process and suggest improvements.

## 9 **Update on outcomes of EELGA Learning Review**

The Monitoring Officer introduced a report which provided an update on actions arising from Personnel Committee's consideration of the East of England Learning Review.

Members discussed the report at length, and wanted the minutes to reflect the Committee's views that the leaking of the Part B report was abhorrent. Members noted the progress being made on the recommendations from the Personnel Committee but felt that no further recommendations were required.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

M Allen (Chair)

V Ranger (Vice-Chair)

J Bailey

J Bonetta

A Bruce

M Chapman

C Gardner

S Hawkins

J Kemp

D Key

H Parr

E Rylance

J Whibley

T Woodward

#### **Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

M Armstrong  
P Arnott  
F Caygill  
P Faithfull  
M Hartnell  
B Ingham  
G Jung  
R Lawrence  
D Ledger  
J Loudoun  
P Millar  
A Moulding  
M Rixson  
J Rowland  
P Skinner  
I Thomas  
T Wright

**Officers in attendance:**

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)

Rebecca Heal, Solicitor

Andrew Hopkins, Communications Consultant

Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager

Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer

Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

**Councillor apologies:**

O Davey

Chair: .....

Date: .....



Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

## Planning for Waste Water, Water Supply and Water Quality

### Report summary:

This report seeks to set out the position in terms of the planning system and consideration of water management issues. It refers to government policy and guidance and the role of the Council as Local Planning Authority in delivering the government's objectives as well as the role of South West Water. The report also refers to the work that has been commissioned on a water cycle study to inform production of the new Local Plan as well as the work that consultants working on considering options for a new community are undertaking to understand impacts of such a development on infrastructure.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That Scrutiny Committee note the report.

### Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that Members have a clear understanding of the role of the Council as Local Planning Authority in working with the water industry.

Officer: Ed Freeman – Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management,  
[efreeman@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:efreeman@eastdevon.gov.uk); Tel: 01395 517519

### Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

## Climate change Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk;

**Links to background information** National Planning Policy Framework - [National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#); National Policy Statement for Waste Water - [pb13709-waste-water-nps.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#); South West River Basin Management Plan - [River basin management plans: 2015 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#);

**Link to [Council Plan](#)**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
  - A greener East Devon
  - A resilient economy
- 

## The Policy Framework

Government policy on planning matters is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) alongside which sit a number of National Planning Statements (NPS). These form the national policy framework for planning which is supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This section of the report will set out the main content of these documents in relation to water management and which form the foundation of the Council's role and responsibilities in relation to water management issues as a planning authority.

Fundamentally the planning system is plan led and so the Local Plan should set out a clear vision for the area and show how we will address housing needs and other social, economic and environmental issues. Strategic policies in the plan should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and among other things make sufficient provision for infrastructure including that required for water supply and waste water as well as conserving and enhancing the natural environment. In order to do this we are required to co-operate with relevant bodies such as Natural England, Environment Agency and infrastructure providers such as South West Water.

The National Policy Statement for Waste Water was published in 2012 and primarily sets out how nationally significant waste water infrastructure should be dealt with and thus is not directly relevant to the role of EDDC. It does however contain a section on generic impacts which is relevant to all waste water infrastructure and highlights a range of issues to consider when determining applications for such development including, water quality and resources, odour, flood risk, biodiversity and geological conservation etc.

The Planning Practice Guidance contains a section on water supply, wastewater and water quality. It highlights the legislative framework and the role of river basin management plans which set out the key issues for the water environment and how these are to be tackled. These are produced at a regional level and so are quite broad and high level. The issues highlighted are also picked up in the PPG itself in relation to Local Plan production and relate to:

- Infrastructure (water supply and wastewater) – This could include identifying suitable sites for new or enhanced waste water and water supply infrastructure, considering the impacts of that

on existing and proposed development in the vicinity of such infrastructure whether existing or proposed and phasing new development so that water and wastewater infrastructure will be in place when and where needed.

- water quality – This could include locating potentially polluting development away from the most sensitive areas, consider the type or location of new development, whether measures to improve water quality, for example sustainable drainage schemes, can be used to address impacts on water quality in addition to mitigating flood risk.
- wastewater – This could involve considering the sufficiency and capacity of wastewater infrastructure, considering circumstances where private treatment works may be accepted and considering the capacity of the environment to receive effluent from development without preventing relevant statutory objectives being met.
- cross-boundary concerns – Water supply and water quality issues often cross boundaries and can only be addressed in partnership with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders.
- strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal – These are tools for assessing the impacts of the proposed plan against objectives such as preventing deterioration of current water body status, taking climate change into account and seeking opportunities to improve water bodies.
- habitats regulations assessments – These are required under the habitat regulations and are a process for assessing the impacts of projects on protected habitats and species including those related to water bodies.

The PPG also refers to evidence documents that can be produced to help to consider these issues and find solutions. These include production of a water cycle study and a drainage strategy for the area. “A water cycle study helps organisations work together to plan for sustainable growth. It uses water and planning evidence to understand environmental and infrastructure capacity. It can identify joined up and cost effective solutions, that are resilient to climate change for the lifetime of the development.

The study provides evidence for plans and sustainability appraisals and is ideally done at an early stage of plan-making. Local authorities (or groups of local authorities) usually lead water cycle studies, as a chief aim is to provide evidence for sound plans, but other partners often include the Environment Agency and water companies”. A drainage strategy according to the guidance “can be prepared by water and sewerage companies and sets out how they intend to deliver statutory drainage functions and meet customer needs within a particular catchment”.

## **The Role of South West Water**

Government guidance highlights the importance of early engagement with water and sewerage companies to help to ensure that proposed growth and environmental objectives are reflected in company business plans. This is important because public water supply and sewerage services in England were privatised in 1989. Since privatisation the water industry has been regulated by Ofwat. Every five years Ofwat sets price limits based on water company business plans, produced in dialogue with the Environment Agency, the Drinking Water Inspectorate, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), customers and others. These plans set out in detail how much each company needs to charge its customers to provide water and sewerage services where relevant and to comply with its statutory obligations.

The water company business plans and charges reflect the cost of:

- collecting or abstracting water

- building and maintaining pipes and ensuring a secure supply of drinking water to businesses and households
- treating water and sewerage to meet environmental standards.

As a result the costs of providing resilient water and sewerage services are recovered through customer bills and are not funded through planning obligations. It is therefore vitally important that South West Water understand the Council's growth plans and that these are reflected in the companies' long-term water resources management plans. This should then ensure that the necessary infrastructure is funded through the water industry's price review. South West Waters business plan 2020 – 2025 and associated documents can be found at: [Business Plan 2020-2025 \(southwestwater.co.uk\)](https://southwestwater.co.uk/business-plan-2020-2025). South West Water are also in the process of developing a "Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan". This has involved a stakeholder forum meeting in July which officers and members attended. This has informed production of a draft plan which is currently out to consultation. The details of this are available at: [Drainage and Wastewater Management Planning – Our emerging plan to 2050 \(southwestwater.co.uk\)](https://southwestwater.co.uk/drainage-and-wastewater-management-planning)

## What we are we doing

The above section highlights the requirements of government policy and guidance. We are still at a relatively early stage of production of the new Local Plan but work has already started on addressing these issues and responding to the guidance. Consultants have been appointed to produce a Water Cycle Study (WCS). The brief for this work states:

"The focus of the WCS should be to identify issues likely to result from future development levels in East Devon and their potential impacts on water supply, wastewater collection and wastewater treatment. It should also identify potential solutions, gather evidence for the plan and the SA/SEA (including site allocations) and inform plan policies. The key outputs from this commission should accord with national policy and guidance, including the Environment Agency Guidance on water cycle studies and guidance on water supply, wastewater and water quality. In particular, it should demonstrate how the plan can ensure:

- That there is enough wastewater capacity (both foul and surface water) for overall development levels;
- That there is enough wastewater capacity for strategic allocations, either through existing facilities or with specific infrastructure improvements;
- That there will be adequate water supply for new developments - both overall and in proposed development locations (or evidence to support a policy requiring the higher level of water efficiency for new housing);
- That the provision of water will not lead to a reduction in water quality, including an understanding of any locations where this may constrain development options;
- That flood risk, particularly from surface water, is limited<sup>1</sup>;
- There is good water quality; and
- That natural capital is not degraded as a result of development and its impact on water quality."

The Water Cycle Study is due to be completed by the end of the year.

Alongside the water cycle study consultants working on helping us to consider options for a new community as part the strategy for a new Local Plan are also considering the impacts of a new community on infrastructure including water infrastructure. They will be working with the consultants undertaking the water cycle study to ensure that these issues are fully considered in relation to any new community option.

In addition specific work is underway to address issues of nutrient levels in the River Axe with EDDC having taken on the role of lead authority in addressing these issues in partnership with our neighbouring authorities who also lie within the river catchment area which extends into Somerset and Dorset. This work comes with £100k of government money and consultants have already been appointed to produce a nutrient calculator that is specifically tailored for the River Axe. This should enable us to more accurately understand the levels of phosphate generated by developments and the mitigation impacts of proposed measures to enable us to accurately understand the impacts and design a suitable mitigation strategy. Work is also underway in understanding the options for delivering mitigation measures with the benefit of the experience of other authorities including those in Somerset who have experience through issues on the Somerset levels.

All of these work streams will involve undertaking consultation and engagement with south west water, environment agency, natural England and other stakeholders to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to addressing these issues.

The above mentioned work will enable us to develop a growth strategy for the new Local Plan with a full understanding of impacts on the water environment. In the meantime we have an adopted Local Plan which includes some key policies on these issues against which planning applications are considered. In particular policies EN18 and EN19 seek to ensure that development does not adversely affect the quality or quantity of either surface or groundwater and that new development has a suitable foul sewage treatment system of adequate capacity and design. Policy EN22 also seeks to control the surface water implications of new development by among other things requiring the submission of drainage impact assessments where there are likely to be significant surface water run off implications and requiring all major commercial developments and residential schemes of 10 or more homes to incorporate sustainable drainage systems. Such systems include swales, soakaways, infiltration basins, ponds, reed beds and permeable surfacing which is designed to manage surface water on-site and minimise and control surface water discharge to watercourses. The Cranbrook Plan looks to take these measures to the next level by taking a more integrated approach to drainage alongside landscaping and bio-diversity ensuring a natural solution to managing surface water that creates attractive green infrastructure that incorporates wildlife. We are also looking at how we can further enhance our approach to these issues through detailed policies in the new local plan which will be informed by the studies referred to above.

South West Water are consulted on planning applications that are likely to have a material impact on their infrastructure and are good at responding to such requests. Their responses do not however usually raise issues with capacity within the sewerage system for the reasons set out earlier in this report that discussions with them at the time of production of the Local Plan meant that they were already aware of the levels of planned growth coming forward in the district and should be making provision through their business plans with the cost recovered through their charges.

## **Conclusion**

It is considered that the government policies and guidance on these issues is clear on the role of the Council as Local Planning Authority in considering water management issues and how this

should be undertaken in discussion with South West Water, Environment Agency, Natural England and other stakeholders. That work is underway and will give us a full understanding of the issues facing East Devon in terms of the water environment and water infrastructure so that we can ensure that through the new Local Plan the impacts of growth on these issues is fully understood and can be appropriately addressed.

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**Financial implications:**

There are no financial implications on which to comment.

**Legal implications:**

There are no legal implications requiring comment.

## Reviewing Economic Development Policy in Rural areas

### Recommendations

1. Scrutiny welcomes the Cabinet's review of the report by Hill Consulting on [Tourism](#) and that of Devon County Council [[Devon Towns Study](#)] but is concerned about the gap in housing affordability
2. In view of the economic turbulence, energy crisis, inflation and food chain disruptions, to urgently review the Corporate Strategy for the AONB and rural areas of the District
3. Embed a focus on sustainability, 'green' best practice and accessibility across the rural area., linking policy and support for businesses with planning for homes, business space, digital and physical infrastructure and energy.

### Background

The rural areas of EDDC contain a majority of the population and businesses of East Devon. In 2019 Overview requested the development of a Rural Strategy. The new Local Plan is due for consultation in October 2022. The Cabinet is due to review a Tourism policy on September 7<sup>th</sup>. However the Portfolio holder and Strategic lead Officer dealing with economic development have both indicated that there is no capacity for developing a Rural Economic Strategy. This was requested by Overview Committee in 2017 and again requested by Overview in January 2020 before the Pandemic shifted priorities.

Recognising that the challenges are complex; not only is there a shortage of skilled labour but additionally there are difficulties in accessing affordable accommodation for current and future employees and there is a lack of public transport to many businesses and tourism venues in rural areas. It is not surprising that there are high vacancies in the health and the care sector and hospitality and both latter sectors are particularly low wage and vital to the District. The stakeholder reports which informed these strategic recommendations below have come about because the current economic and employment situation, especially for Health, Care and Hospitality, is very challenging, with widespread vacancies across the district.

Recently the All-Party Parliamentary Committee issued a report on the rural economy (Levelling up the rural economy April 2022) dealing with the issues which have also been covered more specifically by a report by HOTSW (THE SW RURAL PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION) and another by DCC on the rural economy.

**The issues covered are summarised here and Scrutiny is asked to comment on the need for an EDDC Rural Strategy, which issues should be explored if any and how .**

**Rural Business sectors are now similar to urban sectors with agriculture now quite small as a proportion of employment.** Rural areas have more businesses and more start-ups per head of population than urban areas. Rural firms have a higher likelihood of exporting their goods and services; display higher levels of self-employment and entrepreneurial activity

and have higher growth rates in knowledge-intensive businesses. This includes business and financial services which now account for a quarter of rural economic output. Rural Businesses contain a greater proportion of employees in manufacturing; and have higher employment rates<sup>9</sup>

An important element in the growing differentiation and diversification of rural areas is their response to changing consumption patterns, whereby rising income levels have led to increased spending on the leisure goods and services offered in rural areas.

Four key variables were identified as being robust drivers of productivity that we can be most sure of have a strong influence:

- 1 Business start ups per 1,000 population ▲
- 2 Number of employees per business unit ▲
- 3 Capital investment per work force job ▲
- 4 Proportion of employees who are in public service ▼

### Sustainable Rural Community Development

Rural areas have the very real potential to become an economic powerhouse of creativity, enterprise and opportunity through the balanced use of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Landscapes and the environment must not be damaged, but without sensible and well-designed sustainable development the countryside will not be able to offer the jobs, housing and services that are vital for its communities to survive.

A new approach to rural economic development is emerging nationally:

|                          | Old approach                                    | New Approach   |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Objectives</b>        | Equalisation, farm income, farm competitiveness | Competitiveness of rural areas, value added to local assets and produce, exploitation of unused resources multifunctional use of land assets   |
| <b>Key target sector</b> | Agriculture                                     | Various sectors of rural economies (rural tourism, food, manufacturing, Knowledge Industry etc.)   |
| <b>Main tools</b>        | Subsidies                                       | Subsidies, Investments and Community Volunteers  |
| <b>Key actors</b>        | National governments, farmers                   | All levels of government (European, UK and local), various local stakeholders (Public, Private, Social Enterprises and Community Stakeholders) |

**Businesses in UK towns and villages are 99% small or micro** hence the need for a clear policy. In your Local Plan you will have planning policies to help such industries develop and hopefully special rural farm policies to help succession from parents to children and then to retain skilled generations by skills transfer from older to younger.

*However all too often there are no specific Economic Development policy for Rural areas to match in with your Local Plan and Corporate aspirations*

National and local surveys show that the main constraints on rural business are IT, Planning permissions, labour and workspace.

In respect of office workspace, the bulk of availability is often centred around the cities and larger towns, with small amounts of lower quality space available in rural towns and villages. Typically, the modern space available is purpose built office space with a good quality specification. Other conventional office accommodation across an area tends to be poorly specified but more cost effective. In both cases space is normally let on long term leases, removing availability to many small businesses who are uncertain about how quickly their business will grow. Landlords will often want to see evidence of 3 years of trading history. Clearly start-up companies cannot provide this and will instead be asked to provide a cash rental deposit which could better be invested in the new venture.

Industrial property take up over the last ten years has seen a more even distribution than the office market. There has been widespread activity, in terms of size of deals, location and rent per square foot in the 0-500 sq m range.

Strong latent demand is often identified for small business units from socio-economic analysis, reinforced by evidence from a business survey. Such analysis has regularly demonstrated strong demand for small-unit office space and reasonably specified workshop and industrial space up to 500 sq.m. in size.

In the years since 2,000, consultancy Deloitte has been tracking the types of business which produce the growth and higher paid jobs in the UK economy. They found around 10% of businesses grew strongly across many sectors, especially enabled by high technology. Since then many local Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) have developed a High Growth business service and complementary export support for such businesses. This, along with each LEP's work on skills provision and apprenticeships can provide the right help through small amounts spent on locally funded consultancy. However inward investment enquiries are primarily channelled into the environs of large cities and any Inward Investment website is often difficult to find and is sparsely populated with detailed local information.

Rural economic policy therefore needs to enable workspace development and encourage a proportion of high growth businesses which will become VAT and Business rates eligible businesses.

### **National Planning Policy states**

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.

To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision

and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and

- promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

## **Summary option additional recommendations**

We consider the rural area should be sustainable and accessible and ask Council to consider issues as follows:

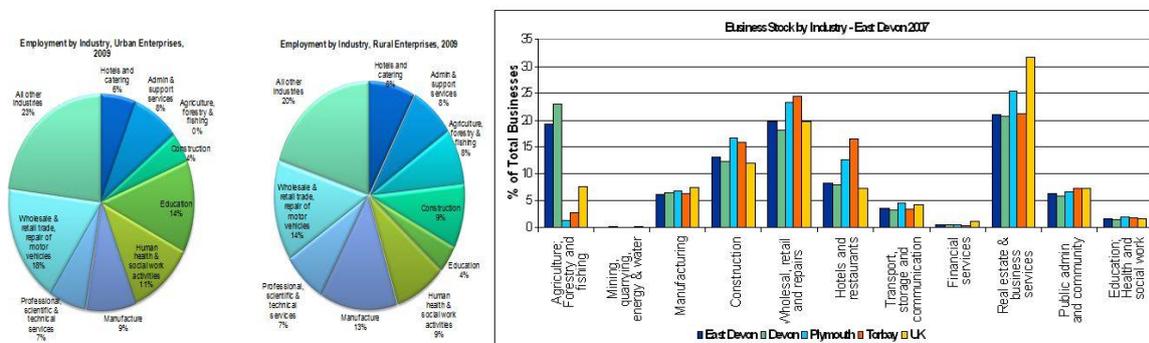
1. Scrutiny welcomes the Cabinet's review of the report by Hill Consulting on Tourism and that of Devon County Council
2. In view of the economic turbulence, energy crisis, inflation and food chain disruptions, to urgently review the Corporate Strategy for the AONB and rural areas of the District
3. Embed a focus on sustainability, 'green' best practice and accessibility across the rural area., linking policy and support for businesses with planning for homes, business space, digital and physical infrastructure and energy.
4. Collaboratively to build the District's reputation, share best practice and create new opportunities for innovation in economic activity by working in partnership and fostering collaboration with all partners.
5. In preserving and connecting with nature, to ensure that we protect the natural capital of our outstanding environment and its biodiversity, sympathetically leveraging its assets to grow the sector and its economic contribution.
6. To further equity and inclusivity we should support economic development, from the countryside to the coast, enabling the whole rural district area and especially the AONBs to thrive in a sustainable way while seeking to raise average incomes, facilities and healthcare arrangements.
7. Facilitate and Support Business start-ups in rural areas
8. Assess ways to drive up investment per work-force job
9. Ensure all new Business Units have high speed broadband and mobile telephone access and enable provision of these facilities to existing units
10. Encourage Planning Authorities, Economic Development and Regeneration officers to work together to facilitate rural business space in accessible sites beside A roads and in town environs.
11. Work to enable 4G AND 5G mobile communications infrastructure development
12. Encourage local supply networks and resilient food chains
13. Enable workspace, market housing and affordable housing to be available in towns and villages. Where possible new construction should also give funds or land to workspace infrastructure via S106, CIL or Unilateral Undertakings (if neighbourhood plans so wish)
14. Allow speculative commercial development near to villages (where Neighbourhood Plans so wish)
15. Encourage LEP Support for improved Skills Training: locally and via e-learning
16. Enable availability of Business Support services accessible by Broadband for Micro- and home-based businesses, because these often fall under the radar of business groups and support organisations
17. Review and track trends on Inward Investment marketing activities
18. Lobby at all levels to enforce Rural-Proofing in National and local Policies

## Appendix 1

### Background

Agriculture now employs only 4.5% of the rural workforce<sup>1</sup>. The structural shift from agriculture towards the 'New Rural Economy' is generally associated with higher incomes and rising prosperity, but has benefitted rural areas unevenly, boosting accessible rural areas more than remoter rural areas:

Most rural businesses today are micro-businesses or small and medium enterprises (SMEs): two thirds of rural England's businesses are micro-businesses and most of the rest are SMEs<sup>2</sup>. Rural businesses have a good record of innovation, and include many knowledge-intensive businesses associated with growth. There are also many food and value added diversified agricultural businesses, Equine and Tourism businesses with local suppliers



### Rural and Land-based sectors and industries

Recent planning policy in the UK has tended to take a preservationist approach, restricting the opportunities for people to work locally in rural areas. Current policy methods for addressing rural issues, such as rural proofing and devolved policy delivery, do not adequately respond to the needs of rural area sustainability

Broadly speaking, the sectoral make up of rural economies is now almost the same as that of the national economy with agriculture continuing to decline in importance both in terms of employment and its contribution to gross domestic product. However, the similarities between the rural and the national economies mask a number of issues which predominately affect the latter:

- o There are growing numbers of knowledge intensive and home based businesses (HBB) in rural areas. HBBs are particularly important to the economy in remote rural areas.
- o Rural businesses tend to be small: 85.4% of businesses in rural areas are micro-businesses compared to 82.6% in urban areas.
- o ICT infrastructure is poor or non-existent in many rural areas. This may discourage some owners from establishing their business in a rural location and disadvantages many knowledge intensive and creative businesses that are forced to rely on lower broadband speeds or unreliable connections

- o In-migrants to rural areas often set up businesses following their relocation. They are an important source of new human capital for rural areas, including knowledge, information and skills.
- o Rural businesses often face challenges when seeking to start up or expand including problems in recruiting suitably skilled workers or in finding appropriate business premises.

Over the last 20 years a significant movement of middle-aged and retired people have moved into the Countryside. Many of those who are moving to rural areas in middle age are doing so as they negotiate important family/life and work-related transitions. Often they may be recent 'empty-nesters' and are therefore able to downsize their accommodation and unlock financial capital. In-migrants are also frequently downsizing their economic activity. Often a job related move for one partner will necessitate a shift to part-time employment or full-time home-making for the other partner. Other shifts out of full-time employment for those moving to rural areas include partial retirement, self-employment or setting up a small business

Middle-aged in-migrants thus help to diversify and strengthen the rural economies into which they move. An example of this dynamism has been found in relation to business networks (chambers of trade, business fora and associations) which have particularly high concentrations of these in-migrants and provide a site both for the integration of newcomers and the pollination of new ideas. These associations take on a role in marketing the local area, representing the voice of active businesses in key local issues and taking on ancillary roles usually performed by public bodies. In-migration therefore provides a stimulus both to commercial enterprise and to the development of society in the local area.

Home based businesses are becoming increasingly important in rural economies. They account for 50% of rural business compared to 26% in urban areas. Driven by factors such as the greater flexibility of service sector jobs, technological improvements, environmental concerns and a shift in lifestyle preferences, this 'sector' seems set to continue to grow. Home based businesses have significantly lower than expected membership of rural business associations suggesting poor integration within the local rural business community. The evidence also suggests that they are 'under the radar' of policy and support organisations. However they may be the seeds of future larger companies because of the business expertise and capital of the founders

### **A view from rural business**

National Enterprise Network (NEN) and the Rural Services Network (RSN) entered into a partnership to get a clear view of business needs and opportunities in the rural areas of England. As part of this partnership plan four short surveys a year across the enterprise support organisations within NEN in order to understand and measure the views of those servicing rural businesses.

22 enterprise support organisations responded to the first survey carried out in February 2017. They served over 3700 rural businesses over the previous 12 months. By far the most common issue considered to be facing rural businesses was broadband and mobile connectivity. Other common issues identified were help with marketing, access to finance

and service/transport availability. 80% of respondents to the survey considered that these needs were different to the needs of urban based businesses.

The opportunities currently being exploited by rural businesses were wide ranging including food and tourism sector opportunities, online marketing and working from home. The final question in the initial survey asked: "In a post Brexit world, what do you consider to be the top two rural business support needs which should be addressed by public funding?" Answers ranged from connectivity and access to digital services to skills, start-up and growth support.

## Food Sector

In terms of the food sector, and particularly the provenance of food, 79% of consumers said it was a consideration (63% some of the time, 16% all the time) and just a fifth said they never thought about it. Three-fifths of shoppers say place of origin is at least as important to them as other factors, such as price and quality, and 55% specifically say they prefer buying UK brands to support British businesses (citing reasons, such as increased trustworthiness and being more attuned to needs and tastes).

The British beer brewing sector has grown from just 140 breweries in 1970 to an excess of 1,700 – with the UK now having more breweries per capita than any other country. In terms of sustainable and secure food: The food and drink manufacturing sector is increasingly automated and more reliant on highly skilled people to maintain and operate new complex technologies. Waste minimisation technologies such as anaerobic digestion and in-vessel composting will require suitably qualified managers and operators and present new opportunities in the industry. Shifts in the skilled workforce including scientific, engineering and management roles, alongside the traditional craft and technical vocations, are necessary if the UK workforce is to be competitive and support the security of the food and drink industry into the future.

The sector, referred to as land-based, comprises a wide variety of industrial and occupational activities. In its simplest and traditional sense the land-based industries are assumed to refer to farming and forestry with an emphasis on agriculture and horticulture for primary food production.

In considering land-based skills, [Lantra](#) <sup>14</sup>, identifies the following occupational areas:

- [Agricultural livestock & crops](#)
- Animal care
- Animal technology
- Aquaculture
- Environmental conservation
- Equine
- Farriery
- Fencing
- Floristry
- Forestry and timber processing
- Game conservation

- Land-based engineering
- Landscaping
- Productive horticulture
- Veterinary nursing

The UK Standard Industrial Classification (UK SIC) does not identify 'land-based' as a distinct category but recognises a section for Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry with Groups for:

- Growing of crops; market gardening; horticulture
- Farming of animals
- Growing of crops combined with farming of animals (mixed farming)
- Agricultural and animal husbandry service activities, except veterinary activities
- Hunting, trapping and game propagation including related service activities
- Forestry, logging and related service activities

To address its knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange objectives, the OpenFields library draws on the science, technology and research base for farming, food, environment and energy together with information relating to other rural business activity (e.g. tourism and recreation) and on generic subjects as applied to land-based or rural businesses (e.g. information technology).

They consider the following topics are of relevance to the land-based sector:

- Arable & industrial crops
- Livestock & dairy production (including animal health & welfare, veterinary practice and fish farming)
- Business and management
- Social & community enterprise
- Information technologies
- Environmental impacts (including wildlife & biodiversity and landscape)
- Equine
- Equipment (agricultural and related)
- Food & drink (including aspects of manufacture, processing and the supply chain)
- Horticulture
- Land-based crafts (ranging from heritage and conservation crafts to bee-keeping)
- Renewable energy
- Rural policy & economic development
- Tourism & recreation (including outdoor recreation and field sports, hunting & fishing)
- Training & skills
- Trees & timber

Until recently land use has been viewed in a single function context whether it be biodiversity, farming or history and heritage (Hine et al., 2007). Land was seen as providing either for food production or biodiversity or heritage for instance. Yet recently it has been recognised that any area of land can provide many different environmental, recreational and health services at the same time and hence be considered to be multifunctional (Hine et al., 2008). Farm diversification takes advantage of this trend combined with the concept of

sustainable development. However Planners tend to view any “invasion” of the rural areas as unsustainable. If we also acknowledge that the natural environment is essential to a healthy society this seems a paradox. Natural England, for example, aims to provide an integrated approach to sustainable land management and conserving the natural environment with attention to biodiversity (Natural England, 2006).

The movement of young people (age 16-29) away from rural areas has occurred alongside counter-movements which tends to involve both older people and families with young children moving to rural areas. The net result is an ageing population in most rural areas which is more advanced than nearby towns. The median age of a rural resident is 42, whereas urban residents have a median age of 36. Over the next 20 years, the median rural age is set to rise towards 50, higher in the more rural districts<sup>4</sup>.

The challenges for communities of rural broadband provision plus the opportunities for them from ‘alternative’ energy generation need to be understood. Not only will these challenges and opportunities clearly continue into the future, but they also show how quickly technological change can bring new issues onto the local agenda, and provide a very uncertain environment in which a community might take action. We have seen this in the growth of renewable energy initiatives in water, wind and photovoltaic rural “farms”. The benefits that Information and Communications Technologies could bring to rural communities through improved local services and business opportunities have been well-documented; however, these can only be realised via a good quality telecommunications infrastructure. This is why recent rural connectivity initiatives by BDUK have been essential

Rural Investment In October 2011, the government announced £150m in capital expenditure to improve mobile coverage and quality – known as the [Mobile Infrastructure Project](#) (MIP). This project is being run by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK). This still needs to improve the coverage and quality of fast broadband and mobile services for consumers in 25% of East Devon where existing coverage is poor or non-existent.

Rural Tourism has developed in diverse ways, in part rooted within particular local landscapes, traditions and farming styles. Local culture heritage and cultural landscapes are crucial elements of rural tourism, with rural places offering destinations for visitors. Making money from the appeal of landscapes, rural environments and local cultural heritage is thus an important economic development strategy

**So a new Rural Development approach is developing <sup>13</sup>:**

|                          | <b>Old approach</b>                             | <b>New Approach</b>   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Objectives</b>        | Equalisation, farm income, farm competitiveness | Competitiveness of rural areas, value added to local assets and produce, exploitation of unused resources                                     |
| <b>Key target sector</b> | Agriculture                                     | Various sectors of rural economies (rural tourism, food, manufacturing, Knowledge Industry etc.)  |
| <b>Main tools</b>        | Subsidies                                       | Investments and Community Volunteers  |
| <b>Key actors</b>        | National governments, farmers                   | All levels of government (European,UK and local), various local stakeholders (Public, Private, Social Enterprises and Community Stakeholders) |

It is now possible to envisage rural areas as sources of the future, as places of innovation and themselves engines of social renewal and economic growth. It has been found, for

example, that innovation is greater in rural areas than in urban <sup>5,6,7</sup> that productivity is growing faster, and nationally around 2 million people are using broadband to work from home in rural England. Such findings encouraged the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) to claim the untapped economic potential of rural areas might be worth an extra £347Bn pa to the national economy, if policies supported rural economic development<sup>8</sup>.

Another report<sup>9</sup> also shows that entrepreneurs in rural areas have just as strong aspirations to grow their businesses as do their counterparts in urban areas

The Taylor Review<sup>10</sup> 2008 and the *Rural Economy Growth Review*<sup>11</sup>, in late 2011, recognised the strength of these arguments and proposed a series of measures to support rural economies beyond agriculture

A detailed statistical analysis of economic drivers in rural areas supports the encouragement of investment and business start-ups<sup>12</sup>

### **Implications**

- Low GVA so need to drive up investment per work-force job and productivity
- Sustain service and facilitate to support Business start-ups
- A particular focus on low carbon industries and sustainable business practices.
- Development Management and Planning applications need to facilitate rural business space in accessible sites on A roads and in environs of town creating a “ladder of business accommodation” –incubation units, work hubs and move on space –through investment in eight hubs and several secondary sites across two counties.
- Fast Broadband and mobile telephone access will be essential for success
- Encouragement of local supply networks is necessary
- Re-use of existing buildings for commercial purposes is needed for upgraded uses.
- Market housing and affordable housing should be available in Towns and village
- Improved skills training locally is needed perhaps via e-learning and masterclasses would be useful to foster succession planning in rural family businesses.
- Business support services need to be accessible by Broadband need to be available. Because Micro- and home-based businesses, which are more prevalent in rural economies, have particular characteristics and needs, they often fall under the radar of business groups and support organisations
- Lobbying at all levels should enforce Rural-Proofing in National and local Policies
- We need partnership with universities and multiple private sector research and development agencies to nurture new businesses and support businesses with high growth potential.
- There is need to galvanise whole communities to recognise, celebrate and promote entrepreneurship
- Support for 4G/5G and fibre networks would help mobile communications

The stakeholder reports which informed these strategic recommendations, reinforced by the current employment market, especially for Care and Hospitality, is very challenging, with widespread vacancies across the district.

Recognising that the challenges are complex; not only is there a shortage of skilled labour but additionally there are difficulties in accessing affordable accommodation for current and future employees and there is a lack of public transport to many businesses and tourism venues in rural areas. It is not surprising that there are high vacancies in the health and the care sector and hospitality and both latter sectors are particularly low wage and vital to the District

We consider the rural area should be sustainable and accessible and ask Council to consider policies as follows:

4. Scrutiny welcomes the Cabinet's review of the report by Hill Consulting on Tourism and that of Devon County Council
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7. Collaboratively to build the District's reputation, share best practice and create new opportunities for innovation in economic activity by working in partnership and fostering collaboration with all partners.
8. In preserving and connecting with nature, to ensure that we protect the natural capital of our outstanding environment and its biodiversity, sympathetically leveraging its assets to grow the sector and its economic contribution.
9. Inclusivity We will support economic development, from the countryside to the coast, enabling the whole rural district area and especially the AONBs to thrive in a sustainable way while seeking to raise average incomes and healthcare arrangements.

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| <b>Scrutiny Committee Forward Plan 2022 / 23</b> |
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**Work for scoping and/or allocation to the Forward Plan**

| <b>Proposed date</b> | <b>Topic</b>  |
|----------------------|---|
| 6 October            | South West Water / beach & river water quality – Environmental Health/<br>Streetscene report<br><br>To be followed by informal joint Zoom meeting with SWW – date 2 November<br>10.00 – 11.30am |
| 6 October            | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Paul Hayward  |
| 6 October            | Quarterly performance report – Q1   |
| 3 November           | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Paul Arnott   |
| 3 November           | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Jack Rowland  |
| 1 December           | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Geoff Jung  |
| 1 December           | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Dan Ledger  |
| 1 December           | Report on draft training strategy (agreed at meeting on 2 December 2021)<br>with Cllr Sarah Jackson   |
| 1 December           | Quarterly performance report - Q2   |
| 11 January 2023      | Joint Budget meeting with the Overview Committee  |
| 2 February 2023      | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Marianne Rixson   |
| 2 March 2023         | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Sarah Jackson   |
| 2 March 2023         | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr John Loudoun  |
| 2 March 2023         | Quarterly performance report – Q3   |
| 6 April 2023         | Portfolio Holder Annual Report Cllr Nick Hookway  |
| TBC                  | Strategic review of policy formation (proposal form from Cllr Allen, agreed at<br>June meeting) – scoping report awaited  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| TBC  | Procedure for putting forward alternative strategies (proposal form from Cllr Allen, agreed at June meeting) – scoping report awaited   |
| TBC  | Expenditure on consultants and agency staff 2020/21 (follow up from meeting of 2 December 2021)   |
| TBC  | <p>Proposal from Mid Devon DC Scrutiny Committee regarding a joint review into the planning controls and regulatory requirements associated with the bio-energy industry within Devon, in particular anaerobic digesters (details circulated to Members by email on 10 December 2021)</p> <p>The Chair to discuss with the Chair of Strategic Planning Committee.</p>   |
| TBC – keep under review                            | <p>Local Plan Sites – Allocations to Delivery</p> <p>The Joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 [minute 43c] recommended ‘<i>a review of the Statement of Community Involvement and consultations on planning applications to consider making greater use of site notices to publicise planning applications</i>’ Goodmores Farm could be considered as part of this work if the concern relates to the consultation specifically (agreed at meeting on 3 March 2022).</p> <p>This item to be kept under review.</p> |
| For noting:  | <p>Database of assets owned by the Council.</p> <p>Note: This work is in-hand through Strata with a demonstration for Members planned at the November Asset Management Forum meeting (scheduled for 4 November 2022).</p>   |
| Correspondence regarding Scrutiny Committee topics |   |
| Date received                                      | Details   |
| 8 June 2022  | Correspondence from Mr G Crawford regarding storm overflow discharge at Exmouth following the response to questions from SWW  |
| 28 June 2022                                       | Correspondence from Mr G Crawford to advise that the Ofwat investigation into raw sewage dumping has been extended to include SWW   |

# PROPOSAL FORM FOR ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## Submitted by :

Cllr Mike Allen

## Please describe the matter you would like considered:

Agricultural land - food production v energy production.

We are currently living in unprecedented times. We are facing a climate crisis. As a Council we have made a commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040 and need, as a district, to help support reducing reliance on fossil fuels and increasing renewable energy production. Equally, we need to be increasing our self-sufficiency in terms of food production (food security, cost of living, food transportation issues tying in to climate change agenda). As a district we have a large number of solar farms with the resulting loss of agricultural land (whether arable or grazing) albeit on a temporary basis (although the temporary nature is quite extended – e.g. 25 years).

In the Local Plan there are policies seeking to protect the loss of the best and most versatile land (Grades 1 – 3a). Equally, there are policies supporting provision of renewable energy sources. The provision of renewable energy production, at least in solar panel terms, is often limited to certain locations where there are good grid connections. These policies can be competing against each other and there is often a judgment call – taking into account a number of other matters - where the balance lies on a case by case basis.

I would like the Committee to review how much agricultural land has been ‘lost’ to renewable energy production. Whether any such land is used for agricultural while in use for renewable energy production. Has any of the land returned to agricultural, or is it ever likely to return to agricultural or whether it should be considered as lost. What production – in agricultural terms – that land could be delivering in terms of food. In light of this and the future needs in relation to climate change and food production, the Committee to consider whether the Council has correctly balanced the competing priorities and therefore has the right policy approach. The Committee could usefully also consider whether there is anything that the Council could be requiring in terms of conditions or limitations to facilitate achieving a better or more advantageous balance.

## Please identify why this item should be considered:

- a) It is a district level function over which the district has some control
- b) It is part of the Council Plan, or a policy or service area of activity which would be timely to review
- c) It is a gap in service provision within District Council's remit
- d) It is a major proposal for policy or procedural change
- e) It is an issue raised from complaints received
- f) It is an area of public concern
- g) The issue relates to an area where Council, or one of its partners, is not performing well
- h) It would be of benefit to residents of the district

i) Other (please specify):

**Having regard to the role of the Scrutiny Committees (see end of form) - please describe as precisely as possible what outcomes you would like to see achieved:**

I would like the Committee to consider whether the competing policy approach to protecting the loss of agricultural land and encouraging the provision of renewable energy sources is being correctly balanced in East Devon. If not, then I would like to see the Committee making recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee to review the policy approach depending on the findings.

**Any other comments that you consider relevant:**

None

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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**Monitoring Officer comments:**

These are issues capable of being considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

The Council's Constitution details the role of the Scrutiny Committee in [Article 7](#) and in the Terms of Reference in [Part 3 Section 2](#). It has statutory powers through the Local Government Act 2000.

The following sets out the role of the Scrutiny Committee in general terms:

*The Overview and Scrutiny Committees operate within the guiding principles of effective scrutiny promoted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, namely:*

- a) Provide a 'critical friend' challenge to the Cabinet as well as external authorities and agencies;*
- b) Its aim is to hold Council to account on behalf of the public and its communities;*
- c) Take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public;*
- d) Make an impact on the delivery of public services*

*The **Scrutiny Committee** will principally take the lead and own **the post decision scrutiny process** (in its widest sense) on behalf of the public with a view to making an impact on the delivery of public*

More specifically the role and powers of the Scrutiny Committee are to;

- *Review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the Cabinet and Council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time.*
- *Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas.*
- *Question Members of the Cabinet and Senior Officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects.*
- *Make recommendations to the Cabinet and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process.*
- *Review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Scrutiny Committee and local people about their activities and performance.*
- *Question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent).*
- *Exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Cabinet and/or a Portfolio Holder Member of the Cabinet.*

Please note the following:

- Scrutiny aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Council Services
- The Scrutiny Committee can gather evidence on issues affecting local people and make recommendations based on its findings.
- It is important to demonstrate that scrutiny work adds value for local people.
- Those scrutinizing should be independent-minded but not apolitical although political point scoring should be avoided.
- Individual planning and licensing decision cannot be considered and nor can matters concerning an individual or entity where there is a right of review or appeal conferred by law being considered by the committee unless it relates to a function for which the authority is responsible not being discharged at all or that its discharge has failed or is failing on a systemic basis.
- Scrutiny will not consider matters which are vexatious, discriminatory or are not reasonable to be included in the agenda.
- You can identify and prioritise potential scrutiny topics, considering the resources they would require and the level of impact they could achieve by:
  - consulting with all members of scrutiny committees, senior officers, cabinet members
  - looking at corporate priorities, business plans and the Forward Plan
  - consider events and decisions in the council's calendar that could require an input from scrutiny
  - evaluate previous council performance and identifying any follow-up work required to previous scrutiny work
  - carry out work to engage with local people, for example through surgeries, local media, opinion surveys and online forums
  - work towards a common target in their questioning of witnesses

Members will also find useful information in the following guidance:

- Government's '[Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for Councils](#)' – statutory status
- Centre for Public Scrutiny '[The Good Scrutiny Guide](#)' – non-statutory status

# PROPOSAL FORM FOR ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Submitted by :

Cllr Mike Allen

Please describe the matter you would like considered:

EDDC has three health and wellbeing priorities:

1. To help more people to be healthy and stay healthy
2. To enhance self-care and support community resilience
3. To integrate and improve support for people in their homes

The health of our community impacts many issues for Council services and there are major changes occurring in a new Integration Strategy which is currently being begun in East Devon and the greater Exeter area. Part of this NHS new strategy is to move to pre-emption of ill health rather than acute treatment and the Council has already emphasized healthy eating and exercise in many press releases

But the East Devon Health Strategy will need review in the context of the increased emphasis on home care and enhanced home care which is at the core of the new arrangements. This change will impact on such areas as new housing design policies and home adaptations. These areas are dealt with by Planning and by Disability Adaptation grants. The enhanced home care approach and the increased numbers of elderly and frail residents living in their own homes will also impact on our Home Safeguard service.

The recent release of a presentation summary of the Integrated Care Strategy approach has been offered to Scrutiny by NHS and Devon CC. This is designed for Councillors. The EDDC Annual review of Health Strategy for 2022 was recently updated and provides an explanation of the way EDDC currently works. The recent Health Scrutiny review of Delayed Transfers of Care by DCC is available which gives added insight into the need for Home Care, Cottage Hospitals and emergency services infrastructure.

All these changes means we have all the information needed for a review of what is needed in view of the new Integration Strategy and post-Pandemic situation

Please identify why this item should be considered:

- a) It is (partly) a district level function over which the district has some control
- b) It is part of the Council Plan, or a policy or service area of activity which would be timely to review
- c) It is a gap in service provision within District Council's remit
- d) It is a major proposal for policy or procedural change /re-evaluation
- e) It is an issue raised from complaints received

f) It is an area of public concern

g) The issue relates to an area where Council, or one of its partners, is not performing well

h) It would be of benefit to residents of the district

i) Other (please specify):

**Having regard to the role of the Scrutiny Committees (see end of form) - please describe as precisely as possible what you would like to see achieved:**

- 1) A timely review of Council's Health Strategy and whether priorities are being delivered
  - 2) Potential recommendation to Strategic Planning to reassess planning policy on new home design and incorporating healthcare adaptations
  - 3) Consideration of accommodation needs of health and Social Care workers and any relevant policies on specifying rules for how these may be provided in our area from Council stock or Planning policies

**Any other comments that you consider relevant:**

All the information needed is immediately available with willing presenters and is in a form which is suitable for Scrutiny Members and Democratic Services has explored the possibilities of a special meeting already

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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**Monitoring Officer comments:**

These are issues capable of being considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

## Scrutiny Committees' Role

The Council's Constitution details the role of the Scrutiny Committee in [Article 7](#) and in the Terms of Reference in [Part 3 Section 2](#). It has statutory powers through the Local Government Act 2000.

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Please note the following:

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Members will also find useful information in the following guidance:

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