

**Agenda for joint budget meeting of the Scrutiny  
Committee and Overview Committee  
Thursday, 11th January, 2024, 9.00 am**



**To all Members of Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee**

**Venue:** Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton

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Wednesday, 3 January 2024

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- 1 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 22)
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Declarations of interest  
Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)
- 4 Public speaking  
Information on [public speaking](#) is available online
- 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 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024-2025 and Draft Council Plan (Pages 23 - 41)
- 8 Key Service Plan Objectives 2024-2025
  - a) [Countryside and Leisure](#) (Pages 42 - 46)
  - b) [Environmental Health](#) (Pages 47 - 49)
  - c) [Housing](#) (Pages 50 - 53)
  - d) [Streetscene](#) (Pages 54 - 57)
  - e) [HR and Payroll Service](#) (Pages 58 - 60)

- f) Finance (Pages 61 - 62)
  - g) Revenue & Benefits, CSC, Fraud and Compliance (Pages 63 - 66)
  - h) Growth, Development and Prosperity (Pages 67 - 71)
  - i) Planning (Pages 72 - 75)
  - j) Governance and Licensing (Pages 76 - 78)
  - k) Place, Assets and Commercialisation (Pages 79 - 81)
  - l) Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Team (Pages 82 - 84)
- 9 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024-2025

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**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the joint Overview Committee and Scrutiny Committee Budget Meeting held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House on 11 January 2023**

**Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 3.55 pm

**64 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

**65 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous joint meetings held on 12 January 2022 and 17 January 2022 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

**66 Declarations of interest**

Minute 70a. Countryside and Leisure.

Councillor Ian Hall, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Councillor is Chair of a charitable organisation running the Axminster Skatepark project.

Minute 70a. Countryside and Leisure.

Councillor Tony Woodward, Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Councillor has contract as casual worker with LED Leisure Management Ltd.

The Monitoring Officer granted Cllr Woodward a dispensation to remain in the meeting, as without a dispensation the Overview Committee would have been inquorate at certain points during the meeting.

Minute 70a. Countryside and Leisure.

Councillor Vicky Johns, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Councillor works for an art charity.

Minute 70b. Housing.

Councillor Jake Bonetta, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Councillor is Chair of Honiton Foodsave.

**67 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential / exempt items.

**69 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2023-2024**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the Director of Finance and the Finance Manager for their work in preparing the reports. It was noted that the draft budgets had been prepared against a background of reduced funding by central Government, constraints on council tax limits and high inflation, all of which were significant factors.

Recommendations from the Committees would go forward to Cabinet on 1 February before referral to full Council to agree the budget.

The Director of Finance outlined the budget position and presented the draft Revenue and Capital budgets for 2023-2024, highlighting the following key points to the Committees:

- With regard to the General Fund position, since the report was compiled the Local Government Settlement has been announced which provided an additional £349,000 in grants, leaving a requirement of £85,000 to be taken from reserves in order to balance the budget.
- It was acceptable to take this amount from reserves and Government advice was that Councils should consider taking amounts from reserves due to the current significant implications of inflation.
- The report highlighted significant variations in portfolio expenditure between years with a 25% increase in expenditure due to factors such as the national pay award in the current financial year, the assumed pay award for the next financial year and the Council's recent pay review.
- Increasing energy costs had added £200,000 to the budget across the whole Council.
- Regarding service specific variations between years, a one off cost of £169,000 had been included for the District Election in May 2023.
- A linked background paper explained the requirement for the inclusion of £100,000 in the budget for the early stage planning of a new town.
- An additional £1.1m was required by StreetScene for expenditure on recycling and waste as a result of the approved bridging solution and inflation linked to contract payments.
- The Housing Task Force Team required an additional £182,000 which would be met from earmarked reserve.
- Special items had been excluded from the draft budget as there was no scope for additional expenditure until the outturn position was known.
- The report highlighted that since the draft budget had been prepared, LED had requested a revised amount of £1.498m which was an increase of £126,000 above the draft budget figure of £1.372m. This request would be considered at the forthcoming meeting of the LED Forum, following which recommendations would go back to Cabinet in February before the final budget proposals are considered by full Council.
- The draft budget assumed a £5 increase to the Council Tax, taking the charge for a Band D property to £161.78, being a 3.19% increase.
- The draft budget was within the range adopted by the Council, although it was noted that it was close to the bottom end of the reserves level. This was due to expenditure approved during the current year and the cost of the upcoming elections.
- The business rate income at £6.7m was significantly above the Government baseline figure and the report highlighted a risk in 2025/26 of this income being substantially reduced as a result of the anticipated Government rebasing of business rates. The potential effect of this on budget shortfall in the following years was shown in the table at 2.18 of the report.
- The report highlighted the Financial Sustainability Model as the agreed approach to addressing the modelled deficits. An in-house review is being undertaken to ensure that work is being carried out as efficiently and effectively as possible and results would be reported back to Members to inform decisions with regard to future budgeting and any potential cuts to services.
- The Housing Revenue Account would be considered in detail by the Housing Review Board at its January meeting.
- The results of the housing stock survey are still awaited.
- The Government cap of 7% on local authority housing rents had been built in to the budget and it was noted that the increased rental income would be needed to cover maintenance costs which were likely to increase by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) which was currently around 10%.



- The Housing Revenue Account was showing a surplus of £268,000 but it was anticipated that this would be required for in-year costs.
- With regard to the Capital Programme the details were set out in the Budget Book which was attached to the report and which had been recommended by the Budget Setting and Capital Allocations Panel.

The Chair thanked the Finance Director for presenting a balanced budget during very challenging times.

In response to questions and comments from Members the following points were made:

- With regard to the Business Rates Retention Scheme, Members were concerned that the Council would be penalised for its achievements. It was noted that the Scheme was always going to be for a certain period of time only and had never been reviewed. The Council was now using income from business rates to support services and the Medium Term Financial Plan set out the anticipated worst case scenario as a result of the future re-basing of the Scheme. It is likely that the Government will introduce a transition period to mitigate against the worst effects.
- Members were of the view that the issue of the Business Rates Retention Scheme review should be raised with MPs.
- The increase in the budgeted expenditure for car parks was due to additional staffing costs.
- Budgeted increase in costs for public conveniences was due to inflationary pressures and particularly increases in the cost of water and electricity.
- In response to concerns regarding second homes, Member's attention was drawn to the report to the January meeting of Cabinet and the on-going work on this issue.
- Members expressed concern at the proposed increase to Council tenants' weekly rent and whether there was sufficient support for tenants.
- Members expressed concern regarding the potential increase in the LED costs and it was noted that budget reports would be presented at the January meeting of the LED Monitoring Forum, followed by further consideration by Cabinet at its February meeting.
- With regard to Members' concerns about the increase in maintenance costs for the Council's housing stock, it was noted that payments are built into maintenance contracts and that there is no scope for renegotiation.

### **PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATION**

That, in principle, and subject to any further revisions following the joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 12 January 2023, the draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2023-2024 be recommended to Cabinet for adoption.

## **70 Key Service Plan Objectives 2023-2024**

The Committees considered the service plan objectives for the following services:

- Countryside and Leisure
- Environmental Health
- Housing
- StreetScene

The Director for Housing, Health and Environment delivered a presentation outlining the key issues and challenges for the four services and the cross-cutting themes from each of the service plans. The presentation included the following:

- Service plans are aligned with the Council Plan and the four services make a significant contribution to delivery of the Council Plan's priorities.
- High level challenges include delivering core services well, using resources effectively, prioritising and maintaining staff morale, ongoing recruitment and retention issues, meeting customer expectations and delivering Council Plan and Service Plan priorities.
- Addressing the climate change emergency is a corporate commitment with significant work to be undertaken to meet the Council's targets. Every Service Plan makes a contribution to meeting the target of becoming a carbon neutral Council by 2040.
- With regard to public health and wellbeing, challenges were identified as response and recovery from the covid pandemic, tackling environmental and social conditions to promote good physical and mental health, encouraging healthier behaviour to reduce illness and addressing the loss of independence and promote wellbeing and self-care.
- The importance of corporate health and safety was highlighted, with some areas such as StreetScene requiring a very strong health and safety focus.
- Addressing poverty and its prevention is now a corporate priority with a clear strategy and action plan.

## 71 **Countryside and Leisure**

The Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure presented the Service Plan for 2023-2024. Key challenges under the headings of Maintaining our Nature Reserves and Green Space, Trees and Outdoor Health and Wellbeing were identified as follows:

- Delivery of duties under the new Environment Act including securing 20% biodiversity net gain on all new developments, as opposed to the mandatory 10%. Guidance on this duty is awaited from Defra. Training will be provided for planning officers and information workshops will be held for Members.
- Development of a local nature recovery plan, led by Devon County Council.
- Working with Natural England's policy on nutrient neutrality on the River Axe with the aim of delivering habitat based nutrient neutrality mitigation measures and water efficiency measures on Council housing stock in the Axe Valley catchment.
- Delivery of nature recovery and re-wilding projects including the Wild Honiton project.
- Development of a new Tree Strategy for East Devon once the draft Devon Tree Strategy is published around March/April and the expansion and support of the Tree Warden Scheme.
- Delivery of priorities identified within the Leisure Strategy including actively re-negotiating dual site agreements, a stock condition survey of leisure centres and provision of leisure facilities at Cranbrook.
- Delivery of priorities within the Culture Strategy which will be assisted by the recent employment of the Cultural Producer.
- Ensuring synergy between the Leisure Strategy, Cultural Strategy and Tourism Strategy.

The Portfolio Holders for Coast, Country and Environment and Tourism, Leisure, sport and Culture thanked the Assistant Director and his team for their work and acknowledged the significant value of the countryside in maintaining residents' wellbeing.

Questions and comments from Members included the following points:

- The Sport England pilot for Cranbrook has taken a long time to get up and running. There is a clear plan for delivery and focus now needs to be on delivering actions identified in the plan.
- Concerns regarding durability of new trees planted on developments will be raised with planning enforcement officers and the issue will be included in the new Tree Strategy.
- Concern was expressed regarding support for the most vulnerable to be able to access leisure centre facilities and Members' attention was drawn to the forthcoming meeting of the LED Forum and the agenda for that meeting.

- There is an urgent need to address issues regarding nutrient neutrality on the River Axe and on-going work to set up the framework will be communicated to Ward Members. £100,000 is available in the Planning service budget and it is vital that the right expertise is brought in for this work in collaboration with Dorset and Somerset.
- There was a need for sufficient officers to deliver the new Tree Strategy and it was noted that there had been issues with the recruitment of tree officers. Officers were of the view that the recent pay review should assist with recruitment and other routes such as apprenticeships should also help with long term recruitment and retention of staff.
- Regarding concerns over Ash dieback, it was noted that this would be addressed through re-planting and would be addressed through the new Tree Strategy.
- Concern was expressed that if leisure centre facilities are withdrawn then work in conjunction with the NHS would be lost unless other facilities elsewhere are available.
- Members queried what other leisure facilities are available through providers other than LED. It was noted that the information may be available as data was compiled during production of the Leisure Strategy.
- Concern was also expressed that LED might be duplicating what is already being provided by other providers and there was a need to understand potential areas of duplication between LED and private providers to ensure that the Council is obtaining best value for tax payers.
- With regard to the development of a café offer at Seaton Wetlands, it was noted that this would be a very modest and sensitively located concession to encourage visitors to explore the whole of the Wetlands as well as to generate some income.
- Regarding development of the ACED Network, it was confirmed that all cultural events in East Devon should be able to be accessed via the ACED website.

#### **RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:**

That the Service Plan for Countryside and Leisure for 2023 – 2024 be adopted subject to the addition of the following:

That an objective be included for a scoping paper to be prepared in order to understand the areas of potential duplication between LED and the private sector to ensure that, going forward, LED is not being paid to carry out work which is being done elsewhere. This is to ensure the best use of taxpayers money.

Prior to the start of the next item, the Chair advised that the Overview Committee had become inquorate due to a Committee member having to leave the meeting. Another member was expected to join later during the meeting.

## **72 Environmental Health**

The new Assistant Director Environmental Health introduced himself and presented the Service Plan for 2023 – 2024. The overarching priority in the Service Plan is to protect the health of the public and the environment and work to improve healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities. The presentation included the following key points:

- Regulation of private sector housing including delivery of enforcement, houses of multiple occupancy, regulation of private water supplies, bringing empty homes back into use and improving the energy efficiency of homes.
- Food and water safety and security. It was noted that the pre-Brexit EU regulations will fall away at the end of the year and it was not yet clear what impact this will have on the service.
- Protecting health including regulating environmental pollution risk, anti social behaviour, infectious disease and animal health where this affects disease and food standards.

Key service development / projects for 2023 -2024 included:

- The creation of a Green Team with representatives from all services to oversee, monitor and report on the delivery of the actions in the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
- Improving the winter resilience of private sector housing.

- Monitoring and improvement of air, land and water quality in the District.
- Improving food hygiene, health and safety in the District including assessment of the new Food Standards Agency Strategy due during the year.
- With regard to community safety and anti-social behaviour, identifying and progressing safeguarding improvements.
- Review of the public health strategy.
- Review of the corporate Emergency and Business Continuity Plans.
- Utilise the Contain Outbreak Management Fund on positive health outcomes.

The Portfolio Holder for Coast, County and Environment thanked the Director Housing, Health and Environment for his work in the interim phase prior to the appointment of the new Assistant Director.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Action and Emergency Response thanked all of the officers involved.

Questions and comments from Members included the following points:

- Members noted that the position with regard to staffing had improved but that some issues with recruitment remain.
- With regard to private water supplies, the team risk assesses supplies through water sampling to ensure safety.
- The team supports communities in managing anti-social behaviour and is part of the Community Safety Partnership.
- The Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment is holding meetings with the relevant MP and South West Water to address sewage pollution in Exmouth. It was acknowledged that engineering works in Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton are a long term and multi million pound issue.
- In response to Members' concerns regarding damp and mould, it was noted that the Environmental Health team has wide-ranging powers and takes a zero tolerance approach to damp and mould. The whole housing sector is prioritising work of this type.

When agreeing the recommendation, it was noted for the record that the Members of the Overview Committee were in agreement although the Committee was inquorate and Members did not vote.

#### **RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:**

That the Environmental Health Service Plan for 2023 – 2024 be adopted.

## 73 **Housing**

The Assistant Director Housing and the Housing Task Force Service Lead presented the Service Plan for 2023 – 2024 and outlined the key challenges for the service under the following headings:

- More affordable homes – a decent home for all.
- Homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Council homes fit for purpose and satisfied tenants

The Assistant Director Housing also advised that:

- The service is currently experiencing very high and growing demand and complexity of demand.
- There is a national issue of damp and mould which is rightly receiving a lot of attention.
- Changes are anticipated due to the forthcoming Social Housing Act.
- The service had to change completely during the covid pandemic and it has taken time to get the service back to normal running pre-covid.

- The service has also experienced personnel challenges, with high levels of staff sickness and difficulties with recruitment.

With regard to the key challenge of more affordable homes, The Housing Task Force Service Lead outlined the work of the Task Force since February 2022 as it seeks to grow the Council's housing stock and explores building Council's own housing in order to re-dress the balance following the right to buy scheme.

The Task Force is reviewing land already owned by the Council and had found 11 sites in the District with potential for development. The Task Force is seeking to deliver new carbon neutral homes in Honiton by way of ZedPods.

Regarding the key challenges of homelessness and rough sleeping and Council homes fit for purpose, the Assistant Director Housing made the following points:

- The service is seeing highest ever demand due to the two main reasons of loss of private sector accommodation and family breakdown.
- Officers are having to spend a lot of time with residents linked to issues with mental health.
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024 – 2028 is due for renewal during the year.
- An internal action plan to address damp and mould would be considered at the upcoming meeting of the Housing Review Board.
- The service worked closely with the Poverty Working Group on the winter strategy.

Questions and comments from Members included the following points:

- With regard to the replacement of carpets and curtains at the end of a tenancy, this is under review and where possible fixtures and fittings would be retained.
- Retrofitting of housing stock would bring most homes up to EPC B.
- Regarding the suitable sites for housing provision, the two largest sites are in Honiton with in excess of 50 homes. Other sites are in Sidbury, Exmouth and Sidmouth with potentially 70-80 homes in the pipeline. There is also significant development potential in Axminster which cannot currently proceed until the Natural England embargo is lifted.
- With regard to the waiting list for homes, it was noted that the vast majority on the waiting list are already housed, but are waiting to move to a more appropriate property.
- It was noted that the Housing service is seeing an increase in work required when properties are returned and that the service had negotiated with the Council's contractor to bring in significant resources to address this issue.
- Members were advised that some people who are homeless do not wish to engage with officers.
- Clarification as to the definition of affordable homes and social homes in that affordable homes are 80% of market rental and social homes are 70% of market rental. The categories also attract different funding.
- In response to a question regarding the complaints to the Housing Ombudsman and the subsequent findings, it was noted that a report on this issue is going to the January Housing Review Board meeting. Further details on this matter are also available on the website.
- Councillors expressed concerns with regard to supporting the most vulnerable residents and it was noted that officers are working proactively to help residents and to encourage vital early engagement.
- With regard to routine maintenance, annual visits to properties are being introduced in order to ensure that the service becomes more proactive.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director Housing and the Housing Task Force Service Lead for their presentations.

It was noted that the Overview Committee was quorate due to the arrival of a Committee Member.

**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:**

That the Housing Service Plan 2023 -2024 be adopted.

74 **Streetscene**

The Assistant Director Streetscene presented the service plan for 2023 – 2024 and summarised the key points as follows:

- The focus for 2023-24 will be on meeting core demands and bedding in the already approved resources, for example, six new operatives to assist with street cleaning due to increased demand for this service.
- It was anticipated that the recruitment of a new Project Officer will shortly be completed and it was noted that the recent pay review had assisted with recruitment. The new Project Officer will work on delivery of items such as the review of bin charges and operating models.
- The service plan includes projects to progress work on climate change such as fleet decarbonisation and more sustainable management of green spaces, together with evidence to show how the service is improving.
- Work will be undertaken to review financial sustainability and future service shape including a review of software to manage these works.
- The service plan includes capital projects for the engineering team, however the challenge will be to deliver with a small team.
- It is anticipated that major projects such as beach management plans will see funding gaps due to global issues and a report on this issue would be considered at an upcoming Cabinet meeting.
- Work will include consideration of low carbon alternatives to hard engineering.
- The service plan also focuses on contract renewal of recycling and waste services in 2026 and meeting the requirements of the forthcoming Environment Act.
- Planning is underway to service up to 90,000 properties in the next decade.
- The service will be considering future depot requirements and investment in infrastructure which will work in tandem with decarbonisation of the fleet, with the investment required in the tens of millions.
- It is hoped that the service will move up the Defra league table for recycling and the service is planning for a recycling rate of 70% by 2030, although it was noted that margins for improvement are tight.
- The recent pay review is helping with recruitment as demand increases due to higher visitor numbers in the District, an increase in residents and longer tourist season due to climate change.
- It was highlighted that the decarbonisation of the fleet will be a significant investment as electric vehicles are double the cost of conventional vehicles.
- A re-naturing strategy will be developed to improve the sustainable management of green spaces.
- Applications for renewal of blue flag status will be made for Exmouth, Sidmouth, Seaton and Beer.

The Portfolio Holders for Coast, Country and Environment and Tourism, Leisure, Sport and Culture thanked the Assistant Director and his team for their work.

Questions and comments from Members included the following points:

- With regard to a review of street litter bin collection models, Members were advised that the new Project Officer should be in post fairly soon and this review would be a priority. In order to understand how the operation is set up, the service would take the opportunity to undertake a full review with the timeline for this shown in the draft service plan.

- Regarding examples of alternative methods of waste collection in other countries, Members were advised that the current system is built on restricted capacity and that residual waste levels are very low. Alternative methods are not under consideration as they do not incentivise residents to recycle.
- In response to a question regarding alternative use of category B and C public toilets under the public toilet review, Members were advised that the Place, Assets and Commercialisation team are leading on negotiations and focussing on those which are progressing. Further information will be released at the appropriate time.
- Regarding re-generation of play areas, it was noted that coastal and flooding resilience are the priorities for the engineering team. Once the new engineering officer is in post some of the work on play areas may be able to be progressed although this is less time sensitive than the coastal and flooding priority projects.
- With regard to a possible review of green bin charges, Members were advised that the charge has not been increased in previous years in order to attract and retain customers. The current draft budget has provision for a small increase.
- Work on increasing on-street recycling is progressing slowly due to waiting for details of the Government's Deposit Return Scheme.
- Beach trackway matting has been very well received.
- Progress on the Bapton Valley cycle route has been slow due to staff shortages.
- Regarding the Heads of Terms for transfer of public toilets, it was noted that proposed transfer is on a long leasehold basis to enable transferees, such as town and parish councils, to raise funds to take on the asset.
- Regarding dog waste, Environmental Health deals with enforcement. A report on proposals to vary and discharge the Public Space Protection Orders was considered at the January Cabinet meeting.
- Consideration could be given to asking residents to put out recycling for collection only when containers are full.

**RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:**

That the Streetscene service plan for 2023 – 2024 be adopted.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

M Chapman  
O Davey (Vice-Chair for this meeting)  
D Key  
H Parr  
E Rylance (Chair for this meeting)  
B Taylor  
T Woodward  
J Bonetta (joined the meeting at 2pm)  
S Gazzard  
I Hall  
M Hartnell  
V Johns (Vice-Chair for this meeting and left at 1pm)

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

K Bloxham  
N Hookway  
G Jung  
J Loudoun  
M Rixson

J Rowland  
P Skinner  
T Wright

**Officers in attendance:**

Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health and Car Parks  
Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Jo Garfoot, Assistant Director Housing Task Force  
Amy Gilbert-Jeans, Assistant Director Housing  
John Golding, Director of Housing, Health and Environment  
Henry Gordon Lennox, Director of Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)  
Andrew Hancock, Assistant Director StreetScene  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer  
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure  
John Symes, Finance Manager

**Councillor apologies:**

M Allen  
J Bailey  
C Gardner  
S Hawkins  
J Kemp  
P Millar  
J Whibley  
D Barrow  
D Manley  
A Moulding

Chair .....

Date: .....



## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Joint Budget Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 12 January 2023**

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

The meeting started at 10.05 am and ended at 3.55 pm

#### **75 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

#### **76 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were received and agreed at the previous session on 11 January 2023.

#### **77 Declarations of interest**

Minutes 80 – 87 Key Service Plan Objectives 2023-2024 and Minute 88 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2023 – 2024.

Councillor Tony Woodward, Disclosable Pecuniary Interest: Councillor has contract as casual worker with LED Leisure Management Ltd.

The Monitoring Officer granted Cllr Woodward a dispensation to remain in the meeting as without a dispensation the Overview Committee would have been inquorate at certain points during the meeting.

Minute 86 Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Team.

Councillor Eleanor Rylance, Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Councillor is a host on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

#### **78 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential or exempt items.

#### **80 Key Service Plan Objectives 2023-2024**

The committees considered individual service plan objectives as set out in these minutes for the following services:

- Finance
- Growth, Development and Prosperity
- Planning
- Governance and Licensing
- Place, Assets and Commercialisation
- Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Team

- HR and Payroll Service

## 81 **Finance**

The Director for Finance, the Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits and the Finance Manager provided clarification and response to questions from Members in relation to the service plan for the service for 2023-24.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance remarked on the volume and breadth of work that is covered, commenting on the challenges that are presented, and the achievements. He thanked the Finance and Revenues & Benefits teams for their hard work.

For the Finance team, work for the coming year would include:

- Implementation of the Financial Sustainability Model; this work is critical in terms of balancing the budget going forward and ensuring effective and efficient delivery of services. Progress will be reported to Members through the Budget Setting and Capital Allocations Panel, with minutes going on to Cabinet.
- Working with Devon Procurement Services to develop a matrix of activities to embed practices in the Council's procurement processes to reduce the carbon footprint, in line with the Procurement Strategy 2022-2027 adopted by Members.
- Implementation of new Finance System. The Finance Manager explained that this is a major project that will touch all areas of the Council; the system will facilitate better reporting and budget monitoring, with user friendly dashboards and the ability to better identify trends. Exeter City Council (ECC) and Teignbridge District Council (TDC) will be on the same system, enabling closer working between the three authorities.

For the Revenues and Benefits team, work for the coming year would include:

- Poverty Strategy – to continue to develop the Poverty Dashboard to drive the Council's response to help residents with the cost of living crisis.
- Development and approval of the Household Support Fund 3 and Discretionary Fund.
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme – currently a revised, more generous scheme is being proposed which will lift the lowest income households out of paying council tax altogether. If approved, the new scheme will be implemented leading up to 2023/24.
- Implementation of Business Rates Revaluation and government schemes announced in the Autumn budget.
- Carrying out a review of telephony across the Council to ensure efficient and streamlined processes and high standards of customer service.
- Carrying out feasibility with ECC Revenues & Benefits Service on exploring opportunities for partnership working/scoping how services can be better aligned.

Clarification and responses included:

- Whilst this Council has a regular relationship with ECC and TDC in terms of shared IT systems, TDC uses different Revenues and Benefits software to that used by this Council and ECC, therefore synergies are closer with ECC. ECC have been proactive in approaching this Council with a view to closer partnership working, and the Assistant Director Revenues & Benefits will be meeting with her counterpart in ECC imminently, to start these conversations.
- The Director for Finance assured Members that sharing computer systems with ECC and TDC does not increase risks of hacking, since data are already held on the same servers, and the same controls and processes through Strata are in place.
- A Member sought to understand where the automations and efficiencies will come in with the new finance system, given that there will be other multiple systems feeding into the main finance system. He asked whether officers would have overview and authorisation of certain transactions, to mitigate risk from errors. The Director for Finance confirmed

that key controls around reconciliations and hierarchy of authorisations are already in place, and will remain in place with the new system. The benefits of the new system are mainly around the ability to report, and procurement. The efficiencies arise from all three authorities designing the finance system together, with development of the same systems and process, meaning that the specialist accountants from the authorities can work together, thereby mitigating against risk of failure.

- It is expected that local councils will continue to be used to deliver funding schemes brought forward by central government, given that district councils in particular are well placed to adapt and get payments out quickly to local residents. Grants are now targeting cost of living, and no further funding is expected in relation to the Covid pandemic.
- The Council does receive funding to cover the costs of administering funding schemes announced by central government, but there is a significant time lag on this being received.
- This Council has a positive track record relative to some other councils in managing the challenges of delivering funding schemes, with the right skills sets, a lot of experience and an agile workforce. The service is therefore able to flex and prioritise and deprioritise work in order to deliver, without reliance on agencies.
- One Member asked if this year's Council Tax and rent increases will mean that more households become eligible for 100% Council Tax reduction. The Assistant Director Revenues & Benefits explained that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme does not take account of expenditure but looks at income to determine which band households fall into. She added that band widths had been revised to allow for the rise in benefits in line with inflation.
- A lot of work takes place to support households with financial resilience and working with trusted partners to try to remove barriers for households in poverty to access support.

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

that the Service Plan 2023-24 for the Finance service be adopted.

82 **Growth, Development and Prosperity**

The Assistant Director Growth, Development and Prosperity provided clarification and response to questions from Members in relation to the service plan for the service for 2023-24.

For the Growth, Development and Prosperity team, work for the coming year would include:

- Input to the development of the new Local Plan with a focus on establishing robust, effective and defensible policies and proposals in a range of areas.
- Lead on the deployment of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Economic Productivity Fund (UKSPF) programmes ensuring core outputs and key milestones are achieved on time and to budget, in line with the UKSPF Investment Plan.
- Provide ongoing support to the East Devon Tourism Network, enabling delivery of relevant Tourism Strategy objectives.
- Ongoing implementation of the Bidsmart initiative across all service areas, with a more collaborative, informed approach to identifying and responding robustly to external funding opportunities.
- Delivery of a vibrant town centre for Cranbrook
- Ongoing work which aligns with the Climate Change Action Plan including Clyst Valley canopy work and the district heating interconnector project.

Questions, clarification and responses included:

- Work has been done at the Heart of the South West level around a vision for sustainable aviation in the area. This included potential for test corridors linking Yeovil, Exeter and Plymouth; it was recognised that work around the launch of Virgin Orbit's Cosmic Girl at Cornwall Airport in Newquay has brought technology and jobs to that part of Cornwall. There is the potential to develop a wider proposition around sustainable aviation as part of the Great South West initiative. This would pick up from the test flights for hybrid-electric propulsion between Exeter and Newquay airport that took place in the summer of 2021.
- The East Devon Tourism Network will bring together a range of bodies and organisations to ensure good visibility on grant schemes and other support coming forward.
- Exeter Airport has been slow to recover from the impact of the pandemic and the demise of FlyBe. The significance of the airport for development of the Science Park and the wider business community is unclear; some key business routes (e.g. to Amsterdam, Paris) have not re-emerged and it would be difficult to demonstrate empirically whether this has impacted on the development of the Science Park. The airport has benefited from financial support which includes £200k from this Council through the Special Case Funds during the pandemic, as well as business rate relief and the furlough scheme nationally.
- Work around delivery of the various assets in Cranbrook is coordinated through the Strategic Delivery Board, and an implementation plan is reviewed at every meeting.

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

that the Service Plan 2023-24 for the Growth, Development and Prosperity service be adopted

83 **Planning**

The Assistant Director for Planning provided clarification and response to questions from Members in relation to the service plan for the service for 2023-24.

The service plan for the coming year included:

- To progress the Local Plan through to a publication draft in accordance with the timetable set out within the local development scheme and in accordance with Members aspirations outlined in the Council Plan.
- Following adoption of the Cranbrook Plan, to determine planning applications for the expansion at Cranbrook and secure the range of uses needed to create the vibrant town envisaged by policy; and to determine applications for the expansion areas at Cranbrook to maintain a supply of housing plots and meet the aspirations for growing the town.
- To manage the efficient and orderly transfer of data in the local land charges system to the Land Registry.

Clarification and responses included:

- Ongoing difficulties around staff recruitment and retention have impacted on service delivery. It is hoped that the recent Reward Review will make the Council more competitive with other public sector organisations, and this will be tested in advertised roles; however, public sector salaries will always lag behind private sector, and people can only compromise to a certain extent. The service is also working to grow its own surveyors and planners for the future, with apprentices being brought in. Additionally, professional bodies are opening up greater routes to qualification into the planning and surveying professions, but it will take time for courses to embed and for people to come in through these routes.
- It was noted that planning fees set by central government have not increased since an inflationary increase around 8 years ago and do not reflect the amount of work involved. Michael Gove MP recently made an announcement about changes to the planning system, including revised fees, and it is hoped that further detail will be announced before the end of the financial year.

- Following any further announcement from central government around changes to the planning system, the Council would need to wait until a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is in place for it to impact planning decisions, and it is not known how long this will take. The Strategic Planning Committee could consider holding off on some decisions in terms of the Local Plan, until such time as the NPPF consultation and its implications are fully understood.
- East Devon is the lead authority for the mitigation strategy for phosphate levels arising from development affecting the River Axe, and is due to receive £100k in funding for the catchment as a whole. A report will be brought to Strategic Planning Committee outlining how the funding could be used; the funding could pay for a dedicated officer to put together the mitigation strategy, with consultants brought in for specialist areas of work. Mitigation is already being delivered through a number of projects and it should be no more than a couple of years before contributions come in through the planning process. There is a risk that in prioritising contributions towards protected habitats, developers will be less able to deliver affordable housing and this is beyond the Council's control; however, the Council will do its best to secure affordable housing within these constraints.
- Currently the Environment Agency is leading on a project which potentially delivers mitigation for the River Axe on a wider scale, with associated cost efficiencies; the Assistant Director for Planning hopes to bring a report to Members in the next couple of months about how the Council can work with the Environment Agency to address the issues.
- Headlines from the Local Plan consultation are expected to be brought to the March meeting of Strategic Planning Committee. All consultation responses including emails and slips written by hand at drop-in centres will be taken into account.
- In respect of delivering infrastructure, CIL was only meant to be part of the funding and unless further funding streams become available from government, there will be insufficient resource to deliver all of the infrastructure that is needed.
- It is hoped that a draft Playing Pitch Strategy will be brought to Members for adoption, within the next six months

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees** that the Service Plan 2023-24 for the Planning service be adopted.

## 84 **Governance and Licensing**

The Director for Governance and Licensing provided clarification and response to questions from Members in relation to the service plan for the service for 2023-24.

The service plan for the coming year included:

- Conduct of the May 2023 elections safely and effectively, with voter ID.
- Implementation of the Induction/Member Development Programme, following May 2023 elections.
- Ensuring implementation of any decision by Council to change its governance arrangements following the outcomes of the Governance Review Working Party.

Clarification and responses included:

- Members were asked to engage with the independent remuneration review process and give their views to the Panel which is impartial.
- When Councillors are appointed to committees after the May 2023 elections, they will need to be properly appraised of the implications and expectations on them, so that the workload is shared evenly.
- Average response time for Freedom of Information requests is within the statutory 20 days.
- A national campaign is now launched highlighting the need for voter ID, ahead of the May 2023 elections, and the returning officer has attended a relevant training course.
- Mandatory training for Members will be delivered early, following the May 2023 elections.

- The new Code of Conduct had been effective in bringing forward Members interests that were previously not obvious, however some Members commented that the electorate were confused about declarations of interest since the new Code had been introduced, and asked for a review of the current framework.

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees** that the Service Plan 2023-24 for the Governance and Licensing service be adopted, subject to the inclusion of an objective to review the Members Code of Conduct in relation to the declarations of interest.

## 85 **Place, Assets and Commercialisation**

The Assistant Director Place, Assets and Commercialisation provided clarification and response to questions from Members in relation to the service plan for the service for 2023-24.

The service plan for the coming year included:

- Commence delivery of priority actions adopted through the new Asset Management Plan to be adopted Spring 2023.
- Support delivery of the Leisure Strategy.
- Delivery of terms of reference and Placemaking Strategy for Exmouth.
- Commence implementation of a Place & Prosperity Fund to be adopted Summer 2023.
- Supporting towns and other communities with the Shared Prosperity Fund, Place & Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up.
- Deliver outcomes of the Public Toilets Review.
- Complete lease to Seaton Tramway of Seaton Jurassic, with associated documentation.
- Undertake a review of depot provision.
- To increase awareness of what is meant by the term Placemaking and facilitate a discussion on this topic and what opportunities are available within East Devon to enable Placemaking outcomes.
- Complete lease to NHS of surplus 1<sup>st</sup> floor offices at Exmouth Town Hall.
- Agree and report on Performance Indicators through Asset Management Forum.
- Using carbon footprint data of building assets as a baseline, introduce a mechanism for capturing details of works undertaken to buildings to evidence progress towards net zero.

Clarification and responses included:

- Key areas of focus are i) placemaking, and in particular finding solutions for stalled employment sites; and ii) improving energy efficiency and sustainability of the Council's buildings.
- In terms of the let portfolio, there is natural churn and when properties become vacant they are usually re-let easily; there is not a problem with voids or the payment of rents.
- Discussions with town and parish councils concerning the transfer of public toilets have been challenging; however, Heads of Terms were agreed by Members and included in the consultation, and it is not intended to re-write them. Regular updates are provided to members of Cabinet and can be circulated more widely to Members.
- In terms of placemaking strategy for the district's towns other than Exmouth, the starting point is what are the opportunities in those towns; there are fewer opportunities in towns where the Council controls fewer assets. A similar project to the Axe Valley study is being rolled out under Shared Prosperity Funding and if opportunities are identified through this study, then the Council can consider how to deliver them.
- The Beer pilot around community asset transfer has been very complex due to the nature of the assets concerned, and learnings have been taken from it. Community asset transfer is a key piece of work and moving forward, it will be important to identify at the outset what is achievable and to decide whether it is practical.

- The service is working on creating an asset register containing useful relevant information other than just what the Council owns, and an update on this work will be provided to Asset Management Forum in March.
- At point 3.3 on the service plan, 'deliver terms of reference and placemaking strategy for Exmouth' refers not to terms of reference for the Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafont Group, but to decisions around the priorities for Exmouth as a place, following the consultation and identification of themes and characteristics, and what projects will be taken forward.
- The wording concerning Broadclyst Leisure Centre at 3.2 in the service plan is lifted from the newly adopted Leisure Strategy.
- A Member asked that the service plan includes specific reference to the site at Websters Garage, Axminster within the first priority listed under section 3.1.
- Electricity costs for the Council's buildings have increased considerably, and the service has reviewed the tariffs that the buildings are on. Work is being done through the capital programme with a view to making efficiency savings but as many of the Council's buildings are quite small, opportunities for financial savings from solar panels are quite limited. The biggest opportunities for carbon and financial savings from solar panels relate to leisure sites, but as utilities are paid for by LED, there is not a financial benefit directly to EDDC.

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees** that the Service Plan 2023-24 for the Place, Assets and Commercialisation service be adopted subject to an amendment within the first priority listed under section 3.1 to make specific reference to the site at Websters Garage, Axminster.

## 86 **Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Team**

The Communications Consultant provided clarification and response to questions from Members in relation to the service plan for the service for 2023-24.

The service plan for the coming year included:

- The Corporate team leading on the digital transformation work under the Financial Sustainability Model, with outputs to be delivered through the year.
- Establishing an equality training and support programme for staff, with training to be delivered by March 2024
- Review of the Community Engagement Policy by December 2023
- Ongoing delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the management of the matching service provision by Citizens Advice East Devon throughout 2023/24.

Clarification and responses included:

- The service is working to improve the website as part of its day to day work, and the Communications Consultant will keep Members informed on progress.
- The home page of the website has been modified to make it clearer how people can contact the Council, including by telephone.
- The Communications Consultant is working closely with the HR team to build staff resilience especially the community development part of the service which has been weakened by long term staff absence.
- The service will be looking at the way some of the community grants are set up, with an aspiration to get them out more quickly with better publicity and encouraging groups and organisations to apply.
- The Corporate team are working on producing a regular newsletter for Members. Internal communications to staff are dealt with by the HR Service, supported by the Corporate team.
- The Corporate team has grown in size to 10 team members with a further team member being recruited.

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees** that the Service Plan 2023-24 for the Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Team service be adopted.

## 87 **HR and Payroll Service**

The HR Manager provided clarification and response to questions from Members in relation to the service plan for the service for 2023-24.

The service plan for the coming year included:

- Provide support and advice on Chief Officer recruitment.
- Evaluate the impact of the Reward Review and reporting outcomes to Personnel Committee and SMT+.
- Agree actions to support Worksmart, informed by the survey analysis and audit, reporting outcomes to Personnel Committee and SMT+.
- Scope and commence Grow Our Own Project to maximise the use of apprenticeships, engagement with local schools and colleges and the development of career pathways, succession planning and talent management.
- Introduction of improved staff benefits offer.
- Scope and begin to implement work to improve the recruitment approach.
- Investors in People reaccreditation and incorporation of learning outcomes into the service plan, as appropriate.

Clarification and responses included:

- Worksmart refers to the set of principles which underpin the hybrid working arrangement. Anecdotally, the flexibility offered by Worksmart appears to be helping with recruitment and retention, and the principles can be modified in light of feedback from evaluation surveys.
- The organisation's Investors in People platinum status ends in March 2023, and on-site visits as part of the reaccreditation process will commence in February. Reaccreditation is every three years and the HR Manager will check and inform Members of the cost.
- HR and Payroll are a small team; there were two part-time business partners covering the Council and supporting Strata. An additional business partner has been secured for Housing specifically, and this has made a considerable difference in moving forward on workforce issues for Housing.
- The Council has a very positive relationship with Unison, and this was particularly helpful during the Reward Review work.
- The HR Manager is the lead officer for inclusion, diversity and equality. These principles interweave through everything that the service does and there are opportunities to share ideas and best practice across authorities. A Member suggested it would be appropriate to have a Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees** that the Service Plan 2023-24 for the HR and Payroll service be adopted.

## 88 **Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2023 - 2024**

The committees had agreed a provisional recommendation to Cabinet, subject to discussion on the service plans taking place. The Director for Finance confirmed that none of the recommended amendments to the service plans would materially impact on the proposed budget.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The Director for Finance stated that the draft budget as presented includes a figure of £1.372m for LED, and does not allow for an additional sum of £126k subsequently



requested by LED. If Members wanted to make a separate recommendation concerning the additional sum, this would need to be made as a separate element to the budget.

- Reports from LED had indicated that they were at the lower end of their reserves in terms of their recommended balances, and this is a matter that will be scrutinised by LED Monitoring Forum. .

**Recommended to Cabinet by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees** to approve the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

O Davey  
H Parr  
E Rylance  
B Taylor  
T Woodward  
J Bonetta (arrived at 12.00pm)  
S Gazzard  
I Hall  
M Hartnell  
V Johns (Chair)

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

P Arnott  
G Jung  
J Loudoun  
M Rixson  
J Rowland  
P Skinner  
T Wright  
P Faithfull

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

Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Joanna Fellows, Corporate HR Manager  
Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management  
Henry Gordon Lennox, Director of Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)  
Andrew Hopkins, Communications Consultant  
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer  
Libby Jarrett, Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services & Corporate Fraud  
John Symes, Finance Manager  
Andrew Wood, Assistant Director Growth Development and Prosperity

#### **Councillor apologies:**

M Allen  
J Bailey  
M Chapman  
C Gardner  
S Hawkins  
D Key  
P Millar

J Whibley  
D Barrow  
D Manley  
A Moulding

Chair: .....

Date: .....



Report to: Scrutiny Committee

**Joint Scrutiny & Overview Committees**

Date of Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

**Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024/25**

**Report summary:**

This report presents the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2024/25 as adopted by Cabinet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024. The Scrutiny and Overview Committees are asked to consider that draft budget and make recommendations for Cabinet to consider on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 when making final budget proposals to recommend to Council.

The draft budget report and linked background paper presented to Cabinet are attached. Specific recommendations are sought from the Committees on the draft budget including the proposed Council Tax level for 2024/25. The proposed draft budget is currently balanced for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.

Since the report to Cabinet was published the Local Government Finance Settlement has been announced giving individual authority settlement numbers, this has made no material overall difference to the monies we assumed we would receive so requires no amendments to the draft budget presented. As for the details there are pluses and minus on what we assumed and for completeness a comparison to the draft budget is given below. The main variation comes in our business rates baseline funding number, however as we estimate total business rates income (baseline and uplift) it means the balance lost in the Government assessment we will adjust in the uplift sum negating any reductions and using this funding line to balance our budget to that proposed in the report. This does however emphasis further the difference between what the Government believes we should be keeping in our business rates and the reality of what we receive.

Comparison between Draft Budget on Cabinet agenda and EDDC Finance Settlement 2024/25:

<b>Income Stream</b>	<b>Draft Budget £000</b>	<b>Settlement £000</b>	<b>Difference (Adverse/Favourable) £000</b>
New Homes Bonus	1,148	1,148	-
Rural Service Delivery Grant	265	265	-
Minimum Funding Guarantee Grant	1,550	1,665	115(F)
Service Grant	58	17	41(A)
Revenue Support Grant	278	277	1(A)
Business Rates Baseline Funding	3,733	3,449	284(A)
Business Rates Retention Uplift	5,077	5,288*	211(F)
<b>Sum</b>			<b>0</b>

\* Adjusted income line to rebalance budget to that proposed in the report (effectively reducing assumed overall business rate income by £73k).

**Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

**Recommendation:**

That the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2024/25 are considered by the Scrutiny and Overview Committees with recommendations on its approval or any amendments being made to Cabinet.

**Reason for recommendation:**

There is a requirement to set a balanced budget and to levy a Council Tax for 2024/25

Officer: Simon Davey – Director of Finance S151 & Interim Chief Executive (shared role)

[sdavey@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:sdavey@eastdevon.gov.uk)

John Symes – Finance Manager & Deputy S151 [jsymes@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:jsymes@eastdevon.gov.uk)

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

An analysis of budget changes has not highlighted areas that give rise to any equality issues that need highlighting. There are no changes proposed from the current service provisions because of the draft budget that will affect individuals.

**Climate change** High Impact

The budget approval gives the Council the resources necessary to undertake its business which will significantly contribute to the carbon footprint of the Council. The Council is committed to reducing its carbon net emissions to zero by 2040 and resources have been factored into the budget to meet this priority.

**Risk:** Medium Risk; Risks have been considered in preparing the budgets and the financial implications have been assessed at the point of preparation. Various budget assumptions have been made including the treatment of inflation and interest rates; estimates on the level and timing of capital receipts; the treatment of demand led pressures; the treatment of planned efficiency savings/productivity gains; levels of income; financial risks inherent in any new arrangements; capital developments; the availability of funds to deal with major contingencies and the need for any provisions. In each of these areas the Council's financial standing, management and track

record have been considered to prepare robust budget proposals. Other specific areas of risk have been highlighted where appropriate within the report.

**Links to background information** Links contained in attached report

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

~~Better homes and communities for all~~

A greener East Devon

A resilient economy

**Financial implications:**

Details are contained in the report

**Legal implications:**

No legal observations are required

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 3 January 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024/25

### Report summary:

This report presents the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2024/25 for adoption by the Cabinet before consideration by a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Housing Review Board.

Recommendations from these meetings will be presented back to Cabinet on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 when members will finalise budget proposals to recommend to Council.

This report has been compiled before the Local Government Finance Settlement which is expected on the 19<sup>th</sup> December, Cabinet will be updated on any implications to the draft budget for its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

**That the draft revenue and capital estimates are adopted before forwarding to a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Housing Review Board for consideration.**

### Reason for recommendation:

There is a requirement to set a balanced budget and to levy a Council Tax for 2024/25

Officer: Simon Davey – Director of Finance S151 & Interim Chief Executive (shared role)

[sdavey@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:sdavey@eastdevon.gov.uk)

John Symes – Finance Manager [jsymes@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:jsymes@eastdevon.gov.uk)

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

## **Equalities impact** Low Impact

An analysis of budget changes has not highlighted areas that give rise to any equality issues that need highlighting. There are no changes proposed from the current service provisions because of the draft budget that will affect individuals.

## **Climate change** High Impact

The budget approval gives the Council the resources necessary to undertake its business which will significantly contribute to the carbon footprint of the Council. The Council is committed to reducing its carbon net emissions to zero by 2040 and resources have been factored into the budget to meet this priority.

**Risk:** Medium Risk; Risks have been considered in preparing the budgets and the financial implications have been assessed at the point of preparation. Various budget assumptions have been made including the treatment of inflation and interest rates; estimates on the level and timing of capital receipts; the treatment of demand led pressures; the treatment of planned efficiency savings/productivity gains; levels of income; financial risks inherent in any new arrangements; capital developments; the availability of funds to deal with major contingencies and the need for any provisions. In each of these areas the Council's financial standing, management and track record have been considered to prepare robust budget proposals. Other specific areas of risk have been highlighted where appropriate within the report.

**Links to background information** [2024/25 Budget Book](#)

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

Priorities (check which apply)

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

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## **1. Process**

- 1.1 The Constitution requires Cabinet to approve the draft revenue and capital budget prior to consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Housing Review Board will undertake the same function in relation to the Housing Revenue Account budgets.
- 1.2 Recommendations from these meetings will be presented back to Cabinet at its meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January, along with any comments from the business community. At this meeting members will be required to recommend to Council a budget and the Council Tax requirement for 2024/25.
- 1.3 At the same time as preparing the draft budget, draft service plans have been prepared for member consideration which have where possible reflected the emerging new Council Plan. This is helped by the Council proposing to retain its core key priorities that are within its existing Plan and looking to recognising how important day to day service delivery is to our residents and businesses.

## 2. General Fund Budget

### The Overall Financial Picture

- 2.1 Members will be aware the Council's costs are mainly met through Business Rate income, a decreasing sum from New Homes Bonus Grant (NHB), Council Tax and through fees and charges on services it provides. A relatively small proportion is met from general government grant.
- 2.2 The Local Government Finance Settlement is a crucial part in the Council's budget preparation. This details the rules and allocations around key income streams and how much the Council can expect to receive from them. The exception being fees and charges which in the main the Council can determine itself, except with planning fees which are determined by Government.
- 2.3 Unfortunately, the settlement is not expected until 19<sup>th</sup> December, too late to be reflected in this report to meet the agenda publishing timetable. On 5 December 2023, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government published a written ministerial statement which was accompanied by a policy statement on the 2024/25 local government finance settlement. This statement comes ahead of the full 2024/25 provisional local government finance settlement announcement. The statement confirmed that:
- The Government will not proceed with any fundamental reforms to the finance system in 2024/25.
  - Overall, the Government expects core spending power for local authorities will increase by 6% on 2023/24.
  - Councils will be compensated for business rate reductions applied by Government.
  - That shire district councils will have a referendum principle of 3% or £5, whichever is higher and there continues to be no referendum limits set for town and parish councils.
  - Continue with the funding guarantee to increase every council's core spending power by at least 3% before additional council tax income as result of council tax local level decisions is factored in.
  - New Homes Bonus will continue in 2024/25 with a new round which will attract no legacy payments.
- 2.4 The adopted Financial Plan which contains the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) estimated for 2024/25 a budget gap of £578k from services costs increasing greater than income generated. The assumption had been made in the Plan that business rate rebasing would not occur at least until 2026/27.
- 2.5 The Financial Sustainability Model (FSM), as part of the Financial Plan, has generated savings and produced additional income, which includes work by the Revenues Team to maximise the council tax base and New Homes Bonus payment; these actions along with increased business rates and working with budget managers has given us a **Draft General Fund Budget for 2024/25 that is balanced and includes a planned transfer to the General Fund of £0.5M.** The requirement for this transfer is detailed further in this report.



## **Draft Revenue Budget 2024/25**

- 2.6 A summary position of the General Fund draft budget is given below. Further details are contained in the Budget Book linked to this report showing the current budget and the draft budget proposed for 2024/25 alongside variation between years. The draft budget has been prepared based on continuing to provide existing services.
- 2.7 The draft budget includes key areas that align to the emerging Council Plan and details can be drawn from service plans.

## General Fund Revenue Budgets 2024/25

Portfolio Budget - Net Expenditure	Original 2023/24 (£)	Original 2024/25 (£)	Variation (£)	%age Change	Notes
Corporate Business	194,520	232,990	38,470	20%	1
Corporate Services	2,207,870	2,407,260	199,390	9%	2
Economy And Regenrtn Portfolio	588,060	571,628	-16,432	-3%	
Environment Portfolio	5,602,440	5,878,759	276,319	5%	3
Finance	-1,154,745	-576,830	577,915	-50%	4
Strategic Development & P'Ship	3,188,800	2,847,812	-340,988	-11%	5
Street Scene Portfolio	13,151,070	14,366,010	1,214,940	9%	6
Sustainable Homes & Communitie	1,714,654	2,108,156	393,502	23%	7
<b>Portfolio Totals</b>	<b>25,492,669</b>	<b>27,835,785</b>	<b>2,343,116</b>	<b>9%</b>	
Reversal of Capital Charges (Depreciation)	-3,270,390	-3,347,540	-77,150	2%	
<b>Portfolio Totals Net of Capital Charges</b>	<b>22,222,279</b>	<b>24,488,245</b>	<b>2,265,966</b>	<b>10%</b>	
Interest Receipts (Net of investment management fees)	-1,148,535	-1,581,690	-433,155		
Interest Payable	300	300	0		
PWLB Interest & Principal Repayments	523,190	506,410	-16,780		
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>21,597,234</b>	<b>23,413,265</b>	<b>1,816,031</b>	<b>8%</b>	
<b>Government Grants</b>					
New Homes Bonus Grant	-1,025,642	-1,147,701	-122,059		
Rural Services Delivery Grant	-264,441	-265,000	-559		
Minimum Funding Guarantee Grant	-1,530,145	-1,550,000	-19,855		
Service Grant	-107,777	-58,000	49,777		
Savings Target	-70,000	0	70,000		
<b>Use of Reserves</b>					
Use of Collection fund surplus	-358,810	-96,000	262,810		
Earmarked Reserves	-1,295,160	-865,411	429,749		
Use of General Fund Balance for elections	-169,290	0	169,290		
Use of MTFP Risk Reserve	-86,069	0	86,069		
Contribution to/(from) General Fund Balance	0	500,000	500,000		
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>16,689,900</b>	<b>19,931,153</b>	<b>2,655,184</b>	<b>16%</b>	
Revenue Support Grant	-260,000	-278,000	-18,000		
Business Rate Baseline Funding	-3,098,000	-3,733,000	-635,000		
Final Settlement adjustment (post budget)	-140,000	0 (tbc)	140,000		
Business Rate Retention Inflation Uplift	-3,300,000	-5,077,242	-1,777,242		
Business Rate Pooling Gain	-318,000	-428,000	-110,000		
-	0	0	0		
<b>Reported Council Tax Requirement</b>	<b>9,973,900</b>	<b>10,414,911</b>	<b>254,942</b>	<b>3%</b>	

## 2.8 Significant variations between years to note:

- Overall, there has been a significant increase in employee related costs of £2.3m. The implications of the 2023/24 national pay award being £1,925 per employee has now been included in the base budget with a further 2% rise for 2024/25. This was the pay award assumption in the MTFP for 2024/25 but considering other councils' assumptions a further £0.5m unallocated contingency has been factored into next year's budget, adding a further 2% possible increase.
- Premises and Transport costs have remained broadly the same with a £3.6m budget across the services.
- Total income in fees and charges has increase by £1.6m to £16.4m from £14.8m.

### **Service specific variations referenced to the table above.**

#### 1. Corporate Business

Inclusion of fixed term Information and Complaints Officer post circa £37k (including on costs) funded by transformation reserve. While improvements are being made to processes it is recognised workload is currently high and we need to improve our response time.

#### 2. Corporate Services

Following the recent IRP review it was approved that there would be an increase to the basic and special duties allowance, this has resulted an increase in budget for 2024/25, reflecting the amounts agreed and an assumed inflationary increase. Overall, a £70.5k increase in budget.

£500k staff contingency budget pending 2024/25 pay award agreement.

#### 3. Environment

£92k LED service payment increase over 2023/24 budget (+6.7% assumed increase). This is a total of £1.411m plus £50k Outreach grant.

#### 4. Finance

£201k additional net cost in Housing Benefit Awarded through subsidy reduction.

£92k additional net Grant & Other External Income on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Administration but £42k increases in related costs including External Audit of Housing Benefit of £16k.

A new post has been included for Procurement Support £49k (partly offset by a contribution from the HRA).

£86k additional employment costs for Financial Resilience Team funded from earmarked reserve.

## 5. Strategic Development & Partnerships

Income levels within development management have been amended to include an estimate for the introduction of the national fee increase of 35% for major applications and 25% for all other applications. This means that householder applications will increase by 25%, from £206 to £258. The maximum fee for the largest and most complex applications will rise by 35%, from the current £300,000 to £405,000. The regulations also introduce an annual inflation-related increase in fees from 1 April 2025. The increase will be at the rate of the consumer price index from the previous September, capped to a maximum of 10% to ensure that fees do not lose their value in future.

In addition, the regulations remove the existing fee exemption, which allows applicants, in certain circumstances, to submit a second application without paying a fee. Budget income has been increased by £375k for 2024/25 and the staffing establishment has been increased by £188k (4 FTE) to support service delivery.

## 6. StreetScene

Total expenditure on recycling and waste has increased by £1.0m, this reflects the new contract arrangements and captures recent increases in the National Living Wage (+£377k) that feed through to the contract cost.

Green Waste has an improved position of £197k, reflecting both an increase in subscribers and price, also the new contract arrangements with Suez whereby 100% of profit is now retained.

Beach Safety has increased by £44k following provision review as report to committee. This reflects step increases in the % contribution paid by EDDC to the RNLI and the extension of cover to Budleigh (peak season only).

## 7. Sustainable Homes and Communities

Homeless Persons budget has increased by £139k; £131k relates to net costs after government grant and £8k from internal service charges.

Home Safeguard additional net cost £124k, partly due to the addition of an Interim Project Manager and Interim promotion of Call Handlers and Telecare Officers circa £62k to be funded by the Transformation Reserve, income has been reviewed to reflect Home Safeguard customer base overall reduced by £10k and increases in internal service charges (£19k).

2.9 There are two new areas of risk in the draft budget that need to be reflected in considering the Council's General Fund Balance.

- The Council has entered a new cost plus 5% arrangement with its Recycling and Waste Contract (details previously reported and adopted by members) with the cost and income risks now falling entirely to the Council. Whilst a prudent approach has been taken in the draft budget it is considered appropriate that the General Fund Balance needs to increase to factor this additional risk, particular in the first full year of its operation.

- The LED service payment is included in the draft budget at £1.464m, £92k above the current year, factoring in a 6.7% increase. A new service level agreement and annual payment methodology is being developed with the support of Strategic Leisure. This has yet to be finalised and needs considering by the LED Monitoring Forum. The proposal is for detailed budgets, with previous year comparisons, to be presented by LED to be considered in partnership with the Council considering affordability, risks that might be shared and possible efficiency. This was also to include a management fee in recognition of investment required by LED and the need to replenish their reserve levels.

A detailed budget has yet to be presented for consideration, but LED have recently indicated that a payment in the order of £1.960m is required. This being a further £496k above the draft budget sum. This needs to be considered in significant detail by the LED Monitoring Forum, as would be the case with any such increase in any Council budget line. The difference between the budget and LED request is a financial risk to the continued operation of this important public service.

2.10 With the MTFP budget gap in mind only a small number of special items/additional growth areas were brought forward for consideration. These being staff resources where capacity for the Council is currently a concern and at this stage the following has been accommodated into the draft budget proposals.

- £49,890 is the permanent inclusion a Digital Communications Officer post (previously temporary),
- a Procurement Officer Support post has been included within Finance with an appropriate charge being made to the HRA,
- within HR a new Equality & Diversity Advisor post has been added at £34k.
- an Information & Complaints Officer has been added for a 12month period and is being funded by the transformation fund.
- £188k of the additional income raised in planning fees increases for additional staffing resources in Planning Development Team.

Due to the limited scope within the budget the initial request of £10,500 for beach matting at Beer, Budleigh and Sidmouth has been excluded but could be included in future as part of larger scheme plans incorporating external funding. Any outstanding special requests could also be considered again at the 2023/24 outturn stage.

## 2.11 Council Tax

The draft budget assumes the Council will increase the Council Tax for 2024/25 by £5 a year. This is in line with the MTFP and assumptions made by Government on funding available to the Council. This gives a precept for the Council of £10,414,911 raising the current annual council tax charge from £161.78 to £166.78 for a band D property, a 3.09% increase. This is the maximum increase allowed within the Referendum regulations (£5 or 3% which is ever is the greater).

This is based on the Council Tax Base of 62,447 band D properties; an increase of 794 compared with the current year.

## 2.12 General Fund Balance

At the beginning of the current financial year the General Fund Balance stood at £4.3m. This is at the upper end of the previously adopted range between £3.5m and £4.3m.

The purpose of this statutory reserve includes:

- Holding a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing.
- a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies.
- a means of building up funds, this can take the form of earmarked reserves.

To assess the adequacy of unallocated general reserves when setting the budget, the chief finance officer should take account of the strategic, operational, and financial risks facing the authority.

Authorities have been faced by increasing financial pressures and a period of severely constrained resources since 2008. Demands on local government services continue to increase. Local authorities now face significant resource pressures because of increased inflation and the cost-of-living challenges.

Events such as the floods and severe weather episodes and the COVID-19 pandemic have emphasised the need for authorities to be prepared for major unforeseen events. Adequate insurance cover combined with appropriate levels of reserves will enable authorities to manage the demands placed on them in such circumstances.

There is no set formula in determining the appropriate level to be held but a common approach we have adopted is to consider a percentage of the Net Expenditure Budget over a period; we have set 10% to cover a year and half giving £3.5m. To this we have added £0.8m as additional headroom. There are two unique risks identified in setting the 2024/25 budget: new Recycling and Waste Collection contract arrangement and the LED SLA. It is therefore proposed in the budget to transfer £0.5m into the General Fund Balance and revise the range from £4m to £4.8m leaving the Balance at the top end.

**Budget proposals for 2024/25 recommend the General Fund Balance adopted range be increased by £0.5m, giving a revised range of £4m to £4.8m. This will help ensure the Council is in a financial position to respond to immediate and future risks.** This will be reviewed again considering actual outcomes and reflected again at the 2023/24 outturn.

### 2.13 Business Rates

The 2024/25 budget uses the Government's assumed funding calculation at £3.733m (to be confirmed), to this an additional £5.077m has been added to reflect the estimated income above base received in business rates (projection in line with LGFutures estimates for EDDC).

Also, a business rate gain has been included for remaining in the Devon Pool estimated at £0.428m. This has again been included in the base budget, for a second year, to help fund the overall budget.

The Council does hold a Rates Volatility Fund of £0.650m accumulated from previous Business Rate surplus to mitigate the risk if Rates do not achieve this full level and it helps smooth out year on year fluctuations.

### 2.14 New Homes Bonus (NHB)

The Government intention is to end the NHB scheme, the grant for 2024/25 is assumed at £1.148m but is to be confirmed, this remains in line with £1.025m in 2023/24. This is an increase of £123k and reflects work by the Revenues Team to increase the income by reducing the number of recorded empty homes and having a higher taxbase.

## **Budget Strategy for future years**

2.15 The Council adopted in October 2023 the Financial Plan 2024 – 2034 which comprised two parts:

➤ **Part A - The Medium Term Financial Plan Model (MTFP)**

The MTFP provides a financial model and forecast of the cost of providing services over a rolling ten-year period, together with an estimate of the financial resources that are likely to be available to the Council. The process is designed to provide an early warning of any potential deficit in the required level of resources.

An extract from that Model is shown in the table below and highlights again the impact of worse case on business rates rebasing in 2026/27 with a shortfall of £4.5m.

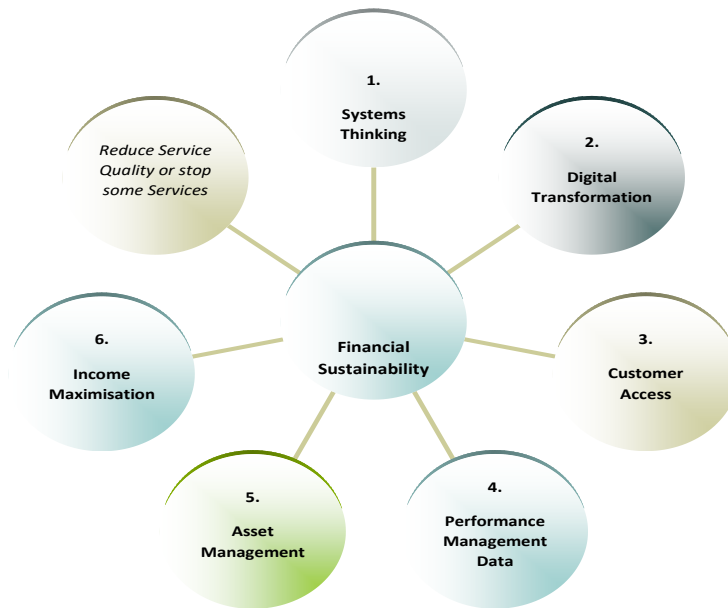
<b>General Fund</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>	<b>2029/30</b>	<b>2030/31</b>	<b>2031/32</b>	<b>2032/33</b>	<b>2033/34</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Budget Shortfall/(Surplus)</b>	578	563	4,467	(154)	(126)	(131)	863	(142)	(258)	(44)

The draft budget now prepared in detail for 2024/25 gives a balanced budget, however future year budget shortfalls remain.

## ➤ Part B – Financial Sustainability Model (FSM)

This part of the Financial Plan considers how the Council will balance its finances over the coming years to continue to provide service for its residents and customers. This work needs to continue with in more earnest, to ensure we are achieving Value for Money throughout the Council within each service, to evidence this and seek improvement and savings where possible. Key enablers are identified to aid us in this process with Enabler Leads identified and corporate resources being available to work with services.

Extract from the FSM as a reminder to the process adopted;



Depending on the outcome of this work and savings achieved, consideration will then need to be given to service reductions to balance the books to achieve financial sustainability.

## 3 Housing Revenue Account Budget

### The Overall Financial Picture

- 3.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is underpinned and influenced by a business plan, this plan needs to be updated with revised financial modelling once the house condition survey work is complete to include an Asset Management Strategy to determine future priorities and affordability going forward.

The draft 2024/25 budget approach has been similar to the current year with variations as noted below. The budget is seen as an interim solution whilst restructured teams bed in which may also result in the re-organisation of budgets but within the same financial envelope. All planned expenditure is met from available income.



3.2 The increase in any individual tenants rent is normally limited to inflation + 1% for the forthcoming financial year. Inflation is taken as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate at the prevailing rate for September 2023, which was official registered at 6.7%.

The draft budget assumes an increase in Council House rents to this level with a factor included for a reduction in stock numbers and voids giving £21.48m, an increase of £1.47m. An increase of 3.5% has been assumed on garage rents giving an additional £8k in income but members may consider this not to be appropriate.

### Draft Revenue Budget 2024/25

3.3 The budget book details the draft estimates for 2024/25.

3.4 The budget has been prepared to maintain council homes to a high standard with a comprehensive planned programme of expenditure, adaptations and routine repairs. The 2024/25 draft budget maintains significant sums for:

- Major repairs totalling £2.9m covering new doors, boilers, kitchens and bathrooms, including change of tenancy expenditure, replacement of wooden fascias with uPVC and roof replacements.
- Day to day repairs, programme maintenance and one off works totalling £5.8m.

Sum of Budget			Data			
Rep Cat 1	Rep Cat 2	Rep Cat 3	2023 YTD	2024	Variance	Notes
1 INCOME	1 Gross Property Rent inc Garages	1 Gross Property Rents	-19,911,900	-21,088,320	-1,176,420	1
		2 Garage Rents	-231,110	-220,150	10,960	2
	2 Other Income	1 Other Income	-658,510	-738,070	-79,560	
<b>1 INCOME Total</b>			<b>-20,801,520</b>	<b>-22,046,540</b>	<b>-1,245,020</b>	
2 EXPENDITURE	1 Repairs And Maintenance - General	1 Responsive Maintenance	2,411,398	2,945,390	533,992	3
		2 Annual Programmed Maintenance	1,539,760	1,520,920	-18,840	
	2 Repairs And Maintenance - Special	1 Compliance	808,600	650,050	-158,550	4
		2 Other	1,003,560	710,160	-293,400	5
	3 Supervision And Management	1 Supervision And Mgt General	5,057,711	5,886,631	828,920	6
		2 Supervision And Mgt Special	3,030,540	3,416,870	386,330	
	4 Other Expenditure	1 Other Exp non Sewerage	571,500	686,070	114,570	7
		2 Sewerage	45,740	45,740	0	
	5 Capital Charges & Bad Debt	2 Reval Deprn and Impair	950,420	950,420	0	
		3 Major Repairs Expenditure	3,356,710	2,800,900	-555,810	8
<b>2 EXPENDITURE Total</b>			<b>18,775,939</b>	<b>19,613,151</b>	<b>837,212</b>	
3 FINANCING	1 Interest on Balances		-49,000	-458,600	-409,600	9
		2 Loan Principal & Interest repayments	2,608,580	2,663,160	54,580	
	3 Other	1 Gain on Disposal	-3,161,910	-3,161,910	0	
		2 Loss on Disposal	2,001,980	2,001,980	0	
		4 Other	-10	-10	0	
	4 MIRS	1 Rev Gain on Disposal	3,161,910	3,161,910	0	
		2 Rev Loss on Disposal	-2,001,980	-2,001,980	0	
		3 Rev Rev, Dep & Impair	-950,420	-950,420	0	
4 TFR to EARRES		-40,000	0	40,000		
	5 Cont to Capital	880,000	1,179,259	299,259	10	
<b>3 FINANCING Total</b>			<b>2,449,150</b>	<b>2,433,389</b>	<b>-15,761</b>	
(blank)			0	0	0	
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>423,569</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-423,569</b>	

### Variations referenced to the above table

1. Cpi +1% (7.7%) increase in rental income per central government guidance.
2. 3.5% increases across all other income including garage rents and associated void levels.

3. 4.6% (Oct CPI proxy) uplift on monthly PPP Payments plus a rebasing of budget requirements for exceptions and non-PPP Properties.
  4. Reduction in Asbestos works based upon current spend patterns.
  5. Fuel efficiency measures budget reduced by the spend to date on the Cyclo boiler project.
  6. Interim housing structure changes plus assumed 2% inflationary uplift as a pay award.
  7. Inflationary uplifts and warm hub contribution of £50k.
  8. Reduced level to include only Void works and Kitchen and Bathroom programs, budget moved to capital contribution.
  9. Continued good rate of return on investments due to interest rate levels.
  10. All surplus to be allocated as a contribution to capital to partially fund planned major works with any additional requirements funded through borrowing.
- 3.5 The proposed Housing Revenue Account draft budget presented is a balanced budget, with any surplus to be included within an increased contribution to capital of £1.2m to invest in our stock and fund capital projects. The HRA Balance is currently predicted to meet the £3.1m level at the end of 2023/24 once contributions to and from reserves are taken into account. There is an additional £1.6m being held in the HRA debt Volatility Fund which remains unchanged.
- 3.6 The draft HRA budget will be reviewed by the Housing Review Board (HRB) on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

## **4 Capital Programme**

### **The Overall Financial Picture**

- 4.1 The draft Capital Programme for 2024/25, after in year available resources are used, gives an overall funding need of £9.114m. The funding position across years will be managed in the most efficient manner considering the Council's overall Treasury Management position.
- 4.2 Any underfunded capital is factored into the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) calculation (the amount required to be charged to the revenue account for unfunded capital) in line with the Council's MRP Policy. In addition, there will either be interest on any external loans required to be factored in, or the loss of investment interest on any internal borrowing used. This has been factored into the 2024/25 draft budget. The higher the unfunded element of the capital programme the greater cost to the General Fund going forward.
- 4.3 The preparation of the draft Capital Budget has been directed by the Budget Setting & Allocation Panel who met on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 to consider scheme proposals. The Panel considered funding resources available, the capital appraisal process and then each scheme proposal in turn. A total of £5.159m was approved to be included in the programme, however £2.102m relating to property linked to LED will be subject to further discussion to ensure compatibility with the agreed LED SLA position. Minutes of this meeting are presented to Cabinet.

4.4 The capital appraisal process has been used to build a capital programme aimed at delivering the Council's stated priorities and ensuring schemes meet set outcomes. Each scheme is given a score against a set criteria such as how the project meets the Council Plan, the risk involved, any part funding, invest to save, service provision and carbon implications; scoring schemes higher which contributed to a reduction in carbon. This scoring is used to measure priority against the funding available.

For each scheme proposed an Initial Project Proposal Form was completed as governed in the adopted "Guide to Project Management". It was recognised by BSCAP the importance of the emerging Asset Management Plan in determining capital spend allocations going forward.

### **Draft Capital Budget 2024/25**

4.5 The budget book details the draft capital programme for 2023/24 to 2027/28.

4.6 A summary of the capital funding position is given below:

<b>Capital Programme Financing</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Net Expenditure to be Financed (GF & HRA)	<b>14,292,256</b>	<b>15,556,302</b>	<b>13,509,935</b>	<b>12,282,758</b>	<b>8,469,090</b>
<b>Adjust for unused income from grants/contributions:</b>					
	<b>14,292,256</b>	<b>15,556,302</b>	<b>13,509,935</b>	<b>12,282,758</b>	<b>8,469,090</b>
<b>Financing:</b>					
In year capital receipts General Fund	(400,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)
3rd Party Loan repayments	(676,231)	(1,336,497)	(102,888)	(906,117)	(109,449)
GF Capital Receipts Reserve	0	0	0	0	0
<b>General Fund Capital Receipts</b>	<b>(1,076,231)</b>	<b>(1,536,497)</b>	<b>(302,888)</b>	<b>(1,106,117)</b>	<b>(309,449)</b>
PWLB loan - EZ - Park and Change	(209,274)				
<b>GF Loans</b>	<b>(209,274)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
HRA Released RTB and Misc Capital Receipts	(500,000)	(500,000)	(500,000)	(500,000)	(500,000)
HRA contribution - From Major Repairs Reserve	(3,881,710)	(4,406,000)	(4,406,000)	(4,406,000)	(4,406,000)
HRA Cont "Depn"	0	0	0	0	0
<b>HRA funding</b>	<b>(4,381,710)</b>	<b>(4,906,000)</b>	<b>(4,906,000)</b>	<b>(4,906,000)</b>	<b>(4,906,000)</b>
<b>New Homes Bonus Funding</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Net (internal borrowing) / Transfer to Capital Reserves balance	(8,625,041)	(9,113,805)	(8,301,047)	(6,270,641)	(3,253,641)
<b>GF Loans/Internal Borrowing</b>	<b>(8,625,041)</b>	<b>(9,113,805)</b>	<b>(8,301,047)</b>	<b>(6,270,641)</b>	<b>(3,253,641)</b>
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>(14,292,256)</b>	<b>(15,556,302)</b>	<b>(13,509,935)</b>	<b>(12,282,758)</b>	<b>(8,469,090)</b>
<b>Shortfall / (Surplus)</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

4.7 The draft capital budget for 2024/25 totals £15.556m (net of direct grants), with the unfunded amount being £9.114m. There continues to be no New Homes Bonus (NHB) or significant capital receipts/reserves available to fund the capital programme.

## **5 Other Balances & Reserves available to the Council**

- 5.1 The Council holds a number of earmarked reserves set aside for specific purposes, the use of such reserves in the 2024/25 draft budget are detailed in the budget book for members' information. In addition, members have ring-fenced the use of the Transformation Fund to support the decisions made over public toilet provision - implementation costs, continued running costs whilst transfers/disposals are completed and to assist with legal fees incurred by town and parish councils. The extension and use of the Fund is likely to be required in 2024/25 and it is proposed an additional provision sum is allocated of £200k if required.

## **6. Robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves**

- 6.1 This part of the report deals with the requirement of Section 25 (2) of the Local Government Act 2003 in that the Council's Chief Finance Officer (CFO) must report on the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of reserves for which the budget provides.
- 6.2 In terms of the robustness of the estimates, all known factors have been considered and the financial implications have been assessed at the point of preparation. Various budget assumptions have been made including the treatment of inflation and interest rates, estimates on the level and timing of capital receipts, the treatment of demand led pressures, the treatment of planned efficiency savings/productivity gains and levels of income, financial risks inherent in any new arrangements and capital developments and the availability of funds to deal with major contingencies and the need for any provisions. In each of these areas the Council's financial standing, management and track record have been considered in order to prepare robust budget proposals.
- 6.3 The proposed draft budgets for 2024/25 maintain both the General Fund balance and the Housing Revenue Account balance at adopted levels provided actual net expenditure is at, or below, the level forecast. Continuous monitoring and reports to Cabinet will highlight and make recommendations on any corrective action necessary to achieve this during 2024/25. The position on these Balances will be considered again at the 2023/24 Outturn stage when the final year end position is known.

Particular risks have been highlighted in the report with the full business rate income being taken into the budget and the financial risks, as highlighted by the MTFP, that any reform/rebasing may bring.

This report has also been prepared without the Local Finance Settlement having been announced and members will be updated on the implications of the actual Settlement.

## **7. Prudential Code**

- 7.1 The Local Government Act 2003 also requires under regulation for local authorities to have regard to the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) when setting and reviewing their affordable borrowing limit.
- 7.2 The key objective of the Code is to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable. A further key objective is to ensure that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and in a manner that supports prudence, affordability and sustainability.

- 7.3 To demonstrate that local authorities have fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out the indicators that must be used and the factors that must be taken into account. These indicators will be presented to the next Cabinet meeting when a recommendation will be made on the budget for 2024/25, Council Tax levy and Council House Rents.
- 7.4 A Capital Strategy is required to be approved by Council annually to consider any investment property the Council holds or likely to hold, what this means in terms of financial exposure and risk. This will be presented along with the documents above at the next Cabinet for onward approval by Council in February 2024.

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**Financial implications:**

Financial details are contained in the report.

**Legal implications:**

No legal observations are required.

# Countryside and Leisure Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Countryside and Leisure Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b></p> <p>Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes &amp; communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.</p>
	<p><b>Greener East Devon</b></p>
2.1.1	<p>District Ecologist to deliver following targets for 2024/25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment of Ecology Officer and Trainee Ecologist into the team to manage Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements from 2024/25</li> <li>• Identify as part of the new BNG duty suitable land to create a Local Habitat Bank to secure a district natural credit scheme.</li> <li>• Work with Development Management (DM) team in providing guidance and training on Biodiversity Net Gain implementation.</li> <li>• Work with the Planning Policy team on the biodiversity chapter and supporting evidence of the new local plan, to include 10% BNG policy for East Devon, and assessment/integration of biodiversity within site allocation process.</li> <li>• Work with Service Leads in both Countryside and Planning to deliver Natural England policy on nutrient neutrality on the River Axe SAC through the Triple Axe project (collaborative partnership with National Landscapes, SWW, WRT, NE &amp; EA); training for DM colleagues, draft Habitat Regs Assessment document, and exploration of other measures such as water saving measures and upgrades of septic tanks.</li> <li>• Collaborate with Devon Local Nature Partnership to develop new statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy with targets for east Devon sites to improve the district’s biodiversity.</li> <li>• Improvement of the EDDC website and DM processes relating to ecology – i.e., overhauling the website to provide an ecology section, updating validation criteria and providing Listed Building Consent protected species position.</li> <li>• Integration of Habitats Regulations Assessment into internal processes, such as events booking, engineering team projects and other internal processes.</li> </ul>
2.1.2	<p>Countryside team and District Ecologist to develop proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for both further habitat acquisition in the District that can facilitate commitments to nature recovery</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• and carbon reduction/adaptation such as the Seaton Wetlands utilising the emerging Local Habitat map to implement nature recovery networks.</li> </ul>
2.1.3	<p>Deliver new visitor infrastructure to Seaton Wetlands to enhance visitor experience and monetise the increased footfall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a pop-up refreshment facility – concessionary arrangement or in-house (Black Hole Marsh hub)</li> <li>• Installation of revised interpretation and welcome panels throughout the site, including updated waymarking system</li> <li>• Work with DCC to ensure smooth delivery of cycle route extension.</li> <li>• Development of a small suitable retail offer from the Discovery Hut selling natural history books and children’s explorer equipment.</li> <li>• Installation of revised interpretation and welcome panels throughout the site, including updated waymarking system</li> </ul>
2.1.4	<p>Work with Forestry England and Offwell Woodlands Trust to deliver in 2024/25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take on tenancy of the Offwell Woods site as a Countryside Team managed woodland to enable the declaration of a new Local Nature Reserve for East Devon.</li> <li>• Embed existing volunteers into the wider countryside volunteering framework</li> </ul>
2.1.5	<p>Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Saving Species Fund’ project successfully applied for and first year delivery funded. Species Spaces from Sea to Source in year one will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create Sheep’s Marsh intertidal scheme,</li> <li>• make improvements to freshwater grazing marsh,</li> <li>• engage private landowners with 12 hectares of species rich pasture restoration.</li> <li>• work with neighbouring landowners to increase conservation grazing of heathland over 20 hectares at Trinity Hill.</li> </ul>
2.1.6	<p>Develop a Tree Strategy that sets out the framework for engaging with climate change, tree wardens and community engagement, tackling pests and diseases, and requirements for trees within development sites.</p>
2.1.7	<p>Tree team to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on planting initiatives across East Devon working with climate change officer, Streetscene, Housing to get a council wide approach.</li> <li>• Engage local stakeholders / landowners for large scale planting including the identification of appropriate street tree planting locations throughout East Devon.</li> <li>• Actively engage and develop tree warden scheme across East Devon to help with the protection of existing trees and planting of new trees.</li> </ul>
2.1.8	<p>Support the work of the World Heritage Site Partnership, East Devon &amp; Blackdown Hills National Landscapes partnerships:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation, review and adoption of 2 National Landscapes Management Plans during 2024-25</li> <li>• Implement recommendations from the Defra review of protected landscapes including the rebranding to National Landscapes</li> <li>• Recruit into the vacant East Devon National Landscape Manager, National Landscape Project Officer and National Landscape Comms Officer roles (due to retirement)</li> <li>• Provide funds for the delivery of the 2 National Landscape Business Plans (see <a href="http://www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk">www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk</a> and <a href="http://www.blackdownhillaonb.org.uk">www.blackdownhillaonb.org.uk</a> )</li> </ul>
2.1.9	<p>The whole Service to contribute to the East Devon’s Public Health Plan and improved health and wellbeing through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish projects delivering health benefits such as Wild Honiton</li> <li>• THG outreach programme – Creative Cabin, THG Out &amp; About</li> <li>• Actively support volunteers on our sites and help provide mental and physical benefits through their participation in activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Better Homes and Communities</b>	
2.1.10	<p>Implement East Devon’s Culture Strategy for East Devon 2022-32 that sets out the vision and aims for EDDC’s support for the arts &amp; culture sector.</p> <p>Identified new areas are projects, activities and events for 2024/25 which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment: Improve the environmental practices of the district's cultural festivals to establish them as leaders in sustainable event management (pilot with Exmouth Festival)</li> <li>• Cultural Tourism: Linking with the new Tourism Strategy, develop a central ‘what’s on’ hub to inform both the tourism industry and consumers about the local cultural offer.</li> <li>• Creative Enterprise and Skills: Build inspiring talent development pathways for the current and next generation of East Devon creatives through setting up an ACED mentoring scheme.</li> <li>• New Places for Culture: Integrate cultural spaces and opportunities into new housing developments including Cranbrook.</li> <li>• Connectivity: Continue building the ACED network via 3 annual meetings, monthly newsletters, information-sharing and socials</li> <li>• Cultural Leadership: Integrate Cultural Strategy Objectives and Actions into wider Council plans, staff work schedules and resource planning to understand what resources are available and where gaps remain.</li> <li>• Capture Value: Develop a single evaluation process that captures the social, economic, environmental and health &amp; wellbeing value of culture, enabling advocacy for the sector as a whole.</li> </ul>



2.1.11	<p>Deliver year 2 of the UK SPF cultural programme &amp; Rural England Prosperity Fund culture and leisure programme 2022-2025 with the following outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver Round 2 of the Creative East Devon Fund</li> <li>• Continue delivering training opportunities for ACED Members</li> <li>• Enhance the quality and appeal of collections, and the sustainability of local museums, through a programme of shared capital investment in display and interpretation.</li> <li>• Support the Economic Development Team on the new Climate Action Programme (CAP, replacing Culture, Leisure and Tourism Fund) to administer decarbonisation grants to community organisations</li> </ul>
2.1.12	<p>THG to deliver a new programme (outside of core work programme) that will be submitted to the Arts Council for funding in July 2024 to create a new programme for 2024/25 'Process and Place' - exploring creative process through time and place including.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art in the form of climate care and action.</li> <li>• Supporting and showcasing local South West artists.</li> <li>• Considering human engagement with the earth, art and artefacts.</li> <li>• Researching our cultural heritage.</li> <li>• Engaging and reviving of forgotten craft techniques.</li> <li>• Transforming THG's engagement programme and strengthened relationships to East Devon communities i.e., schools and other groups including.</li> </ul>
2.1.13	<p>Manor Pavilion Theatre will deliver new areas of work outside of the main programme in 2024/25 that include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up new programme of collaborative talks/plenary sessions with THG's exhibition programme 2024/25</li> <li>• Ballet Theatre UK return with 2 new productions 2024/25.</li> <li>• Explore opportunity to make Sidmouth Youth Theatre a permanent residency within the arts centre from 2025.</li> </ul>
2.1.14	<p>EDDC's Leisure &amp; Built Facilities Strategy 2022-31 and delivery plan to achieve new work areas in 2024/25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start review of dual use site arrangements and secure a better outcome for EDDC in the funding arrangements.</li> <li>• Agree the future template for LED's management fee for 2024/25 and beyond integrating future savings targets to reduce fees.</li> <li>• Implement programme of energy reduction measures with replacement of existing boilers with air source heat pumps etc.</li> <li>• Review and put in place new management fee arrangement on a rolling 2 yearly basis that enables flexibility in setting the fee.</li> <li>• LED Outreach programme enables delivery of EDDC's Public Health action plan targets 2024/25 and also year 2 of the UK SPF Leisure programme</li> </ul>

<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>	
2.1.15	Embed consideration of climate change into biodiversity assessments, policy, and decision making, such as consideration for suitable plant species, control of invasive species, and use of technology to minimise carbon consumption, e.g., by reducing travel.
2.1.16	THG 'Climate Conversations programme'. Encouraging artists and groups to promote climate justice as part of our ongoing programme.
2.1.17	Improve the environmental practices of the district's cultural festivals to establish them as leaders in sustainable event management working with Exmouth Festival in 2024 as a pilot to create a template for other festivals in East Devon to achieve carbon footprint reductions.
2.1.18	Following on from members of the THG team receiving Carbon Literacy "train the trainer training", we aim to deliver Carbon Literacy awareness and sound bites to THG staff, volunteers, young people, artists and wider groups
2.1.19	THG, leisure centres and Manor Pavilion theatre are buildings with poor heating, ventilation and insulation due to their age and their energy consumption/efficiency can be improved
2.1.20	Undertake carbon reduction evaluation on events using toolkit such as Julie's Bicycle to capture reduced emissions achieved
2.1.21	Work with Climate Change Officer to help develop the Council's Carbon Descent plan with an audit of the carbon footprint of existing buildings, assets etc

<b>2.2 Key projects in 2024-25</b>	
2.2.1	Development of a Local Nature Recovery Plan for the district that identifies our key species and habitats and also where nature recovery will be targeted in the district.
2.2.2	Creation of a local Habitat Bank (as part of the Environment Act 2021 new duties for Biodiversity Net Gain.)
2.2.3	Adoption of a Tree Strategy for East Devon
2.2.4	Delivery of UK SPF Cultural programme year 2
2.2.5	Delivery of Heritage Lottery Fund Species Survival Fund project (Spaces from Sea to Source project)

# Environmental Health Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Environmental Health Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b></p> <p>Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes &amp; communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.</p>
2.1.1	<p>Whole service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Service Structure to ensure that it is able to deliver the range of Environmental Health services efficiently and effectively.</li> <li>• Design and deliver out a programme of ‘Systems Thinking’ Reviews across the Service.</li> <li>• Review Performance Indicators, recording and presentation of data. To include audit of ‘Uniform’ system.</li> <li>• Review Service Enforcement Policies</li> </ul>
2.1.2	<p>Private Sector Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of strategies, policies and procedures.</li> <li>• Use of Power BI</li> </ul>
2.1.3	<p>Environmental Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of strategies, policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
2.1.4	<p>Commercial Premises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of digital technologies</li> </ul>
2.1.5	<p>Corporate safety management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement and Introduction of new Corporate Safety Management System</li> <li>• Associated review of identified policies and procedures.</li> </ul>

2.1.6	Public Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate Strategy Review and Publication</li> </ul>
2.1.7	Anti-Social Behaviour & Community Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of Strategies, Policies, Procedures and Training</li> </ul>
2.1.8	Emergency Planning and Business Continuity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service wide Business Impact Analysis</li> </ul>
2.1.9	Safeguarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop QA Process for Safeguarding submission</li> </ul>
2.1.10	Climate Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan</li> </ul>
2.1.11	Review of online information and self-service links

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Service Structure and Procedures
2.2.2	Poverty Reduction Strategy 2024; Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2024
2.2.3	Environmental Protection Review of Strategies, Policies and Procedures
2.2.4	Commercial Premises - Application of Digital Technologies
2.2.5	Improving communication and recording of corporate safety issues
2.2.6	Working to tackle priorities identified in Public Health Strategy
2.2.7	Anti-social Behaviour & Community Safety - Review of policies and procedures

2.2.8	Emergency Planning and Business Continuity - Service wide Business Impact Analysis
2.2.9	Develop QA Process for Safeguarding submission
2.2.10	Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2024
2.2.11	Review of online information and self-service links

# Housing Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Housing Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b> Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes & communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.
2.1.1	Implementing the new strategy and delivering against the actions from the 2024-2028 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
2.1.2	Effectively utilise additional funding streams including the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding which focuses on providing positive outcomes for rough sleepers
2.1.3	Ensure we have a strategic approach in place for providing homes for large families. Similarly take a strategic approach to the provision of specially adapted homes for families requiring them.
2.1.4	Review the eligibility of sheltered housing services reflecting sustainable communities moving forward, including consideration of decommissioning units and alternative usage where appropriate.
2.1.5	Implementation of a permanent structure across tenancy services, bringing stability to the teams and subsequent permanent recruitment to team manager posts.
2.1.6	In support of our continued robust collection of rental income, a review in our approach to recovering former arrears will be completed.
2.1.7	Delivery of an externally funded digital inclusion programme for tenants across all tenures, improving on digital skills and supporting our 'digital first' approach.
2.1.8	Investment in our Home Safeguard service to ensure the technology used is fit for the future and underpins the realisation of the commercial capabilities and the potential financial contribution this service can make towards the General Fund.
2.1.9	Further development of the performance information framework for Housing by building upon our existing interactive KPI Dashboard to provide operational information and measures, and further develop our understanding of Housing's wider Service performance.
2.1.10	Improve self-service / digital capabilities for our tenants and staff alike by implementing a secure online self-service portal for our tenants and rollout of mobile-working devices and technology for real-time access to information "in the field" for our staff.

2.1.11	Development and creation of a Strategic Housing Asset Management Strategy aligned with a review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This will drive a programme of planned works across the stock to ensure we are delivering decent homes . This links directly to the EDDC Climate change Action plan that identifies the need to ensure the appropriate level of investment is made across the housing stock in order to ensure we can meet objectives that relate to improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock.
2.1.12	Continue to deliver projects via government funding opportunities (ie. Social housing decarbonisation fund in order to ensure we are taking opportunities to improve energy efficiency measures in our properties).
2.1.13	Develop a new 5-year Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029, setting the strategic direction of the housing service
2.1.14	Develop a Housing Delivery Plan to increase housing stock in an open and transparent way supporting our registered housing partners to deliver much needed affordable housing across the district.
2.1.15	Develop a Tenancy Strategy to include partnership working with wider registered providers.
2.1.16	Review the Councils approach, options and opportunities to meet decarbonisation objectives .
2.1.17	Review and implement any new areas of Policy that link to ensuring we adhere to any changes/amendments that are made to the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
2.1.18	To consider and explore opportunities where contractual services could be brought in house and delivered as direct labour entities as part of longer-term service delivery plans.
	<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>
2.1.17	The following objectives linked directly to the climate change agenda; 2.1.7, 2.1.9, 2.1.10,2.1.11, 2.1.12, 2.1.13 and 2.1.14
2.1.18	Objective 2.1.13 is the most critical objective in relation to the housing services commitment to actions as set out in the Climate Change Action Plan. The development and creation of an Asset Management Strategy will drive progress that the service needs to make in ensuring that climate change and the energy efficiency status of our housing stock is at the forefront of decisions we are making around investment in the stock moving forward. We know what a fundamental difference we can make to people's life's by ensuring that such measures are at the forefront of our decision making. We tailored our stock condition survey format to ensure that we were collecting all of the relevant information we required in relation to the efficiency of our properties and this will be used as the basis to create our Asset management strategy moving forward

2.1.19	Objective 2.1.12 evidences our commitment to ensure we are maximising all opportunities to access direct government funding in order to assist us in the financial challenges ahead with regards to the climate change agenda and our stock. The investment required to improve the efficiency of our stock will be a significant financial challenge for the Housing Revenue Account, it is therefore essential for us to maximise grant opportunities such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund.
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<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Implementing the new strategy and delivering against the actions from the 2024-2028 Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
2.2.2	Effectively utilise additional funding streams including the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding which focuses on providing positive outcomes for rough sleepers
2.2.3	Ensure we have a strategic approach in place for providing homes for large families. Similarly take a strategic approach to the provision of specially adapted homes for families requiring them.
2.2.4	Review the eligibility of sheltered housing services reflecting sustainable communities moving forward, including consideration of decommissioning units and alternative usage where appropriate.
2.2.5	Implementation of a permanent structure across tenancy services, bringing stability to the teams and subsequent permanent recruitment to team manager posts.
2.2.6	In support of our continued robust collection of rental income, a review in our approach to recovering former arrears will be completed.
2.2.7	Delivery of an externally funded digital inclusion programme for tenants across all tenures, improving on digital skills and supporting our 'digital first' approach.
2.2.8	Investment in our Home Safeguard service to ensure the technology used is fit for the future and underpins the realisation of the commercial capabilities and the potential financial contribution this service can make towards the General Fund.
2.2.9	Further development of the performance information framework for Housing by building upon our existing interactive KPI Dashboard to provide operational information and measures, and further develop our understanding of Housing's wider Service performance.
2.2.10	Implementation and rollout of the TotalMobile mobile working solution across Housing
2.2.11	Implementation of an online Tenant Self-Service Portal



2.2.12	Development and creation of a Strategic Housing Asset Management Strategy aligned with a review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This will drive a program of planned works across the stock to ensure we are delivering decent homes. This links directly to the EDDC Climate change Action plan that identifies the need to ensure the appropriate level of investment is made across the housing stock in order to ensure we can meet objectives that relate to improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock.
2.2.13	Continue to deliver projects via government funding opportunities (social housing decarbonisation fund) in order to ensure we are taking opportunities to improve energy efficiency measures in our properties.
2.2.14	Carry out spot checks on housing services to ensure compliance with all Regulatory requirements.
2.2.15	Develop a new 5 year Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029, setting the strategic direction of the housing service.
2.2.16	Develop a Housing Delivery Plan to increase housing stock in an open and transparent way supporting our registered housing partners to deliver much needed affordable housing across the district
2.2.17	Develop a Tenancy Strategy to include partnership working with wider registered providers
2.2.18	Review the Councils approach, options and opportunities to meet decarbonisation objectives
2.2.19	Review and implement any new areas of Policy that link to ensuring we adhere to any changes/amendments that are made to the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. This may result in the development of new Policies/projects to ensure we are meeting all requirements of the Act.
2.2.20	To consider and explore opportunities where contractual services could be brought in house and delivered as direct labour entities as part of longer-term service delivery plans.

# Streetscene Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Streetscene Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b> Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes & communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.
2.1.1	Council Wide Fleet Decarbonisation (KP).
2.1.2	Recycling & Waste Future Services – Major change project – reviewing options for contract replacement in 2026 and industry adjustments arising from Simpler Recycling & Env. Act. (KP).
2.1.3	Streetscene & Council wide – Review Depot requirements & future investment, links to PAC team priority (KP).
2.1.4	Recycling & Waste Simpler Recycling changes - Prepare for Environment Act changes – Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme, Simper Recycling and Digital Waste Tracking requirements (KP).
2.1.5	Improve our sustainable management of green spaces and improvement of habitat for wildlife (links to Countryside priority regarding Nature Recovery) (KP).
2.1.6	Review of the HRA grounds maintenance contract.
2.1.7	Following Phase 1 review of collection costs in StreetScene Operations, begin Phase 2 full review of models of operation. Links to 2 & 3 (KP).
2.1.8	Sidmouth & East Beach Management Plan Scheme - Plan and deliver the Sidmouth & East Beach Management Scheme (based on the alternative preferred (or hybrid) working option (KP).
2.1.9	Feniton flood alleviation scheme – delivery of Phase 4 to complete the scheme (KP).

2.1.10	Seaton Hole Beach Management Plan – delivery of scheme (KP).
2.1.11	Exmouth Seawall repairs (KP).
2.1.12	Exmouth Beach Management Plan – delivery of new BMP to replace lapsed plan (KP).
2.1.13	Budleigh Salterton Beach Management Plan – delivery of a BMP for Budleigh (KP).
2.1.14	Support the Property, Assets and Commercialisation team to deliver outcomes of Public Toilets Review – namely disposal of Category B and C sites with investment in Category A sites alongside delivering Changing Places facilities.  Staffing changes related to final transfers and contracts of operation with others once known.
	<b>Streetscene Operations</b>
2.1.15	Additional Green Flag/parks awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the management plan and apply for a parks award at The Glen, Honiton working towards Green Flag award status in the future.</li> <li>• Improve the management plan and apply for a parks award at Phear Park, Exmouth working towards Green Flag award status in the future.</li> <li>• Assess Management plan and Green Flag or Parks Award potential for Beer Jubilee.</li> </ul>
	<b>Recycling &amp; Waste</b>
2.1.16	Green Waste Achieve target of 20,400 green waste bins, helping improve our recycling rate and capture of green waste (removing from residual stream) in 2024/25.
	<b>Fleet &amp; Equipment Management</b>

2.1.17	Assess needs relating to home charging and wider district charging infrastructure for our owned fleet and reimbursement for home charging with HR and input into Green Travel Plan.
2.1.18	Access SWEEG support to review fleet data and produce an EV fleet strategy for decarbonising our transport by 2030. Review and consider appropriate fleet management software linking with Strata.
2.1.19	Through annual tender and machinery replacements switch over to electric/low carbon alternatives. Target an increase proportion of electric from internal combustion of 30% to 35% Show the environmental/carbon reduction and HAV benefits of switching and report via a dashboard.
<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>	
2.1.20	Please note: StreetScene service objectives (section 2) contain embedded carbon reduction measures and expected outcomes linked to the <a href="#">Climate Change Action Plan</a> . The following objectives relate to climate change: Key projects 1, 2, 3, 5 & 8 and priorities 17, 18 & 19
2.1.21	Review use of tetrapods and recycled concrete with lower carbon footprint than hard rock for coastal defence schemes.
2.1.220	All StreetScene teams to consider embodied carbon during procurement, actively seeking carbon reduction measures and environmental improvements through comparing alternative products or services with lower carbon or lower environmental impact options.

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Fleet Decarbonisation, climate change action plan
2.2.2	Major change project – reviewing options for contract replacement in 2026 and industry adjustments arising from Simpler Recycling & Env. Act. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sustainable East Devon that seeks to be carbon neutral</li> <li>• Environmental ethics – Reduce, Re-use &amp; Recycle</li> <li>• Financial sustainability</li> </ul>
2.2.3	Input into work of Place, Assets and Commercialisation team to complete a review of depot provision to ensure facilities are in the best locations, incorporate renewable energy, efficiency measures, infrastructure to unlock further service decarbonisation and specifications

	which are fit for future service provision. Identify high level costed options. To be Project Managed through PAC but with StreetScene and others on Project Group.
2.2.4	Prepare for Environment Act changes – Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme, Simper Recycling and Digital Waste Tracking requirements.
2.2.5	Improve our sustainable management of green spaces and improvement of habitat for wildlife. Linking to Countryside’s work leading the Local Nature Recovery Plan for EDDC (as part of Environment Act 2021 new duties)
2.2.6	Review of the HRA grounds maintenance contract with Housing. The current SLA is very outdated and works carried out are estimated to be undervalued. Potential of moving more actual cost from the general fund to the HRA subject to agreements but also the need to review delivery model and market testing. Include review of building cleaning contract.
2.2.7	Following Phase 1 review of collection costs in StreetScene Operations, begin Phase 2 full review of models of operation.  Aligned to Recycling & Waste Future services work, begin an options appraisal of delivery models to include as is and LATCo. And outsourcing. Along with incorporation of dog bin collection.
2.2.8	Sidmouth & East Beach Management Plan Scheme - Plan and deliver the Sidmouth & East Beach Management Scheme (based on the alternative preferred (or hybrid) working option as agreed following the pause process.
2.2.9	Feniton flood alleviation scheme
2.2.10	Seaton Hole Beach Management Plan review
2.2.11	Exmouth Seawall repairs
2.2.12	Exmouth Beach Management Plan review
2.2.13	Budleigh Salterton Beach Management Plan review

# HR and Payroll Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [HR & Payroll Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b> Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes & communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services. The priorities below mainly support quality services. The green travel staff benefit changes support a Greener East Devon and Grow our Own supports a Resilient Economy.
2.1.1	Year 2 workforce planning exercise and development of people strategy informed by people data (including improved learning and development data), workforce planning outcomes, liP Action Plan, Council Plan and Peer Challenge feedback
2.1.2	Implementation of changes to Standby and Call Out Policy and Scheme, following consultation and agreement by Personnel Committee
2.1.3	Staff Wellbeing Champions and staff networks implementation (the latter is subject to confirmation following staff survey feedback in late 2023)
2.1.4	Support implementation of M365 training for all staff
2.1.5	Occupational health provision review (in liaison with Teignbridge and Mid Devon councils) and subsequent implementation of any changes
2.1.6	Policy reviews to reflect legislative changes (e.g. Flexible Working Requests) and implementation of Metacompliance (to support policy awareness and compliance) following M365 roll-out

2.1.7	Chief Executive recruitment, appointment and induction
2.1.8	Explore implementation of further staff benefits – electric vehicle salary sacrifice, potential increase in Cycle to Work Scheme maximum allowance and AVC salary sacrifice scheme. New staff green travel page, promoting cycle, walking and public transport routes and HHH time to support active travel. EV charging provisions review.
2.1.9	Support implementation of climate change training for staff, utilising internal trainers who were trained in 2023
2.1.10	Continuing to develop recruitment approach (see project below)
2.1.11	Use of iTrent data to support people data reporting/dashboards, structure charts and M365 information (tbc) (see project below) Re-introduction of annual staff survey (including staff green travel information) and reporting via people data Implementation of regular mandatory training reporting to SLT Pay benchmarking and annual market supplement review
2.1.12	Finalise iTrent costings structures in line with new corporate finance system requirements iTrent move to Cloud solution and related system developments (tbc)
2.1.13	Continuing Grow Our Own project (see project below)
2.1.14	SLT development (see project below) and then review of wider leadership and management development offer
2.1.15	Equality, diversity and inclusion year 1 actions, subject to agreement and resource provision (see project below)
2.1.16	Support for potential organisational structural changes (tbc)

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Use of iTrent data to support people data reporting/dashboards, structure charts and MS365 information

2.2.2	Transfer of iTrent to Cloud solution (Strata project which will impact on EDDC HR and Payroll Team)
2.2.3	Recruitment improvements
2.2.4	Grow our Own
2.2.5	Senior Leadership Team development
2.2.6	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and practice review



# Finance Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Finance Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b>          Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes &amp; communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.</p>
	<p><b>Greener East Devon</b></p>
2.1.1	<p>Financial Sustainability Model (FSM) – Readopted as part of the Finance Plan 2024-2034.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparative cost and performance data needs to be analysed and presented for consideration.</li> <li>• Service plans presented will have a range of new performance indicators being proposed following an SLT workshop to improve the reporting and understanding of the “health” of the Council. Once approved these need to be presented regularly to members and management for assurance and decision making. The method of presenting needs to be considered.</li> <li>• The Strata business plan has been developed to deliver the Council’s adopted Digital Strategy and Customer Access Strategy. Delivery will require monitoring and linked to the FSM and to determine financial savings.</li> <li>• The Digital Transformation Team have been working on several key projects including the roll out of O365, developing data for HomeSafeguard and improving customer access for Housing Repairs. New laptops and IT access strategy for staff is being rolled out. There future work programme will continue to be aligned to FSM</li> <li>• The development and introduction of a new Asset Management Plan.</li> <li>• A test service review has been undertaken within Rev’s &amp; Ben’s which has delivered savings of nearly £300k for 2024/25 budget. Further embedding of the key principles of the FSM with service reviews to be rolled out in 2024/25.</li> </ul>
2.1.2	<p>The Procurement Strategy is adopted, however there is a matrix of activities to embed practices in our procurement processes particularly to reduce our carbon footprint in line with our commitments.          It has become clear that although DCC Procurement Services offer a good service, which is good value, the Council needs direct Procurement Support working within the Council. This new post will work under the guidance and support of DCC and will be proactive to deliver the strategy, drive efficiencies and support service directly with the procurement processes in administration, ensuring compliance and system support.</p>
2.1.3	<p>Implementation of new Finance System</p>

	<p>New system implemented with the benefits defined in the business case – modern system with closer working with ECC &amp; TDC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This implementation will affect nearly all officers and systems of the Council and will require revised processes and training to be given.</li> </ul>
2.1.4	<p>Preparation and adoption of Car Park Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The draft principles and objectives of the EDDC parking strategy have been formulated and reviewed by Overview Committee. These principles will now be transformed into a full strategy document and be consulted on with members in February 2024. Once finalised the Parking Strategy will form the blueprint for day-to-day parking operations, as well as guiding the long-term strategic direction for car park management. The strategy will link into the wider Council objectives, particularly those relating to tourism and financial sustainability.</li> </ul>
2.1.5	<p>Implementation of Motorhome Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To engage with Town Councils and where requested develop a local agreement and designate car parks for overnight stay</li> </ul>

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
	<b>At this stage the above do not meet the criteria to be a separately monitored projects, but this will be kept under review.</b>

# Revenues & Benefits, CSC Fraud & Compliance Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Revenues & Benefits, CSC and Fraud & Compliance Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b>          Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes &amp; communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.</p>
2.1.1	<p><u>Priority 2 &amp; 4 Sustainable Environment &amp; Quality Services - Digital /Customer Access</u></p> <p>Telephony:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of the call centre telephony system – see key project plan (on Strata Business plan &amp; Comms, Transformation team).</li> </ul> <p>Online Services (via Gov Services) system including automation to reduce the amount of paper bills issued, reduce postage costs and staff efficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self Service / e-billing for Council Tax and Business Rates - To market and promote once live.</li> <li>• Replace the existing council tax move in / move out changes form to create greater efficiencies including automation.</li> <li>• Replace all the council tax discount/exemption review forms with an online intelligent form to streamline process with the aim of greater automation into the back office system and reduced postage/printing costs</li> <li>• Updating the existing Council Tax Reduction Form (phase 2) to become more intelligent by automatically calculating entitlement to achieve reductions in manual processing.</li> <li>• Remaining Housing Benefit forms to be made available in Gov Services with integrations into back-office system.</li> <li>• Apply for Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief.</li> <li>• Moving all emails (via CSC) onto gov service contact us form.</li> </ul>
2.1.2	<p><u>Priority 3 &amp; 4 Resilient Economy &amp; Quality Services</u></p> <p><u>Implement legislative changes in Business Rates and Council Tax:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to Council Tax Second Home charges (April 2025)</li> <li>• Change to Council Tax Empty Home charges (April 2024) (also linked to priority 4)</li> <li>• Business Rates Improvement Relief (April 2024)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Rates Heat Network Relief (April 2024)</li> <li>• Business Rates Extension to Retail, Hospitality &amp; Leisure Scheme (April 2024)</li> <li>• Business Rates Changes to rating multipliers (April 2024)</li> </ul>
2.1.3	<p>Priority 4 Quality Services</p> <p><u>Fraud and Compliance</u> work plan to identify and generate £250K additional income through the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single person discount*</li> <li>• Small Business Rates Review</li> <li>• RV Finder</li> <li>• Empty Homes review to maximise New Homes Bonus</li> </ul> <p>Fraud and Compliance Policies/Strategies to be updated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Tax Penalty and Prosecution Policy</li> <li>• Fraud and Compliance Strategy</li> </ul>
2.1.4	<p>Priority 4 – Quality Services</p> <p><u>11). Procurement of Enforcement Agent Contract</u></p> <p>Working in partnership with 3 other Devon authorities to pool resources &amp; provide value for money in the procurement of new Enforcement Agent contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out to tender in December 2023 until late January 2024</li> <li>• Evaluation of tender/Contract awarded – by mid March 23</li> <li>• Setting up new contracts, systems, transitioning cases from existing Enforcement Agents to new contracted Agents.</li> <li>• Measuring performance.</li> </ul>
2.1.5	<p>Priority 1 – Supported and Engaged Communities</p> <p><u>12) Bring Empty Homes Back into Use</u></p> <p>(included in Housing’s and Environmental Health’s Service Plan)</p> <p>As at 2 October 23 there were 312 (properties that have been empty for more than 6 months and a key priority of the council is to bring empty homes back into use and reduce the turnaround time on voids.</p> <p><b>Private Sector</b></p> <p>To work with Private Sector housing on long term empty properties (more than 2 years) to bring back into use. Where there is also non-payment we will work collaboratively to use appropriate enforcement measures to take action. As of 2 October 2023, there were 57 properties which have been empty for more than 2 years.</p>

	<p>Support the team in developing an Empty Homes Strategy.</p> <p><b>Housing stock</b></p> <p>To support the Housing team with data on voids to help bring back into use.</p> <p>Aim is to reduce the number of empty properties by bringing back into use.</p>
2.1.6	<p><u>Priority 3 Resilient Economy - Poverty Action Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and implement an SLA and funding arrangements for Money Advice to include how these are delivered to ensure they are meeting the Council’s priorities in helping to alleviate poverty.</li> <li>• Working with VCSE (Devon Communities Together) and other independent voluntary groups to explore and understand rural poverty and possible need for how we can better support rural communities.</li> <li>• Money and Pension Service – Assess and sign up to MAPS to provide a further source of financial support for residents. (This would be something new for EDDC)</li> <li>• Introduce and promote the Vulnerability Debt Toolkit across services responsible for the collection of monies owed by residents, to ensure that vulnerable customers who can’t or are struggling to pay receive the appropriate support.</li> <li>• To review and evaluate the Economic Vulnerability Fund pilot project running from January to March 2024; assess and report on the learning outcomes in order to consider whether there is scope to scale up this project. The aims of this pilot project is to proactively work with residents experiencing vulnerabilities who are already identified as requiring support to improve the quality of their homes, whilst addressing fuel poverty and helping to build financial resilience.</li> </ul>
2.1.7	<p>Priority 3 and 4 Resilient Economy and Quality Services</p> <p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement legislative changes in relation to specified accommodation. This work will need to be scoped up once national standards guidance has been issued (due no later than June 24). Likely to involve Environmental Health/Planning &amp; possibly Housing (homeless) over the new licensing regime and the potential impact on HB including Subsidy.</li> <li>• Take up campaign for pensionable age residents to ensure that they are aware of the benefits available to them.</li> </ul> <p>Carry out in depth monitoring/analysis of Council Tax arrears so that these can be assessed on whether changes are needed to our CTR scheme so that it remains fit for purpose. Any proposed changes will need to be modelled, consulted on and approved by Members before 11 March 2025.</p>
2.1.8	Priority 4 Quality Services

	<u>Partnership working</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to explore opportunities for partnership working and better alignment of service provision with Exeter City Council initially focussing on Revenues in order to drive efficiencies and better value for money.</li> </ul>
2.1.9	Priority 4 Quality Services <u>22. Data Governance – compliance with DWP’s MOU</u> Carry out tasks as shown in key project to ensure compliance with MOU. See key project below.

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Replacement of Council Telephony system (Call Centre Technology). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strata’s aim is to install before end of year 2024.</li> <li>(For info Skype for Business End life: October 2025)</li> <li>The replacement technology will be led by Strata and will mean less licenses. This will mean that there will be potentially less call groups within the Council as more calls will be channelled through the corporate call centre. Depending on the extent of this will impact the scale of this project.</li> </ul>
2.2.2	<u>Data Governance</u> Following notification from Department Work & Pension national audits are due to start from 2024 to ensure full compliance with the MOU.

# Growth, Development & Prosperity Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Growth, Development & Prosperity Team Service Plan](#)

2.1	<p><b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b></p> <p>Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes &amp; communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.</p>
2.1.1	<p>Provide intelligence and input to the development of the new Local Plan with a focus on establishing robust, effective and defensible policies and proposals in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment sites</li> <li>• Economic development</li> <li>• Green infrastructure</li> <li>• Habitat mitigation</li> <li>• Zero carbon development</li> <li>• Energy</li> </ul>
2.1.2	<p>Ensure EDDC’s Economic Development Strategy, underpinned by the Local Economic Review is used to help strengthen the evidence base for the new Local Plan.</p> <p>In addition, ensuring a coherent sub-regional response by feeding into responses to ECC and TDC Local Plan consultations.</p>
<b>A Supported and Engaged Community</b>	
2.1.3	<p>Support the work of the Cranbrook Strategic Delivery Board, ensuring that a range of services and infrastructure are delivered in step with new homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support delivery of the masterplan for the town centre</li> <li>• Ensure robust project management arrangements</li> <li>• Utilise revolving infrastructure funds to support the development of the expansion areas</li> </ul>
2.1.4	<p>Complete the development of a business case for a delivery vehicle (up to and including the establishment of a locally-led Development Corporation) to support the development of a second new community.</p>

2.1.5	<p>Lead the deployment of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund programmes ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ all UKSPF projects achieve specified outputs and outcomes in alignment with the UKSPF Investment Plan</li> <li>○ all UKSPF projects achieve key milestones on time and to budget in alignment with the UKSPF Investment Plan</li> </ul> <p>all UKSPF reporting, monitoring and evaluation duties are completed on time and in accordance with DLUHC requirements</p>
2.1.6	<p>Lead the deployment, procurement and contract management of the following UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund projects;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: Innovation and Resilience Fund 3. Grant scheme using Rural England Prosperity Funding to support rural businesses to increase productivity.</li> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: Carbon Action Fund. Grant scheme to fund purchase of decarbonisation equipment as recommended by carbon action plans. Two pathways – one for businesses and one for community organisations.</li> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: Business Support Programme (Prosper). Business support service to strengthen current central Growth Hub referral provision and replace Thrive with tailored additional support for pre-starts, net-zero/green growth and agri-tech businesses across East Devon</li> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: Sustainable Tourism Fund. Funding to promote sustainable tourism projects. Project manage and plan the development of a STF grant programme for tourism SMEs to help them develop better sustainability/ green/accessibility practices and reduce their carbon footprint. Direct SPF Y3 funds to ensure delivery of impactful marketing/promotions of East Devon</li> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: Retrofit Programme. Support to re-skill and up-skill local residents to gain net zero related skills such as accreditations required to enter the retrofitting marketplace.</li> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: Disability Employment Support Programme. Support for economically inactive residents with disabilities to improve their employment prospects and gain access remote and/or digital opportunities.</li> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: NEET Employment Support Programme. Support for young residents not in employment, education or training (NEETs) to improve their employment opportunities.</li> <li>○ Year 3 Delivery: Active Travel Fund. Support to bring forward cycleways within the Clyst Valley Regional Park</li> </ul>
2.1.7	<p>Provide support to the East Devon Tourism Network. Enabling delivery of relevant Tourism Strategy objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Oversee and support the operation of EDTN</li> <li>○ Ensure alignment with the Tourism Strategy</li> <li>○ Monitor performance and contract extension</li> </ul>



2.1.8	Prepare and adopt an Economic Development Strategy for the District
2.1.10	Work to increase the supply of available commercial sites and premises in the District: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen our formal corporate engagement with Place, Assets &amp; Commercialisation Service to help ensure timely delivery of commercial landholdings (e.g. Hayne Lane, Cloakham Lawns, Fosseyway and Colyford Rd sites).</li> </ul>
2.1.11	Lead the delivery of the Enterprise Zone programme to accelerate the delivery of new commercial space. Through the update of the Enterprise Zone Implementation Plan the investment programme will be reviewed and new investment proposals will be identified.
2.1.12	Continue to develop the simplified planning regime in the Enterprise Zone area by bringing forward further Local Development Orders for Skypark and Exeter Science Park). Undertake assessments of individual development proposals in terms of compliance with extant LDOs
2.1.13	Raise the profile of the area by implementing a branding strategy for the Enterprise Zone designation
2.1.14	Support the second Axminster Gate to Plate event in May helping to ensure successful delivery, maximising local benefit and encouraging local adoption as an annual event. Work with at least 3 other East Devon towns to encourage inaugural Gate to Plate events in more locations, supporting quality local food and drink producers and town centre trade.
2.1.15	Record, support and report on all inward investment and local business land/premises enquiries received. Issues experienced in relation to constrained employment land and premises supply within the market to be fed back to Policy and Planning colleagues.
2.1.16	Improve the handling of commercial premises/land enquiries by coordinating and amalgamating record keeping and enquiry handling by different teams to develop a single central database which all teams feed into, update and can report from.
2.1.17	Support local business growth and inward investment by strengthening EDDC's active promotion of vacant/available employment units district wide. Reinvigorate Commercial Property Register, engaging commercial agents.
2.1.19	Monitor and evaluate the impact of our Innovation and Resilience Fund (IRF1). Ensure that beneficiaries have spent their grant funds in line with Funding Agreements. Complete an evaluation of the local economic, social and environmental impact of the IRF1.
2.1.21	Deliver the Clyst Meadows SANGS including engaging with key stakeholders and the community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work with Devon County Council to develop sustainable travel options to the site</li> <li>implement delivery plan for the site implement in perpetuity funding proposal for the site</li> </ul>
2.1.22	Engage with landowners and other partners to implement the Clyst Valley Trail proposals including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalise alignment and delivery plan</li> <li>Secure resources and funding Raise public awareness of the Trail</li> </ul>

2.1.23	<p>Deliver the South East Devon Habitat Mitigation Strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting quarterly meetings of the Habitat Regulations Executive Committee</li> <li>• Implement on site and off sites measures</li> <li>• Provide an annual monitoring report</li> </ul>
<b>Continuous Improvement and Quality Services</b>	
2.1.24	Implementation of the Bidsmart initiative including lead coordination of relevant team of officers, driving improvements through a more collaborative, informed approach to identifying and responding more robustly to external funding opportunities with reference to the strongest supporting evidence
2.1.25	Continued support to planning colleagues through detailed consultation responses on planning applications covering issues relevant to the Service
2.1.26	<p>Ensure that key messages and achievements are clearly communicated both internally and externally across a range of media channels through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online and offline channels including issuing press release</li> <li>• Contributing to the Corporate Knowledge Exchange</li> <li>• Supporting consultation events and exercises</li> <li>• Providing advice and support on the use of social media</li> </ul>
2.1.27	Support the progression of the devolution deal negotiations through Team Devon, ensuring that the Council's interests are represented, and key proposals are reported to Cabinet.
<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>	
2.1.28	<p>Ensure the large-scale delivery of zero carbon development in the West End of the District through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement and delivery of the interconnector project to decarbonise the existing district heating networks in Cranbrook/Skypark and Science Park/Monkerton</li> <li>• Implementing the Green Heat Network Fund scheme through the procurement of an Energy Services Company for the Cranbrook Expansion areas</li> </ul>
2.1.29	Commission and oversee delivery of a new £207k Carbon Action Programme, supporting East Devon businesses to better understand their carbon emissions and to develop effective action plans to reduce these. Support to include 121 support diagnostic sessions and workshops to encourage engagement and behavioural change through increased efficiencies and reduced waste. Programme to complement delivery of our existing SPF Prosper business support provision.

2.1.30	Launch an Enterprise Zone focussed fund to undertake the commissioning of project(s) delivering on the specific themes of EDDC's Clean Growth Vision.
2.1.31	Support the development of a sustainable aviation cluster focused on Exeter Airport: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent the Council on the Sustainable Aviation Board and Future Flight Community Integration Group</li> <li>• Support project development in relation to Advanced Air Mobility</li> </ul>

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.1.1	Delivery of Cranbrook town centre
2.1.2	Development of a Delivery Vehicle to support the development of the second new community
2.1.3	Delivery of UKSPF and REPF programmes
2.1.4	Delivery of a new £207k Carbon Action Programme
2.1.5	Development and publication of an Economic Development Strategy for East Devon
2.1.6	Development of an updated Enterprise Zone Implementation Plan
2.1.7	Delivery of Clyst Meadow SANG
2.1.8	Delivery of the Clyst Valley Trail
2.1.9	District heating interconnector project
2.1.10	Launch an Enterprise Zone focussed fund to undertake the commissioning of project(s) delivering on the specific themes of EDDC's Clean Growth Vision.

# Planning Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Planning Team Service Plan](#)

2.1	<p><b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b>          Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes &amp; communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.</p>
2.1.1	<p>To progress the Local Plan through to a publication draft in accordance with the timetable set out within the local development scheme and in accordance with members aspirations outlined in the Council Plan including zero carbon development, promoting walking and cycling, bio-diversity net gain, affordable housing, promoting a green and resilient economy and the diversification of town centres.</p>
2.1.2	<p>To develop planning policies through the new Local Plan that will deliver new housing that will meet the needs of the community both in terms of its type and tenure. These policies will seek to deliver where possible homes that are affordable to local residents in housing need and provide a mix of specialist and adaptable homes for those in need as well as opportunities for self and custom build and community led housing schemes.</p>
2.1.3	<p>To bolster our supply of sites for the delivery of new homes by allocating suitable sites through the new Local Plan and granting consents for new homes that constitute sustainable development to address our 5 year housing land supply position even where they conflict with some of our policies.</p>
2.1.4	<p>To complete work on an updated gypsy and traveller needs assessment and a strategy for delivering pitches to meet the identified needs including through the Cranbrook expansion areas and by working with partners to deliver other sites in the district.</p>
2.1.5	<p>To work with the Growth, Development and Prosperity team to develop policies and site allocations in the new Local Plan which will help to meet the needs of the business community in the district ensuring that sites are viable and deliverable. To also develop policies that enable our town centres and high streets to adapt to the changing economic climate and provide a range of homes, business, community and leisure spaces to ensure that they remain viable and meet the needs of our communities.</p>
2.1.6	<p>To undertake a review of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to ensure that we understand the infrastructure needed to support growth planned in the new Local Plan and how this could be delivered. To review the CIL charging schedule to ensure that we are requiring developers to make the maximum viable contributions to deliver the required infrastructure to support growth.</p>

2.1.7	To recruit a Planning Obligations Team to administer the collection and spend of CIL and S106 monies from developments. Once the team is established to then review and agree new processes for engaging with town and parish councils on the spend of monies and establish a programme to engage with those communities with monies available to spend prioritising those where monies have been held for the longest time.
2.1.8	To pursue payment of all outstanding CIL and S106 debts and check compliance with CIL exemptions and other S106 obligations to ensure that compliance has been achieved and that all monitoring records are up to date.
2.1.9	To adopt a new Playing Pitch Strategy that clearly identifies the needs for enhanced provision in the district. To work with relevant services and stakeholders to identify how the strategy will be delivered and who will be responsible for key actions.
2.1.10	Develop an updated mitigation strategy to address the impacts of development on the Exe Estuary and Pebblebed Heaths arising from the new developments proposed in the new Local Plan. Develop a mitigation strategy for phosphate levels arising from development affecting the River Axe.
2.1.11	To work with the Countryside team to develop robust systems and processes to ensure that new housing developments deliver at least 10% bio-diversity net gain in accordance with government requirements.
2.1.12	To complete work on a water cycle study to understand the implications of the new Local Plan on water supply, flooding and waste water infrastructure and to undertake engagement with South West Water to understand how required infrastructure will be brought forward and new development phased to ensure that impacts on the water quality of water courses are acceptable and that they do not lead to flooding.
2.1.13	To work with consultants, the community and other stakeholders to masterplan the proposed second new community and develop a business case and delivery vehicle that will deliver to the Council's vision.
2.1.14	To develop a programme of training for Members and town and parish councils to enhance their understanding of the planning system including planning obligations and enable greater engagement with the planning process.
2.1.15	To develop staff recruitment and retention strategies across the service to ensure that we are maximising opportunities to train up potential future planning officers and surveyors as well as having a suitable reward package, training and development processes etc to retain staff wherever possible.
2.1.16	To support the Building Control Surveyors through the new Building Safety Regulator competency assessment and registration process.
2.1.17	To review the Building Control fees and charges to ensure that we continue to recover costs associated with the statutory fee earning services in light of changes to the legislation and the new Building Control regime.

2.1.18	To continue to support the production of neighbourhood plans across the district providing technical support and helping communities to access funding to enable them to engage better with the planning process and articulate their own aspirations for their community including bringing forward community led developments.
2.1.19	To progress the actions set out in the adopted Heritage Strategy including reviewing and updating our conservation area boundaries and management plans, developing our local list of heritage assets and undertaking work to review the condition of heritage assets and measures needed for their appropriate repair and maintenance.
<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>	
2.1.20	To continue to work to reduce the carbon emissions involved in the operation of the service by seeking to minimise the need to travel both to and from the offices but also to site visits and explore opportunities to travel more sustainably where such travel cannot be avoided.
2.1.21	To develop planning policies within the new Local Plan requiring all new residential and commercial developments to be built to minimise their energy demands and maximise their use of renewable energy ensuring that they are net zero carbon.
2.1.22	To develop planning policies that encourage sustainable travel making walking and cycling the preferred means of travel through ensuring that homes, jobs and facilities are located close together and clear and accessible routes facilitate easy travel between them and that public transport is readily available for longer journeys.
2.1.23	To develop planning policies to ensure that new developments are located so that they are not susceptible to the impacts of coastal change or flooding and that they are resilient to climate change and incorporate measures such as sustainable drainage systems, permeable hard surfaces etc.

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	To produce and consult on a publication (Reg 19) draft of the new Local Plan including production of associated evidence.
2.2.2	To produce and consult on a revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
2.2.3	To recruit to the new Planning Obligations Team and develop a work programme to get S106 and CIL workstreams up to date.
2.2.4	To work with consultants to produce a vision, masterplan, business case and proposed delivery vehicle for the second new community.

2.2.5	To develop and implement a programme of training and engagement on planning issues with Members and Town and Parish Councils.
2.2.6	To implement changes to the building control system, ensure that surveyors meet the requirements of the competency framework and continue to cover our costs through fee income.
2.2.7	To develop a recruitment and retention strategy for the service and succession plan for key roles.

# Governance and Licensing Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Governance and Licensing Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b> Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes & communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.
2.1.1	Review of the Council’s Constitution with input from Member Constitution Working Group
2.1.2	Introduction of Protocol with Devon and Cornwall Police in relation to the handling of member code of conduct complaints relating to disclosure/declaring of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
2.1.3	Continue to secure affordable housing (and other planning benefit) through planning and property transactions.
2.1.4	Provide legal advice to Council/Cabinet/Committees and Sub-Committees
2.1.5	Continue to support the Development Management function in enforcement action against unauthorised and harmful development.
2.1.6	To protect the legal interests of the Council by defending or making claims by or against individuals or businesses including responding to applications for judicial review
2.1.7	Provide advice and support on legal strategy / implementation of major projects (including regeneration) and related processes (internal with external resource where required).
2.1.8	Introduction of new Cemetery Regulations policy
2.1.9	Ensure continuity in high level of Bereavement Services administration following retirement of Cemeteries Registrar .
2.1.10	Concluding the GPS mapping of all our 3 managed cemeteries
2.1.11	Completion of a revised Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Policy, being due full review after 5 years to include revised application procedures
2.1.12	Review and implementation of the Statement of Gambling Policy.
2.1.13	Review taxi and private hire fees and charges to implementation.
2.1.14	Implementation of a permanent Pavement Licence regime requiring new policy and fee setting through central government legislation.
2.1.15	Introduction and implementation of relevant fees for film classification.



2.1.16	Introduction and implementation of street trading consent fees.
2.1.17	Provide Democratic Services support to all Council committees, Forums, Working Groups and Panels
2.1.18	Review and update Council, Cabinet and Committee report templates
2.1.19	Provide training to officers on decision-making and the legal requirements in relation to key decisions
2.1.20	Hold an Annual Council meeting to make appointments to Committees, Outside Bodies, Forums, Working Groups and Panels
2.1.21	To prepare a timetable of meetings for all council committee meetings for 2024/2025 and publish on the Council's website
2.1.22	To issue and publish a Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by Cabinet and officers in accordance with the Council's Constitution
2.1.23	To conduct a Member Satisfaction survey and produce an action plan on the quality of service provided by Democratic Services for 2023/2024
2.1.24	Setting up and management of Election Project Team
2.1.25	Conducting a safe and legal Police and Crime Commissioner election in May
2.1.26	Conducting a safe and legal General Election
2.1.27	Provide a successful annual canvass
2.1.28	Review and update Data Protection policies and guidance
2.1.29	Review Corporate Complaints procedure to ensure compliance with Ombudsmen code of practice
2.1.30	Set up Information Governance Board (subject to member approval)
2.1.31	Set up Information Governance Working Group
2.1.32	Produce Annual Report to the Audit and Governance Committee in relation to Information Governance
2.1.33	Produce regular report to Members in relation to complaints
	<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>
2.1.34	Continue to provide legal advice on the Council's projects relating to climate change
2.1.35	Reduce travel to work through improved systems/processes

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Conduct election
2.2.2	Review Licensing Fees To review existing fees and the implementation of new fees in a legal and transparent manner. To balance the need for funding whilst taking a proportionate approach.

2.2.3	<p>Recruit new Cemeteries Registrar</p> <p>To ensure transfer of skills from existing member of staff to new recruit, together with upskilling of other members of the Licensing team in relation to Cemeteries administration.</p>
2.2.4	<p>Conduct Member Skills Audit</p> <p>Identify members training and development needs for 2024/2025 and to develop a plan for delivery</p>
2.2.5	<p>Ensure sufficient oversight of Information Governance</p> <p>Through creation of Information Governance Board and Working Group and production of Annual Report to the Audit and Governance Committee</p>

# Place, Assets and Commercialisation Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Place, Assets and Commercialisation Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b> Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes & communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.
	<b>Quality services</b>
2.1.1	Adopt new General Fund Asset Management Plan for period 2024-2029
2.1.2	Deliver Capital Programme
2.1.3	Deliver outcomes of Public Toilets Review – namely completing disposal / transfer of Category B and C sites with investment in Category A sites alongside delivering Changing Places facilities
2.1.4	Office Accommodation Strategy ensuring efficient and effective use of Blackdown House and Exmouth Town Hall ensuring that office stock is fit-for-purpose for Worksmart+ but also that costs are reduced where possible and income generated where any surplus space exists
2.1.5	Undertake a review of depot provision to ensure facilities are in the best locations and fit-for-purpose. Identify costed options
2.1.6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Finalise and implement reporting on Performance Indicators through AMF to ensure improved visibility of performance and identifying of any issues.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Estates – Rent Roll / % increase since 1<sup>st</sup> April (of that year)</li> <li>b) Estates – Held for Sale Assets</li> <li>c) Estates – Vacant Assets</li> <li>d) Estates – Capital Receipts (in financial year)</li> <li>e) Estates – Instructions to Legal in quarter</li> <li>f) Property &amp; FM – Planned Maintenance spend to budget (%)</li> <li>g) Property &amp; FM – Reactive Maintenance spend to budget (%)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	h) Property & FM - % of completed Firmstep maintenance requests in quarter Health & Safety Compliance of General Fund buildings (%)
2.1.7	Deliver a further 3% increase in total rent roll from let property (main General Fund account only using a baseline of 01/04/2024)
2.1.8	Deliver a further £200k in Capital Receipts through programme of land and property disposals
	A resilient economy
2.1.9	Placemaking Strategy for Exmouth Town and Seafront by implementing the Phase 1 projects recommended in the plan (subject to budget availability)  Expand the Role of the Placemaking Group and form a subgroup (recommended on the 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 by Cabinet) to include a wider membership
2.1.10	Screen and assess the suitability of proposed investment projects in a timely manner and where appropriate bring these forward to the Place and Prosperity Board using the £20m Place and Prosperity Fund or other funding route
2.1.11	Continue to pursue the delivery of placemaking outcomes in our town centres and key locations by undertaking feasibility studies, working with key partners, enabling delivery of projects through our landholdings and securing funding where possible  In Sidmouth, the Town Council has been allocated UKSPF funding to undertake a feasibility study on the youth centre facility within the town.  A similar study has been completed in Ottery St Mary to consider potential improvements for their existing youth services hub.  Work continues with Axminster and Seaton following completion of Regeneration Strategies for those towns, to work with stakeholders signposting and enabling delivery of individual placemaking/economic development projects.
2.1.12	Progress acquisition of new industrial units at Redgates, Exmouth and undertake marketing exercise to agree lettings of the units
2.1.13	Unlocking stalled employment sites owned by EDDC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hayne lane, Honiton</li> <li>• Colyford Road, Seaton</li> <li>• Harepath Road, Seaton</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete land transfer of Cloakham Lawns (Subject to s106) and develop a viability assessment for the site</li> </ul> <p>Exploring acquisition of sites for employment opportunities.</p>
	<b>Better homes and communities</b>
2.1.14	Continue to support other Services with delivery of small placemaking projects, e.g. open or green spaces, public realm, transport links etc. Includes encouraging community asset transfer where appropriate for both parties
2.1.15	Support delivery of Leisure Strategy
	<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>
2.1.16	Swimming Pools Decarbonisation Project. The project will establish the interventions required and related costs to decarbonise EDDC's three swimming pool sites. The work will consider each decarbonisation project to RIBA Stage 3 and prepare detailed information required to apply for external funding should opportunities arise
2.1.17	Whether it be place making, estate management, repairs and maintenance or capital investment in our land and buildings, sustainability and decarbonisation is at the heart of all we do

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Adopt new General Fund Asset Management Plan for period 2024-2029
2.2.2	Deliver outcomes of Public Toilets Review – namely completing disposal/ transfer of Category B and C sites
2.2.3	Office Accommodation Strategy ensuring efficient and effective use of Blackdown House and Exmouth Town Hall ensuring that office stock is fit-for-purpose for Worksmart+ but also that costs are reduced where possible and income generated where any surplus space exists
2.2.4	Undertake a review of depot provision to ensure facilities are in the best locations and fit-for-purpose. Identify costed options.
2.2.5	Placemaking Strategy for Exmouth Town and Seafront
2.2.6	Unlocking stalled employment sites
2.2.7	Decarbonisation of Swimming Pools
2.2.8	Public Toilet Investment Programme (Phase 1)
2.2.9	Public Toilet Investment Programme (Phase 2)
2.2.10	Capital Projects – Various Construction Projects

# Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Communications, Digital Services and Engagement Team Service Plan](#)

<b>2.1</b>	<b>Service Objectives 2024-25</b> Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes & communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.
2.1.1	As the corporate Communications team we will be focused to promote and communicate the actions identified in the council and individual service plans.
2.1.2	We will coordinate all marketing activity and interaction with the media across the council setting corporate standards.
2.1.3	Reflecting diversity and reaching communities across East Devon, including digitally excluded groups, will underpin our communications and engagement work.
2.1.4	Support the delivery of the Strata business plan this includes the operation of the gateway which will determine which other (non-service catalogue) work is added to the Strata work programme on behalf of the council.
2.1.5	Corporate team leading on the digital transformation work under the Financial Sustainability Model (FSM) with outputs to be delivered through the year.
2.1.6	Corporate team leading on the Performance Management Data work under the FSM with outputs to be delivered through the year.
2.1.7	Establish corporate standards for the use of data and how this is presented across the council.
2.1.8	Action the SWAP (South West Audit Partnership) audits recommendations from the following audits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firmstep</li> <li>• Performance</li> <li>• IT Governance</li> <li>• Partnerships</li> </ul>
2.1.9	Engagement with our communities via Commonplace surveys including residents survey and surveys supporting planning and other departments.
2.1.10	Work to provide better communication and engagement with town and parish councils.

2.1.11	Move forward with the new corporate project / programme management framework.
2.1.12	Set out a revised organisational performance management framework including reporting on the new council plan. Also investigate new performance software.
2.1.13	Coordination of all grant schemes across the council and will work with partners on how these can be better promoted and distributed.
2.1.14	Review the social media policy, communications policy, and the community engagement policy by December 2024
2.1.15	Continue to meet the increasing housing demand from all resettlement cohorts (H4U, ARAP (Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy) and new refugees) and secure suitable temporary and permanent accommodation.
2.1.16	Develop a method of tenancy support work to proactively support cohorts who have moved into tenancy to maintain these.
2.1.17	Limit the impact of income refugees/ migrants on the statutory services – including Housing Solutions by continue to deliver an effective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private Rented Support grant</li> <li>• Developing strong relationships with landlords and letting agents in the area and feeding into the landlord forum.</li> <li>• Providing information on benefits, budgeting, employment, and access to English language courses.</li> </ul>
2.1.18	Improve working relationships with voluntary partners to ensure the resettlement service is resilient.
2.1.19	Secure external services and support around ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provisions and employment support.
2.1.20	Secure external services to support with mental health and wellbeing of refugees including access to counselling sessions and wellbeing workshops
2.1.21	Develop a robust ‘community sponsorship’ scheme to reach the refugee cap.
2.1.22	Work towards achieving ‘sanctuary’ status for the council – complimenting the better homes and communities for all council goal. This involves creating a framework for the council and for voluntary partners and other services to ensure equal access to services and that East Devon is a welcoming environment for asylum seekers, refugees, and other vulnerable migrants.
<b>Service actions relating to climate change</b>	
2.1.23	Through our media communications and community engagement we will raise awareness of climate change issues, biodiversity, and ecological recovery. Wherever relevant, we will link climate actions to other positive impacts beyond the environment, such as economic growth.
2.1.24	We will lessen our digital carbon footprint by taking actions such as deleting files and emails that are no longer needed.

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Key projects in 2024-25</b>
2.2.1	Continue the roll out of Firmstep (GovServices) to improve organisational efficiency by April 2025
2.2.2	Operate a “gateway” for all non-service catalogue IT requests
2.2.3	Provide dashboards on performance
2.2.4	Establish a corporate project management board and team
2.2.5	Provide a pro-active resettlement service