

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 31 October 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.05 am and ended at 12.30 pm. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11.22 am and was reconvened at 11.41 am.

33 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 3 October 2023 were confirmed as a true record.

In response to a comment about how North Somerset District Council were going to challenge their housing numbers in their local plan, the Assistant Director advised he would be watching the outcome with interest and reminded Members that this council did not have a sound case to reduce its numbers.

34 Declarations of interest

The Chair on behalf of Members of the Strategic Planning Committee advised receiving lobbying communication from Mr Persey who spoke during the public speaking section.

35 Public speaking

Robert Persey addressed the Committee to offer land in the centre of Dulford free of charge for up to 12 affordable housing and asked Members to consider changing policy to enable the numbers on the housing waiting list to be used to identify the need for a rural exception site.

The East Devon Local Plan 2013 – 2031 identified that parishes of Awliscombe, Broadhembury, Payhembury and Plymtree all had a housing need. He advised that there were currently 5,109 on the EDDC housing waiting list, of which 18 families were from Broadhembury. He referred to a recent letter from the Department of Levelling Up Communities which stated that local authorities should support local needs in rural areas including rural exception sites and welcomed a debate from Members about this issue as there was a duty to provide more homes.

In response the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that the fundamental issue was that Dulford was a small hamlet with a very limited range of services and facilities and that the Devon Home Choice data raised concerns about whether there was a need in that locality. The current position that has been advised to Mr Persey is to test its need through a planning application if he believes the advice to be incorrect and to undergo a housing needs survey through the parish council if he believes the data to be inaccurate.

36 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential or exempt items.

38 **East Devon Local Plan 2020-2040 Consultation Draft - Consultation Feedback Addendum**

The Committee considered the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management's feedback addendum report that had addressed the concerns raised by Members about comments that had been missed out of the original feedback report.

These included:

- The consultation feedback report had not included the sentiment scores from the questions about whether people supported or opposed policies in the draft local plan.
- Various sites allocations had been omitted for development.
- Representation from Network Rail had been omitted.
- Comments made on paper slips at the Whimble event.
- A further review of the comment slips regarding housing numbers at the Whimble event summarised on page 15 of the report.

Members comments included:

- Inconsistent comments made by Network Rail.
- The inclusion of comments made by Whimble residents were welcomed.
- A concern was raised about the sentiment score analysis due to inconsistencies.
- It was noted that DCC did not support a new town in Clyst St Mary.
- Comments made about the new town included the need to consider a development that would cater for cars as without a better public transport system people would be more reliant on cars.
- Clarification was sought about what changes have taken place regarding development following receipt of the 1,800 responses during the consultation stage. In response it was advised decisions were taken on sound planning grounds and work was still ongoing to review all of the comments received.

RESOLVED:

That the addendum to the draft local plan consultation feedback report be noted.

39 **East Devon Local Plan - Timetable and Local Development Scheme**

The Committee considered the proposed timetable detailing the key stages of work which included a series of reports that would be made available for public comment under the Regulation 18 stage in respect of matters including Green Wedges and additional employment sites.

Members noted that the timeline leading to the adoption of the local plan was extremely tight and the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised Members to be mindful for the possibility of additional meetings to help keep on track with the timeline.

It was emphasised to Members that a significant key risk that could hinder keeping to the timetable was the current staff resourcing issue and despite advertising the team currently had a vacant Planning Officer post. To overcome this issue the team were

considering exploring the option of sending work out to consultants to assist and a further report would be brought to Committee to address any budget implications.

Comments received included:

- It was suggested that the committee could link up the redrafted chapters together to help speed things along.
- A concern was raised about the staffing issue and the possibility of costly consultant fees and the need to address the issue long term. In response the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that there was no immediate solution as although the council had undergone a pay review there was still high competition between the public and private sector. Long term solutions could involve exploring further apprenticeships within the team but this would not help in the short term.
- It was suggested for the timetable to be made a standard agenda item and to be brought back to Committee every other meeting to update Members.
- Clarification was sought on what the implications would be if Members failed to meet the June 2025 deadline. It was advised that the evidence gathered would be carried over to the new local plan system and that the proposed substantial changes to the new local plan are designed to make it quicker and easier to complete. However any new system comes with uncertainty and it was still desirable to proceed under the current system as quickly as possible.
- Reference was made to the series of reports and whether Built up Area Boundaries would be added to the list of subject matters and whether settlement boundaries would be revisited.
- It was questioned whether discussing two or three chapters per meeting would be feasible.
- A concern was raised that Planning Committee Members are being asked to approve applications without answers to the lack of jobs and infrastructure. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management reminded members of the lack of a five-year housing land supply and the need to apply the tilted balance.

RESOLVED:

1. That the timetable and approach to local plan making work set out in the committee report be endorsed.
2. That the proposed new Local Development Scheme, appended to this report, be endorsed and that it be recommended to Council for adoption.

40

East Devon Local Plan - A Proposed New Vision

The Committee considered the East Devon Local Plan – A proposed new vision report that set out a proposed vision for inclusion in the East Devon Local Plan following a decision made by Committee on 21 July 2023 to replace the vision in the draft local plan. Strategic Planning Committee Members attended a workshop session on 31 August 2023 to consider the vision for the plan and those comments and suggestions made during that session helped officers produce a revised vision.

The following suggestions and comments were made by Members:

- It was suggested that a section should be included about the concerns raised about the oversubscribed schools and hospitals.
- There is a need to include the Clyst Valley Regional Park.
- It had been suggested that further work was needed before it could be endorsed.
- There was a need to look at the punctuation.
- It was suggested that each town should have its own vision.

- The vision needs to acknowledge the east and west district divide – urban and rural communities need to be defined.
- Greater emphasis on climate change.
- There is a need to address affordable housing and the protection of local residents to avoid inward migration.
- Infrastructure and transport should be included.
- Support was expressed to include a vision for each of the towns.
- As some villages need small scale development this should also be mentioned.
- It was suggested that the sixth paragraph should be expanded to include what to expect from new development and what it delivers.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management welcomed all the suggestions and sought further clarification on whether Members preferred to amend the vision's wording at this meeting or to be brought back for members consideration at a later date. It was suggested that the wording could be emailed to Committee Members as a tracked document which could then be brought back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Committee defer the consideration of the proposed vision as set out in this report to allow the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management to take on board Members comments and to prepare a revised vision for further deliberation at the January 2024 Strategic Planning Committee.
2. That the new local plan should include a vision for each of the towns to act as a focus for the plans approach for each of these locations.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Bailey
K Blakey
B Collins
O Davey (Chair)
P Fernley
C Fitzgerald
M Howe (Vice-Chair)
D Ledger
Y Levine
T Olive
H Parr

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
K Bloxham
C Brown
J Brown
P Faithfull
G Jung

Officers in attendance:

Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management

Damian Hunter, Planning Solicitor

Councillor apologies:

J Bailey
M Hartnell
P Hayward

Chairman

Date: