

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 6 December 2023

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.53 pm

60 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of Full Council held on 18 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

61 Apologies

Apologies received from Cllrs Violet Bonetta, Christopher Burhop, Fred Caygill, Sarah Chamberlain, Marcus Hartnell, Mike Howe, Jamie Kemp, Dan Ledger, Sophie Richards, Joe Whibley and Daniel Wilson.

62 Declarations of interest

None.

63 Petition - The George Inn, Chardstock

The Council invited the Peter Manley to present a petition on behalf of The George Inn Continuity Group calling on the Council to gain access to The George Inn, Chardstock and to carry out a full independent inspection of the property in order to facilitate the following:

- assess and report the extent of deterioration and damage
- assess and report the scope of works needed to remedy the deterioration and damage
- issue statutory notices, as required to the property owners and oversee the satisfactory completion of the required repairs needed to safeguard this historic community asset.

Members noted that the petition contained 1,048 verified signatures.

The Chair thanked The George Inn Continuity Group for submitting the petition and **RESOLVED** that the petition is referred to the Assistant Director Planning, Strategy and Development Management.

64 Public speaking

Councillor Duncan Mackinder had registered to speak in respect of Agenda Item 4 Petition The George Inn, Chardstock.

Cllr Mackinder supported the petition submitted by The George Inn Continuity Group and made the following comments:

- Loss of spending by visitors to the area
- Loss of business rates to the Council
- Preservation of listed building by owners and a mechanism to ensure owners continued to pay business rates
- Conservation Officer to prioritise the inspection of the building to bring it back into use for the benefits of the local community and visitors to East Devon.

The Chair thanked Cllr Mackinder for his comments which were duly noted.

65 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency for this meeting.

66 **Announcements from the Chair and Leader**

The Chair of Council, Cllr Eleanor Rylance wished everyone a calm and peaceful holiday season.

The Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott announced that Cllr Richard Jefferies was appointed as the Associate Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism.

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

There were no items of confidential/exempt business at this meeting.

68 **To answer questions asked by Members of the Council pursuant to Procedure Rules No. 9.2 and 9.5**

There were two questions on notice asked by members of the Council pursuant to Procedure Rule no. 9.2

Question 1 submitted by Cllr Jess Bailey for the Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott. The question and response were set out in the Council Agenda and are attached at Appendix A of these minutes.

Cllr Jess Bailey thanked the Leader of Council for the response and requested that a meeting is set up between the Leader of Council, Cllr Jess Bailey and the Assistant Director for Planning to further discuss the issues raised in the question.

The Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott confirmed that a meeting would be arranged.

RESOLVED that a meeting is convened between the Leader of Council, Cllr Jess Bailey and the Assistant Director for Planning, Strategy and Development Management.

Question 2 submitted by Cllr Ian Barlow for the Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott. The question and response were set out in the Council Agenda and are attached at Appendix A of these minutes.

The Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott proposed that the comments expressed in the question should be raised during the Peer Review process.

69 **Reports from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees and questions on those reports**

Minute no. 82 Cabinet on 29 November 2023 (Arts and Culture Forum – Terms of Reference)

The Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott introduced the recommendations from the minutes of the Art and Culture Forum held on 8 November 2023 relating to the updated terms of reference of the Arts and Culture Forum.

RESOLVED to approve the terms of reference of the Arts and Culture Forum.

Minute no. 83 Cabinet on 29 November 2023 (Future of Warm Hubs)

The Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott introduced the recommendations from the minutes of the Housing Review Board held on 9 November 2023 relating to the Warm Hubs Project.

RESOLVED to approve a budget of £50,000 to allocate towards delivering and designating the Warm Hubs project.

Minute no. 90 Cabinet on 29 November 2023 (Exmouth Sea Wall Emergency Repairs Budget)

The Leader of Council, Cllr Paul Arnott presented the recommendations from Cabinet seeking funding to carry out emergency repair works to Exmouth Seafront.

RESOLVED to approve a sum of up to £1.1m allocated to carry out emergency works to Exmouth Seafront, such works may also act as the permanent solution. It was noted that external contributions may be received which may reduce the spend.

Minute no. 94 Cabinet on 29 November 2023 (Treasury Management Performance 2023/2024 – 1 April to 30 September 2023)

The Leader of Council presented the recommendations from Cabinet relating to the Treasury Management performance from 1 April to 30 September 2023.

RESOLVED to note the treasury management activity and Prudential Indicators from 1 April to 30 September 2023.

Minute no. 100 Cabinet on 29 November 2023 (Site acquisition opportunity)

The Leader of Council presented the recommendations from Cabinet relating to a site acquisition opportunity in Axbridge.

RESOLVED to agree that a budget of up to £40,000 is allocated for due diligence work to be undertaken to inform the council's decision on acquiring the site and for future feasibility studies.

70 **Minutes of Cabinet held on 29 November 2023. Minute numbers 72 - 100**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Cabinet on 29 November 2023 are noted.

71 **Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 5 October 2023. Minute numbers 19 - 28**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 5 October 2023 are noted.

72 **Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 16 November 2023. Minute numbers 29 - 39**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 November 2023 are noted.

73 **Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 9 November 2023. Minute numbers 21 - 36**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Housing Review Board held on 9 November 2023 are noted.

74 **Minutes of Strategic Planning Committee held on 3 October 2023. Minute numbers 25 - 32**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 5 October 2023 are noted.

75 **Minutes of Strategic Planning Committee 31 October 2023. Minute numbers 33 - 40**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 31 October 2023 are noted.

76 **Minutes of Planning Committee held on 26 September 2023. Minute numbers 56 - 71**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 26 September 2023 are noted.

77 **Minutes of Planning Committee held on 24 October 2023. Minute numbers 72 - 87**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 24 October 2023 are noted.

(a) **Minutes of Planning Committee held on 21 November 2023. Minute numbers 88 - 95**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 21 November 2023 are noted.

78 **Minutes of Licensing & Enforcement Committee held on 15 November 2023. Minute numbers 8 - 14**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Licensing and Enforcement Committee held on 15 November 2023 are noted.

(a) **Minutes of Licensing & Enforcement Sub Committee held on 25**

October 2023. Minute numbers 23 - 28

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Licensing and Enforcement Sub Committee held on 25 October 2023 are noted.

79 **Minutes of Standards Committee held on 14 November 2023. Minute numbers 10 - 17**

Minute no. 15 Standards Committee on 14 November 2023 (Revised Code of Conduct complaints procedure)

The Monitoring Officer, Melanie Wellman, presented a recommendation from the Standards Committee setting out details of revisions to the Member Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure.

Cllr Eleanor Rylance proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Sam Hawkins.

Having been duly proposed and seconded the Council **RESOLVED** to approve the Member Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure.

(a) **Minutes of Personnel Committee held on 17 October 2023. Minute numbers 11 - 19**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 17 October 2023 are noted.

80 **Minutes of Overview Committee held on 12 October 2023. Minute numbers 9 - 17**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Overview Committee held on 12 October 2023 are noted.

81 **Minutes of Overview Committee held on 9 November 2023. Minute numbers 18 - 25**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Overview Committee held on 9 November 2023 are noted. Refer back to Overview to review

82 **Report from the Independent Remuneration Panel**

The Chair of Council, Cllr Eleanor Rylance welcomed the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), Nigel Arnold to the meeting.

Members noted that it was agreed in 2022 that new Independent Remuneration Panel members should be appointed to conduct a review of current allowances to ensure that we were engaging with a wide and diverse range of potential Councillors and that the existing Councillors are appropriately remunerated for their voluntary role. The current East Devon Independent Remuneration Panel was appointed in January 2023 with a view to review the allowances paid to EDDC Councillors

The Chair of the IRP commented on the work of the Panel, including:

- No increase to allowances since 2008
 - Allowances should reflect the increased commitments and professional nature of being a councillor and providing a public service and serving the community
 - Questionnaire and interviews held during 2023 and allowances set against a benchmark of similar sized authorities
 - Ten recommendations set out in the IRP report as follows:
1. that the Basic Allowance for East Devon District Councillors should be increased to £5,260, representing the average Basic Allowance from our benchmarked councils.
 2. that the increase to the Basic Allowance should be backdated to the May 2023 election.
 3. that an increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance based on the average benchmark for equivalent posts in councils we benchmarked, except;
 - Where a post with a benchmarked increase is higher than the NJC index (5) it will be capped at the NJC increase.
 - Where a post with a benchmark percentage increase would be lower than currently graded or is not replicated within the benchmarked councils (7) it will receive the NJC increase.
 4. that these increases (set out in 3 above) to the Special Responsibility Allowance should be backdated to the 1st June 2023.
 5. that if a member, with the agreement of the Leader of the Council, is acting in a capacity of a cabinet or portfolio holder for a significant period due to the incumbent being absent through sickness or extended leave of absence, that individual should, if not in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance, be paid the full agreed amount of the incumbent Special Responsibility Allowance. If they are already in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance and continue to receive it they should receive 50% of the Special Responsibility Allowance for that new post/responsibility.
 6. that the Basic Allowance should increase each year on the 1st May beginning May 2024 and Special Responsibility Allowance should increase each year on 1st June beginning in 2024 in line with the average of the agreed National Joint Council Pay Award for staff. This index should be reviewed every 4 years.
 7. that there are no changes to the current Travel Rates and Subsistence Allowances for Councillors at this time as they are aligned to EDDC staff allowances.
 8. that there are no changes to the current Child Care and Dependants' Carers' Allowance.
 9. that all Co-optees on the Housing Review Board should be in receipt of an annual allowance in addition to their travel expense.
 10. that an annual allowance be introduced in line with the views of Democratic Services and Home Office guidance from 1st May 2024. These allowances should be reviewed after 4 years.

Housing Review Board	£550	
Standards Committee	£400	
Independent Remuneration Panel		£400

The Council discussed the IRP recommendations and the following points were raised:

- levels of allowances at East Devon District Council had remained unchanged since 2008;
- allowances need to be attractive to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand for local election

The Chair thanked the IRP for their work in reviewing the allowances paid to councillors.

Cllr Ian Barlow proposed the recommendations from the IRP and this was seconded by Cllr Steve Gazzard.

Having been duly proposed and seconded the Council **RESOLVED:**

- 1 that the Basic Allowance for East Devon District Councillors should be increased to £5,260, representing the average Basic Allowance from our benchmarked councils.
- 2 that the increase to the Basic Allowance should be backdated to the May 2023 election.
- 3 that an increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance based on the average benchmark for equivalent posts in councils we benchmarked, except;
 - Where a post with a benchmarked increase is higher than the NJC index (5) it will be capped at the NJC increase.
 - Where a post with a benchmark percentage increase would be lower than currently graded or is not replicated within the benchmarked councils (7) it will receive the NJC increase.
- 4 that these increases (set out in 3 above) to the Special Responsibility Allowance should be backdated to the 1st June 2023.
- 5 that if a member, with the agreement of the Leader of the Council, is acting in a capacity of a cabinet or portfolio holder for a significant period due to the incumbent being absent through sickness or extended leave of absence, that individual should, if not in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance, be paid the full agreed amount of the incumbent Special Responsibility Allowance. If they are already in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance and continue to receive it they should receive 50% of the Special Responsibility Allowance for that new post/responsibility.
- 6 that the Basic Allowance should increase each year on the 1st May beginning May 2024 and Special Responsibility Allowance should increase each year on 1st June beginning in 2024 in line with the average of the agreed National Joint Council Pay Award for staff. This index should be reviewed every 4 years.
- 7 that there are no changes to the current Travel Rates and Subsistence Allowances for Councillors at this time as they are aligned to EDDC staff allowances.
- 8 that there are no changes to the current Child Care and Dependants' Carers' Allowance.
- 9 that all Co-optees on the Housing Review Board should be in receipt of an annual allowance in addition to their travel expense.
- 10 that an annual allowance be introduced in line with the views of Democratic Services and Home Office guidance from 1st May 2024. These allowances should be reviewed after 4 years.

Housing Review Board	£550
Standards Committee	£400
Independent Remuneration Panel	£400

83 **Allocation of Committee Places**

The Democratic Services Manager, Andrew Melhuish presented a report setting out details of a change to the allocation and appointments of members for seats on the Council's committees for the remainder of the 2023/2024 municipal year following the resignation of a member of the Conservative Group and that member joining the Independent Group.

The Council discussed the report and noted that the change in membership resulted in the number of seats allocated to the Independent Group increased by one seat and the Conservative Group seat allocation reduced by one seat.

Cllr John Loudoun proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Cllr Todd Olive and having duly been proposed and seconded the Council **RESOLVED:**

1. that the revised political balance of the Council is agreed and that the proposed allocation of committee places for 2023/2024 is agreed.
2. that authority is delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the appropriate Group Leader to make in year changes to committee and joint committee appointments (excluding the appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs) in accordance with the allocation of places to political groups by the Council and the wishes of the relevant political group leader.

84 **Proposed Dissolution of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee**

The Council received a report seeking approval for the dissolution of the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee.

The Council noted that the HotSW Joint Committee was made up of Somerset Council, Devon County Council, Plymouth Council, Torbay Council, National Parks and the 8 Devon District Councils. The dissolution followed a steer from the Leaders and senior members of several authorities for proposals to be brought forward to all authorities to consider their withdrawal and dissolution of the Joint Committee.

Cllr Paul Hayward proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Marianne Rixson and having duly been proposed and seconded the Council **RESOLVED** that it agrees to serve notice of its withdrawal and that the Heart of the South West Joint Committee be dissolved on 31 December 2023.

85 **Colyford Parish Council**

The Monitoring Officer, Melanie Wellman presented a report seeking to advance the next instalment of the precept or loaning funds in the sum of £1,202 to Colyford Parish Council to assist with cash flow pending the transfer of funds from Colyton Parish Council pursuant to the Reorganisation Order made on 11 January 2023.

The Council discussed the report and noted that £10,000 has now been released to Colyford Parish Council.

Cllr Tony McCullom proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Derek Haggerty and having been duly proposed and seconded the Council **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Council recommends that the sum of £1,202 is loaned or advanced from the precept to Colyford Parish Council.
2. That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Governance and Licensing in consultation with the Director of Finance to agree the form of advance or loan to Colyford Parish Council.

Cllrs Paul Arnott and Helen Parr abstained from the vote and requested that their abstention was recorded in the minutes.

86 **Motion on Notice - Motion 1: Coach Tourism in East Devon District**

The Chair of Council, Cllr Eleanor Rylance invited Cllr Derek Haggerty to propose a motion on notice which was seconded by Cllr John Heath and signed by Cllrs Brian Bailey, Jenny Brown, John Heath, Bethany Collins and Ian Barlow as follows:

Increasing coach passenger visitors to East Devon including Exmouth, Budleigh, Sidmouth, Beer, Seaton, Honiton, Colyton, Axminster, Ottery St Mary plus, any other town or village who wishes to take part.

Many towns and city councils in the UK are turning away coach tourism, causing a loss of £millions of group tourism income, to attractions businesses and the local economy. Covid has only just allowed things to start returning to a more normal growth in coach tourism, possibly now, coachers are one of the greenest forms of transport.

2024 onwards this EDDC council could step up again as leading first choice coach tourist area, attracting more UK and incoming tourists from all over the world into the East Devon District, already 2024 is looking buoyant for coach tourism with a predicted 30% + more visitors to the UK. East Devon stepping forward now, would attract a lot more coach tourism.

What is required for this to happen in each destination?

1. Improved signage for attractions, coach & car parking, town centres toilets. TIC.
2. Free coach parking facilities in East Devon, (not bus parking)
3. Designated drop off and pick up points for coach passengers.
4. Coach driver facilities (driver break stop, where the driver can use toilet & get snacks)
5. Meet and greet service possibly linked with TIC, towns & attractions (this could be funded by the visitor).
6. this project means everyone working together as one East Devon Team improving the tourist footfall, aimed at working for our district as voted,

As councillors working together as one EDDC team, we can improve consistently for our towns, all businesses, attractions and hotels, and all future council administrations.

This ongoing incentive would bind together all high street businesses, attractions, all types of accommodations including holiday parks, taking groups of all sizes from around the world.

EDDC could have its own coach friendly programme, working free with CPT, confederation of passenger transport. This project would reach every visiting coach and holiday operator. competing with every other holiday destination around the country, but first we must agree to step forward accepting one of the greenest forms of transportation in today's tourism marketplace, this project will grow into a consistent source of revenue for tourism in our East Devon District.

I am more than happy to work with each town to help reach our ongoing goals.

Members discussed referring the motion to the Overview Committee for further investigation and whether a Task and Finish Group should be set up. Cllr Derek Haggerty accepted the revised wording of the motion and the seconder to the motion, Cllr John Heath supported it.

Cllr Paul Arnott proposed an amendment to the motion: that the motion should be referred to the Overview Committee for further investigation and whether to set up a

Task and Finish Forum to undertake that work. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Derek Haggerty.

Having duly been proposed and seconded the Council **RESOLVED** that the motion should be referred to the Overview Committee for further investigation and whether to set up a Task and Finish Forum to undertake that work.

Cllr Ian Chubb left the meeting at 7.19pm.

87 **Motion on Notice - Motion 2: Government Planning Policies**

The Chair of Council invited Cllr Jess Bailey to present a motion on notice which was seconded by Cllr Bethany Collins and signed by Cllrs Peter Faithfull, Vicky Johns and Melanie Martin, as follows:

Background

As a result of Conservative government planning policies, EDDC planning officers are under considerable pressure to recommend approval of totally inappropriate, highly unpopular, and very damaging planning applications such as that for land east of Sidmouth Road, Ottery St Mary and Land at Eastfield West Hill.

East Devon is being penalised by the government due to its lack of '5 year land supply' despite an excellent track record in recent years. 9,000 new homes have been delivered over the past decade in East Devon and more than 4,000 houses are set to be delivered in the next 5 years.

This Council is fully committed to ensuring homes are delivered for residents - particularly those who are younger and less well off. However, this Council believes that harm will be caused to the countryside and communities of East Devon under the government's approach.

That this Council therefore agrees to urgently instruct a senior planning barrister at KC level to review the position of EDDC and provide EDDC with advice (including by reference to case law) how best to robustly resist speculative development and uphold EDDC local plan and neighbourhood plan policies in order to protect the countryside and communities of East Devon.

Cllr Jess Bailey altered the motion to read that this Council will ask the Planning Advisory Service or other appropriate organisation to review its planning reports given its lack of 5 year land supply and advise how best to resist speculative development particularly by reference to the work of other councils and decisions taken by the planning inspectorate.

Cllr Loudoun proposed an amendment to the motion, namely that this Council therefore agrees to urgently ask all Devon District Councils and the LGA to agree to mount a legal challenge to robustly resist speculative development and uphold EDDC and other councils' Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plan policies in order to protect the countryside and communities of East Devon and elsewhere.

The amendment was seconded by Cllr Vicky Johns and a vote was taken to support the motion as amended.

Cllr Chris Ingham moved that the vote on the motion be put and this was seconded by Cllr Stuart Hughes and carried.

The motion was put to the vote and having duly been moved and seconded the Council **RESOLVED:**

1. that this Council will ask the Planning Advisory Service or other appropriate organisation to review its planning reports given its lack of 5 year land supply and advise how best to resist speculative development particularly by reference to the work of other councils and decisions taken by the planning inspectorate.
2. that this Council therefore agrees to urgently ask all Devon District Councils and the Local Government Association to agree to mount a legal challenge to robustly resist speculative development and uphold EDDC and other councils' Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plan policies in order to protect the countryside and communities of East Devon and elsewhere.

Cllr Ben Ingham left the meeting at 8.10pm.

88 **Motion on Notice - Motion 3: Public Convenience provision**

Motion 3: Public Convenience provision

Motion Proposed: Cllr Ian Barlow and seconded Cllr Peter Faithfull

Motion signed: Cllrs Jenny Brown, Sarah Chamberlain, Ben Ingham and Daniel Wilson

With the state of our housing stock, with about 25% of our 4,177 Social houses failing to meet the decent homes standard, can we justify spending £5 million on upgrading our 15 toilet blocks across East Devon or £333,000 on a survey to look at how to decarbonise three swimming pools.

We would suggest that a working group urgently looks at the plans for our toilet provision and the estimated cost before this council's reputation is further damaged in the eyes of its residents, as we would be spending more on 15 toilets than the annual planned improvements to our 4,177 properties.

Cllr Paul Hayward proposed an amendment to the motion: that this Council agrees that a politically balanced Finance Portfolio holders working group comprising 7 members to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets and politically balanced be established as soon as practicable to consider the proposals for our future toilet provision and the estimated costs of the long-overdue modernisation works.

The motion was seconded by Cllr Marianne Rixson and having been put to the vote was carried.

Cllr Paul Hayward proposed the substantive motion and was seconded by Cllr John Loudoun which was duly put to the vote and Council **RESOLVED** that this Council agrees that a politically balanced Finance Portfolio holders working group comprising 7 members to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets and politically balanced be established as soon as practicable to consider the proposals for our future toilet provision and the estimated costs of the long-overdue modernisation works.

89 **Report of the Monitoring Officer - Constitutional Working Group**

The Monitoring Officer, Melanie Wellman, presented a report seeking the creation of a member constitutional working group to be consulted and to inform a review of the Council's Constitution.

Cllr Sam Hawkins proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Sarah Jackson and having duly been put to the vote the Council **RESOLVED**:

1. to set up a constitutional working group made up of nine members of Council.
2. that Council nominate members to the constitutional working group in accordance with the proposals outlined in the report.

90 **Report on appointments to Panels, Forums and Joint Bodies and Appointment of Representatives on outside bodies**

The Democratic Services Manager, Andrew Melhuish, presented a report seeking agreement of the Terms of Reference and membership for the Seaton Beach Management Plan Steering Group and to appoint the Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country and Environment to the Exmouth Beach Management Plan Steering Group.

Cllr Todd Olive proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Cllr Ian Barlow and having duly been put to the vote Council **RESOLVED**:

1. to approve the Terms of Reference and membership of the Seaton Beach Management Plan Steering Group.
2. to appoint the Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country and Environment as the Chair of the Exmouth Beach Management Plan Steering Group.

Outside Body representatives

The Council also considered appointing representatives to two outside bodies, namely: SPACE and East Devon Citizens Advice.

In respect of SPACE Cllr Loudoun nominated Cllr John Heath as the representative and this was seconded by Cllr Bethany Collins, Cllr Ian Barlow was also nominated and this was seconded by Cllr Stuart Hughes. A vote was taken on both nominations and Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr John Heath as the Council's representative on SPACE.

Cllr John Loudoun proposed Cllr Yehudi Levine as the representative on the East Devon Citizens Advice which was seconded by Cllr Todd Olive. Having duly been put to the vote Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Yehudi Levine as the Council's representative on the East Devon Citizens Advice.

Safeguarding Champion

The Council considered the appointment of a Safeguarding Champion.

Cllr Paul Arnott proposed Cllr John Heath which was seconded by Cllr Eileen Wragg. Having duly been put to the vote Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr John Heath as the Safeguarding Champion.

East Devon District Council

Meeting on 6 December 2023

Question Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Leader of Council (Councillor Paul Arnott) from Councillor Jess Bailey

Question 1

1. On the 19th July 2023 I asked the Leader to provide details of officer meetings (including times dates and attendees) which had resulted in the proposed enlargement of West Hill's settlement boundary. This enlargement represents a radical change in West Hill's boundary and has the effect of potentially significantly opening up greenfield development around the perimeter of West Hill. I was advised that a response would be given 'in due course' but five months later an explanation has not been provided.

Please can you explain how it came about that the officers redrew West Hill's boundary (it cannot be due to the 'principles' approved by the strategic planning committee because those very same principles resulted in an entirely different boundary as part of the villages plan in 2017).

Please include details of internal email exchanges, meetings, and details of internal discussions.

2. On 9th October this council wrote to its three MPs calling on them to press the government to find a more positive approach to solving the housing crisis and to move away from algorithms that pay no regard to the consequences of new housing numbers on the environment and the communities affected by growth. Please publish the responses received.

Answer:

1. At Strategic Planning Committee on the 8th February 2022 Members considered a working draft of the New Local Plan and endorsed an approach to the drawing of settlement boundaries. The approach sought to draw them more 'loosely' to provide development opportunities for smaller sites to come forward around the settlements – see resolution under Strategic Policy 7 at [Agenda item - Working draft of the proposed East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2040 - East Devon](#). Following this a report was brought to Strategic Planning Committee on the 5th April 2022 seeking Members agreement to a methodology for defining settlement boundaries that would achieve this. The methodology was agreed by the committee.

The new methodology is markedly different from that used to define the boundaries in the villages plan. Three additional criteria were inserted into the methodology in order to address Members resolution of the 8th February 2022. These criteria state that the following land areas would now be included within settlement boundaries:

- Areas of land that are largely contained between site allocations proposed in the draft local plan and the main built up area of the related settlement.
- Parcels of land smaller than 0.15 of a hectare that may provide opportunities for no more than 4 homes to be built where generally compatible with the general layout and landscape setting of the settlement.
- Parcels of land larger than 0.15 of a hectare that may not have been considered suitable for allocation, but nevertheless may provide suitable development opportunities if applicants demonstrate through the development management process that individual proposals would be acceptable.

On the basis of the methodology including these new criteria the settlement boundaries were reviewed including that of West Hill and reported to Strategic Planning Committee on the 1st November 2022 where it was agreed to consult on the draft Local Plan including the settlement boundaries for West Hill and other settlements.

There will have been various meetings and discussions between officers in production of the methodology and its use in production of the settlement boundaries, however these are not expressly recorded other than key action points in team meetings. The key decisions relevant to this matter were however all made by Members of Strategic Planning Committee and are recorded in the minutes of the relevant meetings referred to above.

2. The only response to the letter received so far was from Simon Jupp MP and this has already been circulated to all Members by Maria Pearce via e-mail on 7th November at 8.52am.

Question Procedure Rule 9.2 to the Leader of Council (Councillor Paul Arnott) from Councillor Ian Barlow

Question 2

Why is it if this council is supposed to be modern do we still have cabinet meetings that start at 6pm when like it or not people are not at their best mentally, officers have to wait around unproductively late into the evening and some decisions may appear rushed. Other committees where members don't receive extra money have their meetings in the day planning for instance.

Answer:

The 6pm start of certain committee meetings, Cabinet and Full Council is to allow elected members who have full time employment fulfil their duties for attending meetings without impacting their employment and allows members of the public to attend evening meetings.

If members wish to review the timings of meetings it would be sensible to undertake a consultation exercise with councillors and the public to find out if there is an appetite for making changes to the timings of meetings.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott	C Fitzgerald	J Loudoun
B Bailey	S Gazzard	D Mackinder
J Bailey	M Goodman	M Martin
I Barlow	D Haggerty	T McCollum
K Blakey	A Hall	C Nicholas
K Bloxham	M Hall	J O'Leary
C Brown	S Hawkins	T Olive
J Brown	P Hayward	H Parr
A Bruce	J Heath	H Riddell
M Chapman	N Hookway	M Rixson
I Chubb	S Hughes	E Rylance
B Collins	B Ingham	S Smith
R Collins	S Jackson	A Toye
O Davey	R Jefferies	S Westerman
T Dumper	V Johns	E Wragg
P Faithfull	G Jung	
P Fernley	Y Levine	

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Director of Finance

Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager

Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance & Licensing (Monitoring Officer)

Councillor apologies:

V Bonetta
C Burhop
F Caygill
S Chamberlain
M Hartnell
M Howe
J Kemp
D Ledger
S Richards
J Whibley
D Wilson

Chair

Date: