

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 27 March 2025**

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.17 pm

#### **26 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 February 2025**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 February 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

#### **27 Declarations of interest**

Minute 33, East Devon National Landscape annual review 2024/25

Cllr Ian Barlow, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Trustee of Sidmouth Arboretum

Minute 33, East Devon National Landscape annual review 2024/25

Cllr Richard Jefferies, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Chair of East Devon National Landscapes

#### **28 Public Speaking**

No members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

#### **29 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential/exempt items.

#### **31 Update Paper on the Introduction of an Online Petition Scheme**

The Corporate Lead Democratic Services & Scrutiny presented this update report which outlined the potential to provide a facility through the Council's website to allow the submission of online petitions, to enhance the current offer of submitting petitions in paper form or via email.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The Corporate Lead Democratic Services & Scrutiny confirmed that the online petition platform will be implemented from within existing resources, requiring no additional budget.
- The proposed platform is currently being used by Exeter City Council and has been successful.
- Not all residents can access a digital petition platform and a mechanism will need to be in place for residents to put their name to a petition in paper form.
- Through Councillor learning sessions, guidance can be provided for Councillors on how they can support residents with petitions.
- In reviewing the Petition Scheme, the Corporate Lead Democratic Services & Scrutiny was asked to reconsider the wording which sets out that petitions can be submitted for

‘matters which affect local people or local communities in East Devon more than the general public nationally’. It was felt that there are matters which affect local people to the same extent as the public nationally, but which are nevertheless an appropriate matter for petition.

- The Petition Scheme and the proposed online petition platform are not intended for petitions relating to planning matters, since these are dealt with separately in legislation.

The Committee noted the following next steps:

1. An updated petition scheme to be submitted to the Constitution Working Group to review at their meeting on 22 April 2025. Review of the petition scheme would also be added to the Committee's work programme for 25-26, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
2. The Corporate Lead Democratic Services & Scrutiny to work with the Digital Team and Strata to deliver an online digital platform for the submission of petitions by members of the public with implementation of an online petition form by 30 May 2025.

## 32 **Policy Review Project**

The National Management Trainee presented this report which summarised the findings and recommendations from a policy management review conducted between September 2024 and February 2025.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The aim of the project is to streamline the policy management process.
- The Senior Leadership Team decides which policies are published on the Council's website.
- A new corporate performance and risk system is being brought in which will also facilitate policy management, ensuring the authority is using the most efficient available technology for these purposes.

The Committee noted the work undertaken to review the Council's policy and review procedures, resulting in changes to the policy template and policy management processes as set out in the report.

## 33 **East Devon National Landscape annual review 2024/25**

The Assistant Director Countryside & Leisure introduced this item which detailed the work programmes and activities that had been carried out by the East Devon National Landscape team over the last 12 months, and summarised the plans for 2025/26 and how they aligned with the Council's own priorities for the environment.

The East Devon National Landscapes Manager presented the 2024/25 Annual Review to the Committee, together with an update on progress being made with reviewing the Management Plan 2025-2030.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- In addition to East Devon National Landscapes, other organisations such as National Trust, RSPB, The Woodland Trust and the Wildlife Trust are also working towards the tree cover target of 807 hectares, with a view to meeting this ambitious target through collective effort.
- The Management Plan will set out who is going to do what in regard to action points, including engaging community groups to facilitate delivery of targets.
- Through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Devon County Council have been working with ecologists and lepidopterists to gather population statistics for species of moths and butterflies, and important habitat has been identified in grasslands along coastal strips. This work is ongoing, with the findings to be published later in the year.

- Development in protected landscapes will be a challenge moving forward, and each application will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- An Access for All grant from central government has been renewed for a further financial year; proposals for how this is used are worked up in conjunction with landowners, and applications usually decided on a first come first served basis. If a variety of applications are received, then decisions are made by a panel based on assessment against criteria. Applications can be made via the East Devon National Landscapes website.

The Assistant Director Countryside stated that the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Annual Review would be presented to a future meeting of the Overview Committee.

The Overview Committee noted the East Devon National Landscape Annual Review report 2024 and update on the Management Plan Review 2025-2030.

## 34 **Work Programme 2024 - 2025**

The Overview Committee's Work Programme 2024 – 2025 was received and noted.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

A Bailey  
B Bailey  
K Blakey (Chair)  
J Heath  
Y Levine  
M Martin (Vice-Chair)  
D Wilson

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

I Barlow  
R Collins  
R Jefferies  
M Rixson

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

Jo Avery, Management Information Officer  
Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Agnieszka Grzegorzczak, National Management Trainee  
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer  
Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager  
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure  
Katie Webb, Property Lawyer

#### **Councillor apologies:**

O Davey  
T Dumper  
P Fernley  
A Hall

Chair: .....

Date: .....