



Agenda for Cabinet Wednesday, 10th July, 2024, 5.00 pm

Members of Cabinet

Councillors: M Rixson, G Jung, D Ledger, S Jackson, J Loudoun, N Hookway, P Arnott (Chair), P Hayward (Vice-Chair), S Hawkins and T Olive

Venue: Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton

Contact: Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer;
01395 517543 or email acoombes@eastdevon.gov.uk
(or group number 01395 517546)
Monday, 1 July 2024

East Devon District Council
Blackdown House
Border Road
Heathpark Industrial Estate
Honiton
EX14 1EJ

DX 48808 HONITON

Tel: 01404 515616

www.eastdevon.gov.uk

This meeting is being recorded for subsequent publication on the Council's website and will be streamed live to the [East Devon District Council Youtube Channel](#)

- 1 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 4 - 10)
- 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 is one item which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.
- 7 Minutes and recommendations of Overview Committee held on 30 May 2024 (Pages 11 - 14)
- 8 Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 13 June 2024 (Pages 15 - 21)
- 9 Minutes of Arts and Culture Forum held on 12 June 2024 (Pages 22 - 27)
- 10 Minutes of Poverty Working Panel held on 24 June 2024 (Pages 28 - 31)

- 11 Minutes of Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum held on 25 June 2024 (Pages 32 - 33)

Key Matters for Decision

- 12 Economic Development Strategy for East Devon (Pages 34 - 63)
- 13 Peer Challenge action plan (Pages 64 - 66)
- 14 Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (Pages 67 - 73)

[Notice of Key Decision](#)

Matters for Decision

- 15 **Annual complaint monitoring and service improvement report 2023-24** (Pages 74 - 82)
- a) Financial Outturn 2023-24 (Pages 83 - 94)
- b) HRA 2024-25 Revised Budget (Pages 95 - 119)
- 17 **Draft Productivity Plan** (Pages 120 - 126)
- 18 **Information Security Management System policies update** (Pages 127 - 129)
- 19 **Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan consultation** (Pages 130 - 134)
- 20 **Scrutiny Review recommendations and delivery plan update** (Pages 135 - 136)
- 21 **Forward Plan quarterly review** (Pages 137 - 144)
- 22 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Vice Chair to move the following:

“that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out on the agenda, is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B)”

Part B Key Matters for Decision

- 23 Land acquisition at Seaton (Pages 145 - 150)

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

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EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 5 June 2024****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.25 pm

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet held on 1 May 2024 were agreed.

The Chair congratulated Tracy Hendren as the newly appointed Chief Executive. He expressed his thanks to Simon Davey and Melanie Wellman for their roles as part of the interim Chief Executive team over the past few months. He congratulated Andrew Wood as the newly appointed Director of Place (interim) and Catrin Stark the newly appointed Director of Housing and Health (interim). The Chair welcomed Cllr Sam Hawkins, Cllr Todd Olive and Cllr Bethany Collins to their new roles on Cabinet.

2 Declarations of interest

Min 10. Exmouth Sea Wall Emergency Repairs Update and Phase 2.
Councillor Aurora Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is a Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 10. Exmouth Sea Wall Emergency Repairs Update and Phase 2.
Councillor Nick Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is a Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 10. Exmouth Sea Wall Emergency Repairs Update and Phase 2.
Councillor Paul Arnott, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is a candidate for the Exmouth & Exeter East parliamentary seat in the General Election.

Min 17. Colyton Parish Neighbourhood Plan - minor modification.
Councillor Paul Arnott, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Is a Colyton Parish Councillor.

Min 16. Exeter Science Park - Deloitte Review.
Councillor Paul Arnott, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is a candidate for the Exmouth & Exeter East parliamentary seat in the General Election.

Min 16. Exeter Science Park - Deloitte Review.
Councillor Sam Hawkins, Other registerable Interest, is the Council Shareholder representative for Exeter Science Park.

3 Public speaking

There were no public speakers.

4 Matters of urgency

There were none.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one item dealt with in this way which is recorded at Minute 210.

6 **Minutes of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 24 April 2024**

Members agreed to note the Minutes of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 24 April 2024.

7 **Minutes of South and East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee held on 24 April 2024**

Members agreed to note the Minutes of the South and East Devon Habitat Regulations Executive Committee held on 24 April 2024.

8 **Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-28**

The Housing Solutions Manager presented the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-28 for approval and adoption as required by the Homelessness Act 2002.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

To adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2028.

REASON:

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and develop and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness based on the findings of the review.

9 **Feniton Phase 4 Resolving risks to get to site**

Cabinet was updated on the latest set of issues the project had faced prior to getting to site, and the reason for the delay in getting to site. It highlighted the remaining risks to the project and what was being done to mitigate risks and update the total project costing, asking for approval for additional total project spend.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Approves the full scheme value for approval of £6.075m (No further EDDCs funds are required at this time, with additional project budget found from external sources)
2. Agrees to postpone commencing Phase 4 until the planning permission is granted.
3. Approves EDDC entering a contract with Kier Construction to deliver Phase 4, to mobilise asap once the planning permission has been secured, noting that the current additional external funds not yet been formally approved.
4. Subject to recommendation 3, Cabinet grants authority for EDDC to enter a contract for construction with Kier up to the value of £3.5m

REASON:

1. To ensure project has authority to proceed.
2. To support the planning process and not risk starting a scheme with a planning objection,
3. To remove any further delay to starting on the project. As delay will likely raise costs, with more fundraising needed.
4. To enable a speedy contract signing to get to site soon.

10 **Exmouth Sea Wall Emergency Repairs Update and Phase 2**

The Chair left the room while this item was being debated with the Deputy Leader acting as Chair.

The Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment introduced this item detailing the events of last Autumn when the seawall collapsed due to a storm. The speed and reaction from staff to mobilising contractors within hours was superb and the moving of thousands of tons of sand to protect the wall from the next forecasted storm. Phase 2 was a challenge, but the work had to be done, he apologised to business tenants affected by the noise and disruption during this period.

The Engineering Projects Manager updated Members on the emergency repairs to Exmouth Seawall in Phase 1. He explained various options for Phase 2 and set out recommended alignment of Phase 2. The financial situation and update on the Slipway repairs and cladding options was outlined.

Members congratulated and thanked staff, contractors and the Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment for an excellent effort in achieving so much in a short space of time.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Approves the carrying out of further emergency (and permanent) repairs to Exmouth seafront in respect of Phase 1, Phase 2 and associated emergency works and grants delegated authority to the Director of Housing Health and Environment (initially and then to the new Director of Place) in respect of the project, in consultation with the Director of Finance, the Director of Governance and the Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment.
2. Approves total budget spend for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 works of £3.312m. Note no additional budget from EDDC required over the £1.5m already approved. £1.812m obtained from external funding.
3. Supports the recommended option alignment and target start date for Phase 2 seawall repairs. However due to ongoing investigations, the final alignment decision being with the delegated officers as per recommendation 1.
4. Given the emergency nature of the works, Cabinet notes the exemption to contract standing orders in respect of the design consultancy total spend for the sum of £300,000 that has been approved by S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer as provided for in the Constitution. This is an increase from 6th March 2024.
5. Notes the decisions made to date on repairing the slipway.
6. Notes the Outline Business Case submission to the Environment Agency for access to national funding.

REASON:

Given the location of the failed and failing wall, it was not an option to do nothing and allow the sea to erode the seafront further. Therefore Phase 2 must start in October prior to the winter storms. Starting in October dictates the wall alignment. Further spend and costs have been incurred due to further storms in April.

11 **Household Support Fund 5**

The Benefits and Financial Resilience Manager provided details on the proposed policy of the Household Support Fund and funding available to support households for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Agree to the proposed policy for the Household Support Fund for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.
2. Agree for delegated authority to be given to the Assistant Director for Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services and Fraud and Compliance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities, in the event subsequent changes need to be made to the policy including providing additional groups to receive a targeted payment. Any required changes would be based on funding, available data from our poverty dashboard, other relevant factors at the time a decision needs to be made including carrying out a new Equalities Impact Assessment.

REASON:

The recommendation allows for the administration of the Household Support Fund to be targeted at those who require financial support with the cost of essentials. In addition, the proposed policy is in line with the Department for Work and Pensions guidance and with other Team Devon authorities who continue to work together to ensure a Devon wide framework in administering the fund.

Based on data gathered from those residents who request support from the Financial Resilience team we know that 59% of residents who are approaching us for help are those residents who have a member of the household who is disabled or is a carer. Given that this group of residents are vulnerable they may be less likely to know that they can access support from the Household Support Fund, therefore we are proposing that we target support at those households.

The open application would still allow those with vulnerable residents in the household such as low-income households with children access to the fund. The policy continued to support the Council's anti-poverty strategy.

12 **Live and Move Sport England Place Partner 2025 - 2028**

The Cranbrook New Community Manager sought endorsement for a joint bid with Exeter City Council to extend the role of Cranbrook and Exeter as a Sport England Place Partner and apply for investment to 'deepen' the work of the Live and Move programme for a further three years (2025-2028).

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Approve the joint bid with Exeter City Council as set out at Appendix C of this report, to become a Sport England Place Partner for the period 2025-2028.

REASON:

To ensure that residents of Cranbrook can continue to benefit from support to promote more active lifestyles and to help realise good health and wellbeing outcomes.

13 **Colyton Parish Neighbourhood Plan - minor modification**

The Deputy Leader took the Chair for this item.

The 'Colyton Parish Neighbourhood Plan' was made (adopted) by EDDC on 10 January 2022. On 5 December 2022, following a community governance review, EDDC agreed to create a new parish of Colyford, comprising part of the original Colyton parish area, and a new Parish Council for Colyford has since been established. The Colyton Designated Area and the area covered by the Colyton Parish Neighbourhood Plan therefore now covers the combined area of both the reduced Colyton parish and the new Colyford parish. Colyford Parish Council have asked if the name of the neighbourhood plan could

be amended to 'Colyton and Colyford Neighbourhood Plan' to reflect this for accuracy and clarity in its use and implementation.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Agree to the proposed minor modification to the Colyton Parish Neighbourhood Plan to reflect the change in community governance to the Colyton and Colyford Neighbourhood Plan, and to correct the error in page numbering in the index.
2. Agree to update the name of the Colyton Designated Neighbourhood Area accordingly to the Colyton and Colyford Neighbourhood Area.

REASON:

For clarity and accuracy and for the avoidance of doubt in the use and application of the neighbourhood plan and associated designated neighbourhood area for planning policy and development management purposes.

14 **Housing Ombudsman self-assessment and complaint procedure update**

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which covered 2 key areas, firstly the Housing Service self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code, which became statutory on 1 April 2024. Secondly it updated the corporate complaints policy and procedure to ensure compliance with the updated code and the code produced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Note and agree the procedure updates and compliance with the Housing Ombudsman code of practice in complaint handling.
2. Approve the appointment of the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities to the role of Member Responsible for Complaints (MRC) for Housing complaints.

REASON:

The council, as social housing landlord, must demonstrate compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's code by 30 June 2024 and had made amendments to the corporate complaints procedure and policy to ensure that it was fully compliant.

15 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt and private information (as set out against each Part B agenda item), is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing the items in private session (Part B).

16 **Exeter Science Park - Deloitte Review**

The Chair and Cllr Hawkins left the room while this item was being debated with the Deputy Leader acting as Chair.

Cabinet last considered a report in relation to the Science Park at the November 2023 meeting. This committed to the results of a strategic review of the development of the

Science Park being reported to Cabinet when complete. The report fulfilled this commitment. The strategic review had been undertaken by Deloitte. The associated report highlighted a number of structural issues facing the company that went to the heart of the future development of the Science Park and made a number of recommendations to address these.

A variety of issues were discussed including how the recommendations from the review were influencing the development of the next business plan for the Science Park and the challenges around securing further investment to bring forward the next phases of development. It was agreed that a briefing session would help members to understand these issues in further detail.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Notes the findings of the strategic review, endorses the associated recommendations and the accompanying activity needed to implement them to;
 - Develop a clear marketing and business development strategy.
 - Deliver a sustainable operating and funding model via cost reduction and a restructuring of the debt.
 - Improve governance by reviewing the Further Agreement and Reserved Matters.
 - Secure an updated Local Development Order and start the process to bring in either a private sector investor or private sector developer to support delivery of the remainder of the science park.
2. Receives further reports as required on specific areas of activity together with an overarching report in 12 months' time setting out the collective progress in implementing these recommendations.

REASON:

To ensure that the Science Park could continue to develop and fulfil its potential as a key economic driver for the District and wider region.

Attendance List

Present:

Portfolio Holders

| | |
|-----------|---|
| M Rixson | Portfolio Holder Climate Action & Emergency Response |
| G Jung | Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment |
| D Ledger | Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes & Communities |
| S Jackson | Portfolio Holder Communications and Democracy |
| J Loudoun | Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination |
| N Hookway | Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism |
| S Hawkins | Portfolio Holder Finance |
| P Arnott | Leader of the Council |
| P Hayward | Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets |
| T Olive | Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning |

Cabinet apologies:

Also present (for some or all the meeting)

Councillor Aurora Bailey
Councillor Brian Bailey
Councillor Ian Barlow

Councillor Kevin Blakey
Councillor Colin Brown
Councillor Bethany Collins
Councillor Roy Collins
Councillor Paula Fernley
Councillor Richard Jefferies

Also present:

Officers:

Thea Billeter, Cranbrook New Community Manager
Tom Buxton-Smith, Engineering Projects Manager
Sharon Church, Benefits Manager
Andrew Mitchell, Housing Solutions Service Manager
Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Andrew Hancock, Assistant Director StreetScene
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Andrew Hopkins, Corporate Lead - Communications, Digital Services and Engagement
Andrew King, Tenancy Services Manager
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place (interim)

Chair

Date:

Recommendations for Cabinet that will resolve in an action being taken:

Overview Committee held on 30 May 2024

Minute 6 An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon

To adopt the Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) for East Devon

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 30 May 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.09 pm

1 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 March 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 March 2024 were signed as a true and accurate record.

2 Declarations of interest

Minute 6, An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon
Councillor Vicky Johns, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Director of Ottery Larder.

3 Public Speaking

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

4 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential/exempt items.

6 An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon

The Economic Development Manager presented this report and asked members to consider the new five-year Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for East Devon and make recommendations, before it is presented to Cabinet for approval.

The EDS had been developed following an Economic Development Review (LDR) presented to Cabinet in October 2023, the findings from which highlighted the core issues and challenges facing the district's economy. The Strategy had been widely consulted on, addressed the core challenges highlighted by the LDR, supported delivery of the new Council Plan and set a clear vision for East Devon's economy to 2029.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Members commended the Economic Development team on carrying out the work in-house, remarking that Officers were therefore more likely to want to own it and deliver on it.
- The EDS is deliverable from within the current in-house resource and existing devolved funding (UKSPF/REPF). It does not propose delivery of any major new projects for which funding is not identified.
- The Service Plan for the Economic Development service will be based on the EDS, once adopted, and actions will align with the priorities set out.
- There are sites in the Enterprise Zone and Exeter Logistics Park which are suitable for large employers and particularly inward investors with good budgets, and this is beneficial

for business rate income. It was noted however that logistics and warehousing have low job density relative to the size of the footprint.

- Large employers struggle to recruit local staff, since the district has high levels of employment, and house prices mean that workers from elsewhere cannot afford to relocate to the area. The Economic Development team recognise the impact of the housing difficulties on recruitment and are committed to exploring what best practice exists in other local authorities and what this Council can seek to emulate, to ease the pressures.
- Average wages in the district have increased relative to the regional average and this might be related to the constrained local labour market, with employers having to pay more to attract workers in from greater distances who cannot afford to live locally.
- In regard to strategic planning, delivery of employment land followed by development of houses will help to reduce the requirement for people to commute across and out of the district and reduce the carbon impact of this travel.
- There are different types of demand for different areas of the district, with significant logistics demand in the west due to proximity to the transport infrastructure, but with rural centres in the east looking for smaller, more affordable B2 units to grow their businesses.
- The EDS reflects a holistic view of what good economic growth looks like, with a focus on environmental impact and how this is mitigated, and with consideration to the quality of jobs proposed and how valuable they are to the district's economy.
- There are factors within the report which are outside of the Council's remit including the cost of housing relative to wages, the cost and reliability of public transport, the road network and availability of WiFi, and Members expressed concern that these factors will restrict the capacity of the Council to deliver on the EDS.
- In regard to public transport and the availability of services to and from places of employment, the Council will work closely with the new Combined County Authority (CCA) to provide them with the appropriate data to inform their thinking around service provision.
- There is clear market failure in the delivery of employment land in East Devon and it was noted that to prevent the further loss of employment land to residential development, it is important that any proposed employment allocation site within the new Local Plan has been subject to robust viability testing prior to adoption. We will then have 1) the evidence we need to both protect those allocations from subsequent COU to more profitable residential development, and 2) an understanding of the infrastructure and investment requirement of those sites being delivered. This will form our pipeline of projects for which both centralised and devolved funding can be applied for.
- It has become apparent that the rail industry is unable to develop a freight terminal in the west end of the district and the Assistant Director – Growth, Development and Prosperity explained that due to the steep gradient, it is not possible for container traffic to use the stretch of line between Exeter St Davids and Exeter Central. There is ongoing work with Network Rail and others to look at the passing loop around getting a half-hourly service on the Great Western mainline out to Axminster, and this will boost reliability.
- It is understood that the Housing Task Force is considering the potential use of garages for housing. A Member suggested they could be used for small industrial units, in the alternative, and this potential use could be considered through a group of employment stakeholders and subjected to a feasibility assessment, if appropriate.

Following the discussion, the Committee endorsed the draft Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) for East Devon.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

To adopt the Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) for East Devon

7 E-petitions briefing note

The Committee received this briefing note and a full officer report is expected to a future meeting, outlining a business case for the introduction of an e-petition scheme for the

Council. The Overview Committee will then consider if the proposed scheme is cost-effective.

8 Work Programme 2024-2025

The Committee considered the Cabinet Forward Plan and noted the Work Programme for 2024-2025.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Bailey
T Dumper (Vice-Chair)
A Hall (Chair)
J Heath
V Johns
Y Levine
M Martin
H Riddell
D Haggerty
A Bailey

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
R Collins

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Robert Murray, Economic Development Manager
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place (interim)

Councillor apologies:

P Fernley
O Davey

Chair:

Date:

Recommendations for Cabinet that will resolve in an action being taken:

Scrutiny Committee 13 June 2024

Minute 7 Improving green spaces for wildlife

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

The Scrutiny Committee recommends that Cabinet:

1. Reviews the reasons that the Managing Sites for Wildlife approach was adopted and how this came about.
2. Endorses the approaches and amended process of wildlife improvement practices, and notes the wider Nature Recovery Work being led by Countryside.
3. Approves wider communication to Councillors regarding this approach, with a feature in the Councillor update and reconsiders communication with residents, towns and parishes to increase positive interaction.
4. Provides any further recommendations for supporting the important strategy of transitioning traditionally maintained green spaces to wildlife improvement areas within climatic (eg. mild winters and wet springs) and budgeting constraints.
5. Agrees that Councillors increase their awareness of the reasoning and history of this approach and how it relates to central and local government legislative and policy frameworks.
6. Agrees that Councillors help disseminate this message to residents / voters in order to bridge the gap between Council strategy and residents' expectations of wildlife improvement areas and the continual transition of EDDC-owned green spaces from traditionally mown grass areas to wildlife havens. This will help StreetScene continue to align its targeted work with the legislative framework and Council-wide agendas, policies, strategies and action plans.
7. Endorses that the Council continues to work with voluntary and community groups across the District.
8. Supports that the Wildlife Improvement Strategy is brought back to the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

Minute 8 Review of Emergency Responses in 2023/4 by East Devon District Council

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET

That the Council should encourage every community in East Devon to have a local emergency plan in place.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 13 June 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.46 pm

1 Minutes of the previous meetings held on 4 April 2024 and 18 April 2024

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 4 April 2024 and 18 April 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

2 Declarations of interest

Minute 8. Review of Emergency Responses in 2023/4 by East Devon District Council. Councillor Vicky Johns, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Councillor is a member of Ottery St Mary Town Council which distributes sand bags in the event of local flooding.

3 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

4 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential / exempt items.

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

There were no decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

7 Improving green spaces for wildlife

The StreetScene Operations Manager presented the report which set out the approach, objectives for and reasoning behind targeted wildlife improvement areas. The report covered the management of designated wildlife improvement areas, legislation, policies and strategies that apply to the development and designation of wildlife improvement areas, management systems, stakeholders consultations, communication with residents and similar work by other local authorities.

The StreetScene Operations Manager highlighted the following points from the report:

- Not all green spaces in East Devon are managed by the StreetScene team as some are managed by other bodies such as DCC, town and parish councils or EDDC's Countryside / Wild East Devon team.

- The way green spaces are managed is crucial particularly in light of the loss of wildlife and bio-diversity across Devon.
- Management of wildlife improvement areas is a key priority in the Council Plan for creating a Greener East Devon and aligns with the priorities set out in the Council's Climate Change Strategy, Action Plan and the legislated Nature Recovery Plan.
- As wildlife improvement areas are all public realm, StreetScene recognises the need for on-going communication with residents regarding how the areas are created and managed. The team will be working on a communications campaign to educate residents with the help of councillors and local town and parish councils.
- All wildlife improvement areas are now mapped and can be viewed on the Council's website.
- Recommendation 6 of the report [page 12] is key to supporting good communication with residents moving forwards.

The Chair thanked Officers for their comprehensive and informative report.

Responses to questions from Members and discussion included the following points:

- Areas such as tree copses are considered vital for the sustainability of small mammals. The recent planting of the Exmouth Tiny Forest provides an example of newly planted trees and will be monitored over the next decade to assess the benefits to bio-diversity.
- As StreetScene does not have an Ecologist within the team, it is important that the team works with local groups, such as the Exmouth Wildlife Group, which provide vital support to StreetScene's work.
- Concern was expressed regarding mowing in Brixington Park, Exmouth which could be detrimental to small mammals. The StreetScene Operations Manager and the Horticultural Technical Officer agreed to give this point further consideration.
- There was discussion regarding the up-keep of closed cemeteries such as Beer Cemetery and concern was expressed that the area around graves should be kept well maintained out of respect for the deceased. The Horticultural Technical Officer advised that improvements were being made to the management of the western section of Beer Cemetery which is not a wildlife improvement area.
- There was concern that there is not always a clear distinction between formal maintained areas and areas designated for wildlife improvement. It was noted that this should be monitored closely to ensure that maintained areas are clearly kept in good condition and that any wildlife areas are mown along the edges ie. by the side of pavements etc. so that the areas are clearly defined.
- With regard to the use of yellow rattle to suppress grasses and increase biodiversity, it was noted that it can take several years to see any improvement. Use of the cut and collect mowers to scarify the ground will support the growth of yellow rattle.
- The Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment outlined the process by which EDDC takes on the management of closed cemeteries and the challenge of striking the right balance between respectful maintenance and enabling re-wilding.
- With regard to a query about Winters Lane at Ottery St Mary, it was noted that this site will be re-assessed in the next few months and consultation will be undertaken with a view to under-canopy planting such as hazel and buckthorn.
- Concern was expressed regarding basic maintenance of public open spaces in Seaton and good, timely maintenance could assist with public perception and support for wildlife improvement areas. It was noted that glyphosate had been banned on EDDC land since 2022, and this, together with mild winters and wetter springs has led to greater challenges with the maintenance of public open spaces.
- The Council has a definite role to play in leading and inspiring residents to follow the aims of wildlife improvement, however, the messaging needs to correctly identify and explain what is re-wilding or improving areas for wildlife.
- Real progress will be made when residents follow EDDC's example of improving areas for wildlife.

- Greater involvement of community groups, town and parish councils and schools would assist with encouraging residents' involvement, communications and managing resident's expectations.
- It was noted that the environment, sensitivities and residents' expectations are different in every area and that this would be an ongoing evolving project. A holistic approach to ongoing communications is needed.

It was noted that the Horticultural Technical Officer would be happy to provide workshops for new Councillors to increase awareness as part of the induction process. It was agreed that Officers would consider the use of clear and easily recognisable signage to indicate wildlife improvement areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

The Scrutiny Committee recommends that Cabinet:

1. Reviews the reasons that the Managing Sites for Wildlife approach was adopted and how this came about.
2. Endorses the approaches and amended process of wildlife improvement practices, and notes the wider Nature Recovery Work being led by Countryside.
3. Approves wider communication to Councillors regarding this approach, with a feature in the Councillor update and reconsiders communication with residents, towns and parishes to increase positive interaction.
4. Provides any further recommendations for supporting the important strategy of transitioning traditionally maintained green spaces to wildlife improvement areas within climatic (eg. mild winters and wet springs) and budgeting constraints.
5. Agrees that Councillors increase their awareness of the reasoning and history of this approach and how it relates to central and local government legislative and policy frameworks.
6. Agrees that Councillors help disseminate this message to residents / voters in order to bridge the gap between Council strategy and residents' expectations of wildlife improvement areas and the continual transition of EDDC-owned green spaces from traditionally mown grass areas to wildlife havens. This will help StreetScene continue to align its targeted work with the legislative framework and Council-wide agendas, policies, strategies and action plans.
7. Endorses that the Council continues to work with voluntary and community groups across the District.
8. Supports that the Wildlife Improvement Strategy is brought back to the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

The Chair thanked Officers for attending the meeting.

8 Review of Emergency Responses in 2023/4 by East Devon District Council

The Assistant Director Environmental Health presented the report which outlined the Emergency Planning and Response work undertaken in the year 2023 / 24 with particular reference to the floods in May and September 2023 and subsequent work based on lessons learned. The Assistant Director Environmental Health highlighted the following points in the report:

- The Council is defined in law as a 'Category 1' responder to emergencies which places certain responsibilities on the Council.
- The Council is an active partner in the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Resilience Forum and a member of the Devon Emergency Planning Partnership which provides support with specialist administrative tasks.

- An Emergency Planning Officer is employed by the Council, based in the Environmental Health Service.
- Weather related risks and incidents dominated the period covered by the report and it was noted that weather warnings from the Met Office are improving, supported by flood alerts from the Environment Agency, both of which assist with emergency planning.
- Weather warnings and flood alerts are widely disseminated to assist Council staff and town and parish councils to increase local resilience.
- Members' attention was drawn to the highly localised flash floods in the Otter Valley in May 2023 and storm damage to the seawall at Exmouth caused by Storm Ciaran in November 2023.
- The flash floods in the Otter Valley had highlighted that EDDC was responsible for the recovery phase due to the localised nature of the incident. The response had emphasised the need for multi-agency partnership working. The work done at the time had resulted in better engagement with the local community and increased awareness of the need for local resilience.
- It was noted that recent changes in the Senior Leadership Team had resulted in agreeing a new weekly rota for the role of Emergency Duty Officer which will enable the Council to respond to emergencies at short notice.
- Attention was drawn to the National Risk Register and the key risk of a national power outage which highlighted the need for resilience among local communities.

Responses to questions and discussion included the following points:

- The Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country and Environment thanked Officers and noted how well EDDC had responded to the localised flooding incident in May 2023 and emphasised the need for local communities to have plans in place to support themselves during such an event.
- Local community groups are key to resilience during emergencies and communities should be encouraged to start work on emergency planning if they had not already done so.
- It was noted that Devon Communities Together provided information and support for emergency planning.
- Local knowledge suggested that the localised flooding in May 2023 was exacerbated by water running off fields and lack of maintenance of drains and gullies which was previously undertaken by DCC.
- Better use of land management was discussed following the May 2023 flooding and should form part of the 'business as usual' phase following recovery from such an emergency.
- Good local knowledge would be crucial in managing an emergency such as a national power outage as it would be very difficult to hold detailed local information on residents' specific needs at District Council level.
- DCC operates an annual or tri-annual cycle of gully cleaning with an interactive map available on the DCC website showing the last time a gully was cleaned. Issues can be reported through the DCC website.

The Committee particularly noted the comments made with regard to the need for local community resilience groups and the concerns expressed regarding the importance of gully clearance. The Committee asked the Assistant Director Environmental Health to emphasise the need for gully clearance during communications with DCC.

It was agreed to ask the Emergency Planning Officer to come back to the Committee to respond to the concerns and issues raised.

It was agreed to note the Emergency Planning work undertaken in the year 2023 / 24.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET

That the Council should encourage every community in East Devon to have a local emergency plan in place.

9 **Work programme**

It was noted that the Scrutiny Action Plan, which is in course of preparation, will inform much of the Committee's work programme for the rest of the civic year.

It was also noted, and agreed, that the Chair of the Overview Committee had requested early sight of the Service Plans, well in advance of the joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in January.

The work programme was agreed.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

M Chapman
M Goodman (Chair)
A Hall
M Hall
M Hartnell
J Heath
V Johns
D Mackinder (Vice-Chair)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

A Bailey
B Bailey
R Collins
G Jung
M Rixson

Officers in attendance:

Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place (interim)
Paul Fealey, Horticultural Technical Officer
Julia Woodbridge, StreetScene Operations Manager

Councillor apologies:

I Barlow
J Brown
B Collins
O Davey
Y Levine
A Toye
J Whibley

Chairman

Date:

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**Minutes of the meeting of Arts and Culture Forum held at Online via the Zoom app on 12 June 2024****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.45 pm

1 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

2 Appointment of Vice Chair

Nominations for Vice Chair were received for Councillor Nick Hookway.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Nick Hookway be appointed Vice Chair of the Arts and Culture Forum for the ensuing year.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 November 2023 were agreed.

4 Declarations of interest

6. Museum Development South West.

Councillor Paula Fernley, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Her father volunteered at the South West Airfield Heritage Trust.

5 Museum Development South West - report on progress of the East Devon Culture Strategy

Jo Cairns, Museum Development Officer for Museum Development South West (MDSW) gave the Forum some background to MDSW. They were a team of museum and heritage development specialists working with the museum and heritage sector in the South West to effect positive, lasting change the deliver public value. MDSW was an Arts Council England funded Investment Principles Support Organisation and was one of five museum development providers across England supporting accredited museums.

In the South West 67% of museums were independent charities, compared to 58% nationally. 57% of museums were 'micro', with fewer than 10,000 visitors annually. 42% of the museums in the South West were wholly volunteer run, with 9 volunteers to every one paid member of staff in the South West (compared to four volunteers to one paid member of staff nationally). These regional statistics highlighted the need for professional support from MDSW.

The key services of MDSW were:

- Local, place based Museum Development Officers.
- Small grants programmes and funding support.
- Skills and training networks.
- Specialist support in collections and volunteering.
- Organisational development and technical accreditation.

- Communications, advocacy and resources.
- Secure funding for projects.

MDSW worked in partnership with EDDC with funding provided through the Shared Prosperity Fund. There were four accredited museums receiving support (Allhallows Museum, Sidmouth Museum, Fairlynch Museum and Arts Centre, Axminster Heritage Centre) and there were five others not yet accredited, but still receiving support due to funding from EDDC (Exmouth Museum, Seaton Museum, Ottery St Mary Heritage Museum, Whimble Heritage Centre, South West Airfield Heritage Trust).

The Museum Development Officer explained that in 2023/24 EDDC received a 300% return on its investment from MDSW. It received:

- £4,685 in Museum Development Officer support.
- Technical accreditation support to two museums.
- £1,264 specialist officer support in collections and digital.
- One participant in Volunteering Fit for the Future at £1,400 (Exmouth Museum – dedicated volunteer management consultancy).
- 18 training attendances at 13 training sessions from 3 museums at £986.
- One On Display! grant awarded at £1,000 (Axminster Heritage Centre – Thomas Whitty Rug) which enabled a total project valued at £5,735.

It was noted that Arts Council funding was received by MDSW for accredited museums. The accreditation scheme run by Arts Council England ensured that museums were adhering to a certain standards. A return had to be submitted every five years to the Arts Council to demonstrate the museum was still adhering to the particular criteria. Being accredited showed that a museum was working to a particular standard and opened up opportunities for grants as a lot of funding was only open to accredited museums.

On behalf of the Forum the Vice Chair in the Chair thanked the Museum Development Officer for her presentation.

6 **Villages in Action - report on progress of the East Devon Cultural Strategy**

Mair George, Creative Director, Villages in Action explained that Villages in Action (VIA) had been in existence for over 30 years. It was an arts charity working across rural Devon. There was a small team of four part time workers – the Creative Director, two producers and a finance manager. Since 2021 VIA had embarked on a new journey to shift the way that rural touring in Devon was thought about, with a network of volunteer promoters and co-curators, re-imagining how and why towns and villages engaged with culture, and opening up the way that rural communities enjoyed and grew new creative opportunities. The aim was to strengthen the voice of towns and villages in both hosting and creating work that reflected changing communities in the wider world. This was done by growing a network of locally rooted co-curators who imagined and shaped new creative projects with VIA, inspired by what their community wanted and needed. The aim was that over time this culturally driven action network would grow meaningful. Agriculture was a way of thinking about rural touring differently.

The Creative Director highlighted four main points of VIA work over the last year:

- Community touring – hosted 25 high quality arts performances for 1,496 live audiences, with five participatory workshops sessions from visiting touring artists.
- Village exchange - Delivered 3 intergenerational skill-share projects in Ottery St Mary (young people; music focus), Honiton (older adults with dementia; reminiscence) & Membury (mixed ages; heritage storytelling).

- Zest - Active Care Homes commission, producing over 12 high quality digital works for use in care settings, engaging excluded participants, developing specialist digital production team & content (older adults dementia).
- Artist support - Supported over 80 artists including 8 open-call From Devon With Love scratch artists. Nurtured artists through the current fundraising re-submission cycle (Arts Council England). Developed a new relationship with University of Exeter Drama focusing on graduate retention in the South West.

VIA were most known for their community touring. Box office income in East Devon had increased, along with the number of performances and attendees. Some examples of high quality regional and national artists were given, including the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in Ottery St Mary. Overall there had been a range of work for all ages across a number of different community spaces with positive feedback received.

The VIA Creative Director outlined some forthcoming performances, workshops and activities and went on to thank EDDC for continuing to support the arts through VIA.

On behalf of the Forum, the Vice Chair thanked the Creative Director for her fascinating presentation.

7 **Arts and Culture East Devon update and Arts Council bid**

The Forum received a presentation from the Cultural Producer. The Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) network met three times a year in person and the most recent meeting had been held on 10 June at Seaton Gateway Theatre. 34 people attended the meeting which was co-chaired by the ACED music champion. Different speakers were invited to present, including ACED climate change champion, Anne-Marie Culhane on a recent project 'Overwintering' on the Exe Estuary that had been successfully delivered and funded through the Creative East Devon Fund. The ACED network also heard about the new Carbon Action Programme, which community organisations could apply to for equipment that would help decarbonise their buildings. This built on the learning from last year's Culture, Leisure and Tourism Fund. This fund would open in the autumn and a range of other support services would be offered, including a free energy audit to ensure that community organisations were applying for the right type of equipment to be the most energy efficient.

The inaugural ACED volunteer of the year award was given to Colin Trussell, who had been volunteering with Sidmouth Folk Festival for over 30 years. The plan was for this to become an annual award in order to recognise the importance of volunteers as it would not be possible to deliver the festivals and events in Devon without their support.

The Cultural Producer explained the recently launched ACED mentoring scheme, whereby a young person aged 18 to 30 was paired with an experienced ACED network member who had training in being a mentor. There were currently 10 mentors signed up to the scheme which was in its pilot phase. Free training opportunities had also been delivered through the Shared Prosperity Fund including training specific to East Devon museums, training in bid writing, public speaking, producing live events and volunteer recruitment and retention. The next training opportunity, which was free to ACED members was equality, diversity and inclusion co-ordinated by the Thelma Hulbert Gallery.

There were now 174 ACED members, which represented a 54% increase in membership since November 2023. This increase was in part due to ACED membership being

essential for eligibility in applying to the Creative East Devon Fund. This fund was designed to provide discretionary financial support to local art and culture initiatives and projects that demonstrated a commitment to developing the East Devon Cultural Strategy. Creative projects could apply for up to £3,000. The scheme was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Cultural Producer reported that she had been working on some projects around theme two of the Cultural Strategy: protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The objective was to establish East Devon as an innovator and regional beacon of culture-led environmental protection, enhancement and activism. The Cultural Producer was working closely with Exmouth Festival on action 2.2 of theme two – to improve the environmental practices of the district’s cultural festivals to establish them as leaders in sustainable event management. Those involved were looking forward to sharing the learnings from this once the event had taken place as it was thought that it could be a really useful blueprint for other event organisers to take actions to lower the carbon footprints of these types of events.

The Forum also considered the report on an Arts Council bid of approximately £30,000 relating to theme 2.1.2 in the cultural strategy, to work with local museums and South West Museums Development to engage in national conversations about the climate crisis and enable displays of natural science and biodiversity collections in East Devon’s museums. It was noted that funding bids to the Arts Council continued to be extremely competitive, with around one in ten applications being successful. A bid was also being submitted for the Thelma Hulbert Gallery to continue the success of its current programme, engaging young people with the gallery space, with particular focus on EDI and climate.

The Vice Chair thanked the Cultural Producer for her inspiring presentation and report and commented on the extraordinary commitment that volunteers across East Devon had made to its cultural landscape.

The Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure highlighted how EDDC’s Culture Strategy, which was only two years old, was beginning to lead some interesting thinking across the county. He thanked the Cultural Producer and other officers involved for their hard work in getting funding into grassroots organisations and utilising the enthusiasm, expertise and knowledge within East Devon’s communities.

RESOLVED: that the Arts and Culture Forum note and support the two funding bids to the Arts Council to support the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and East Devon museums.

8 **Thelma Hulbert Gallery update and Arts Council bid**

Gemma Girvan, Gallery Manager and Curator introduced herself to those present and stated that she was six months into the role as Manager of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG). The Forum noted that gallery sales figures were in line with previous years, which was pleasing. The Gallery Manager and Curator went on to highlight the following activities:

- Present Makers exhibition had been record breaking this year, taking over £14,000 and showcasing over 60 established and emerging makers.
- The Mikhail Karikis exhibition focussed on climate change, with EDDC’s Climate Change Officer and the Curator at RAMM. The exhibition showcased work by Honiton Community College pupils as part of the Create Our Space (COS) project.
- South West Academy was opened by the newly appointed president, John Nettles, with over 100 artists and supporters at the opening.

- THG Open Winners Exhibition – this was well received, with press coverage in the Midweek Herald, Exeter Living, Evolver and Devon Life.
- Gluck's Flowers – a theatre company based in Bristol that had Arts Council funding to show this performance in gallery spaces, turning the gallery into a theatre for 2 days.

The THG's engagement programme was going from strength to strength. At the beginning of the year jewellery making workshops and print painting workshops sold out. The Create Our Space (COS) project, an Arts Council funded project encouraging young people to engage with the gallery was coming to an end, with the last round of workshops being delivered to five local primary schools. An evaluation of the project would be carried out at the end of July. As part of the Arts Council funding a few people took part in carbon literacy training and had been trained as trainers. They had delivered carbon literacy training to the THG teams as well as some volunteers. It was hoped that training could be rolled out to other groups, including the ACED network.

The Creative Cabin would be out and about over the summer at festivals. The option of a more portable creative cabin was being explored (in addition to the current one), for example something that could go into the boot of a car, that was more accessible and portable as well as being more 'green'. Taking the current Creative Cabin out and about could be logistically challenging at times. The THG team were looking at the next Arts Council bid to carry on the successes from the COS project as well as building the relationships with young people and a young persons network, and also continuing to focus on the climate. The Forum were reminded that funding bids to the Arts Council continued to be extremely competitive, with around one in ten applications being successful. There was also an opportunity with Art Fund as this year's focus was museums and galleries run by local authorities. Lots of areas of potential funding were being explored, as well as how the THG could work with other partners.

9 **Cultural tourism update**

The Chair welcomed the Senior Economic Development Officer to the meeting to update the Forum on cultural tourism.

EDDC adopted a tourism strategy at the end of 2022 which included a very strong focus on the cultural offer. The tourism strategy vision was for East Devon to become the leading all year long tourism destination in Devon, focussing on some of its key assets and advantages like natural diversity, as well as encouraging more businesses to do the same. The Senior Economic Development Officer worked closely with the Cultural Producer and they were now working on a joint cultural tourism project to highlight the cultural offer in the area.

An East Devon Tourism Network had been set up and running for approximately 18 months, with quarterly meetings. East Devon Excellence were delivering this strong network which was going really well and showcased different aspects of the cultural offer. For example, the November meeting would focus on festivals and events as a way of attracting tourists to the area and extending the tourist season.

The Senior Economic Development Officer explained that the current main project where efforts were being focussed to nurture and promote cultural tourism was a cultural tourism map. This was a product development project where all of EDDC's key assets where visitors could experience high quality cultural activity would be depicted on a map so that people could plan their visit. There would be printed versions available as well as an interactive version online where people would be able to build their own itineraries. The map would be based on an existing map from East Devon Excellence and was a

resource that could be built on. It promised to be a really engaging project and the aim was to launch it in September 2024 at the end of the active summer season, with the aim of promoting tourism outside of the peak summer months. It was noted that although the cultural tourism map was the main project, there would be other projects too. East Devon District Council would act as an enabler for tourism in the area, rather than being a promotional agent.

Input from the Arts and Culture Forum was welcomed and members were invited to attend all economic development events. On behalf of the Forum the Vice Chair thanked the Senior Economic Development Officer for her fascinating update.

Attendance List

EDDC Councillors present:

O Davey
P Fernley
N Hookway
I Barlow
T Olive

Town Representatives

J Bull, Axminster Town Council
R Doorbar, Budleigh Salterton Town Council
C Buchan, Cranbrook Town Council
I Barlow, Sidmouth Town Council

Officers in attendance:

Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Gemma Girvan, Gallery Manager and Curator
Caitlin Davey, Events Officer
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Sarah Elghady, Cultural Producer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Geri Panteva, Senior Economic Development Officer

Also Present

M Rixson
Jo Cairns, Museum Development Officer, Museum Development South West
Mair George, Creative Director, Villages in Action

Apologies:

A Aaroussi
V Johns
J Whibley
S Gazzard, Exmouth Town Council
R Sexton, Honiton Town Council substitute
P Arnott (non committee member)

Chair

Date:

Recommendations for Cabinet that will resolve in an action being taken:

Poverty Working Panel on 24 June 2024

Minute 4 Updated terms of reference for Poverty Working Panel

To approve the updated Terms of Reference for the Poverty Working Panel

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Poverty Working Panel held at Online via the Zoom app on 24 June 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.00 am

1 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 March 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 March 2024 were noted as a true and accurate record.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Public speaking

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

4 Updated terms of reference for Poverty Working Panel

The Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, Fraud & Compliance introduced this report which set out proposed updated Terms of Reference, with a view to providing greater clarity and relevance on the role of the Poverty Working Panel moving forward.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet to approve the updated Terms of Reference for the Poverty Working Panel.

5 Template Poverty Working Panel Work Programme 2024-2025

Members received the template work programme for the Poverty Working Panel for 2024-2025 and were encouraged to input into the programme, to shape the meetings of the Panel going forward.

6 Timelines for updating the Poverty Strategy

The Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, Fraud & Compliance presented this briefing paper which detailed proposed timelines for updating the Poverty Strategy, noting that the current strategy ends on 1 July 2024.

It was intended to consult with the Poverty Working Panel and with the voluntary sector, to receive contributions to help shape the emerging new strategy.

Members discussed priorities for the strategy, and noted the report.

7 **Voluntary Sector Anti-Poverty Event**

The Chair outlined proposals to hold a Voluntary Sector Anti-Poverty Event in the autumn, to coincide with the first anniversary of the VCSE. This event would be an opportunity for networking between community groups and with key note speakers, as well as raising awareness of the updated Poverty Strategy and the work of the Council to reduce poverty across the district.

Members expressed unanimous support for the proposed event.

8 **Household Support Fund update**

The Benefits & Financial Resilience Manager presented this report which provided an update on deployment of Household Support Fund (HSF) 4, and detailed the HSF5 policy agreed by Cabinet on 5 June 2024. The report also set out future considerations, given that the future of the HSF beyond the end of September 2024 is unknown, and may not continue.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The financial resilience team continue to work with residents to support them to reduce their outgoings and increase incomes, particularly where there has been a repeat need for emergency help.
- The team also work collaboratively with a range of agencies and different voluntary groups to access the right support for residents.
- Voluntary groups can be invited to register their organisation with the Devon Connect online database, a community hub which aims to connect people to their community and promote social action.

Members noted the report.

9 **East Devon District Councils Public Health Strategy 2024-2027**

The Public Health Project Officer introduced this item, outlining how the new Public Health Strategy and some of its uppermost priorities link to the work of the Poverty Panel. These priorities include:

- Cost of living crisis
- Mental health
- Unpaid carers
- Loneliness and social isolation (also known as social health)
- Dementia
- Homelessness, housing and indoor environment factors.

Members were encouraged to use the Public Health Strategy as a tool to help to influence the decisions they take in other committee meetings, which will in turn align with the Council's anti-poverty strategies.

Attendance List **Councillors present:**

P Arnott
B Collins
D Ledger (Chair)
M Martin
M Rixson
S Smith

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
K Bloxham
R Collins
C Fitzgerald
S Westerman

Officers in attendance:

Sharon Church, Benefits Manager
Libby Jarrett, Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Customer Access, Fraud & Compliance
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Helen Wharam, Public Health Project Officer

Councillor apologies:

M Goodman
D Haggerty
J Heath

Chair:

Date:

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**Minutes of the meeting of Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum (formerly LED Monitoring Forum) held at online via Zoom app on 25 June 2024****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.02 pm and ended at 6.18 pm

1 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 April 2024

After the roll call was completed, it was apparent that the meeting was inquorate. It was agreed that as there were no decisions to be made, it would be acceptable for the meeting to continue on an informal basis.

The Chair welcomed the new LED CEO, Olly Swayne, to the Forum.

Approval of the previous meeting's minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Public Speaking

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

4 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential/exempt items.

6 LED Facilities and Activities report May/June 2024

The LED Director of Delivery presented this report which provided an update on the activities of LED including operational delivery, customer engagement, facilities projects, health and safety, and community projects.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- With regard to the number of visits to swimming pools, it is possible to report on the number of repeat visits by individual members; however, LED do not hold the data to report on repeat visits by casual users.
- In response to a member's question, it was clarified that the NPS which LED has achieved for the EDDC leisure facilities is 50, as detailed in the KPI Dashboard (minute 7 refers). The overall NPS of 58 which is set out in the Facilities and Activities report relates to the wider LED Leisure group.

The Chair thanked the LED Director of Delivery for the report and observed that it had been a positive quarter for LED.

7 **LED KPI Dashboard May 2024**

The Forum received and noted key details of the performance of LED Community Leisure for May 2024.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Whilst NPS surveys were sent out, the Dashboard indicates that no responses were received for three leisure centres.
- The Chair will liaise with the LED CEO and Director of Delivery to consider how the KPIs can be reported going forward in a way which benchmarks performance against the same period in previous years, to make the data which this Forum receives more meaningful.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

S Hawkins (Chair)
N Hookway (Vice-Chair)
A Toye
J Whibley (joined the meeting at 6.13pm)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
K Bloxham
P Fernley
R Jefferies
G Jung
T Olive
M Rixson

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

P Arnott
M Hall
J Loudoun

Chair

Date:

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon

Report summary:

On the 10th October 2023, Cabinet considered the [Local Economic Review](#) developed by EDDC's Economic Development team.

In summary, it was resolved that: 1) the work be endorsed; 2) that the evidence it contains be used to inform the development of the Council Plan; and 3) that a new Economic Development Strategy for East Devon would be developed to directly engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review.

With this direction, the Economic Development team developed a brief for the Strategy to be developed in-house. The approach was approved by the Economy PFH and a series of local consultations with a range of stakeholders most relevant to our district economy and employment trajectory was undertaken. From this, an initial Economic Development Strategy (EDS) document was produced. This was then subject to extensive internal/corporate and external district wide review with feedback informing the finalisation of the Strategy.

The work was presented for review to EDDC's Executive Leadership Team ahead of Overview Committee on the 30th May 2024. Members of Overview endorsed the Economic Development Strategy document and recommended it to Cabinet for publication.

The current report now introduces at **Appendix A** our final draft Economic Development Strategy for East Devon (2024-2029) for Cabinet review ahead of publication.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendations:

That Cabinet;

- 1) Endorse the final draft Economic Development Strategy for East Devon (2024-2029);
- 2) Delegate to EDDC's Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets and Interim Director of Place consent to approve final design and content updates in producing a digital version of the Strategy for publication on EDDC's website.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Council's resources and those of our partners most effectively engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review whilst delivering on the [Council Plan](#) (2024-2028) priority for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.

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 Medium Impact

Our policy programme promotes activity in support of the broadest range of residents, organisations and employers. The Strategy aligns with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals which include a commitment to reduced inequality. The work has been developed on the basis of an inclusive consultation programme, ensuring the widest range of perspectives have been considered. In relation to protected characteristics, we are prioritising support across demographics, from younger working age adults to helping older residents who wish to remain economically active. The work includes commitments to coordinate employment support for economically inactive residents of all ages, including specialist support for those with disabilities. It aims to reduce the number of households facing poverty, including through the provision of retrofitting grants to reduce energy use and associated spend.

[Equality Impact Assessment.](#)

Climate change Medium Impact. ONS data shows East Devon's higher levels of out-commuting is a significant contributor to our high emissions. The Strategy responds to the need to prioritise decarbonisation and reduce travel to work times through strengthening local employment and associated land provision. This will improve our job density alongside supporting the wider transition to a low carbon economy

Risk: Low Risk; There are no significant risks associated with the report recommendations.

Links to background information

30th May 2024 Overview Committee Report: [An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon](#);
10th October 2023 Cabinet Report: East Devon – [Local Economic Review](#);
7th December 2023 Economy [Portfolio Holder Report](#) to Scrutiny Committee;
19th Feb-10th March District Wide [Consultation](#) on the Draft Economic Development Strategy;
2024-2025 Growth, Development & Prosperity [Service Plan](#).

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

1. Background

- 1.1 On the 10th October 2023, EDDC's Economic Development team presented a report to Cabinet setting out the main findings of their Local Economic Review (LER). It highlighted the core issues and challenges facing our district economy as evidenced from the most up-to-date Census and ONS data.
- 1.2 Some of the core findings from the LER are as follows:
- **Demographics:** East Devon has the third lowest proportion of working age residents and fourth highest proportion of retirees in the country. We've notable variance in the age profile of settlements, though only two of our 30 wards have a retiree population below the national average.
 - **Employment:** East Devon has the lowest proportion of economically active residents and highest number of economically inactive residents compared to the other EHOD geographies, regional and national averages. Despite this low proportion of economically active residents, the district has one of the lowest rates of unemployment, with claimant count figures slightly above pre-pandemic levels.
 - **Wages:** Despite the critical loss of Flybe in 2020 and around 1,000 of our most valuable highly skilled jobs, average wages in East Devon have increased to match the regional average, though remain below the national average.
 - **Productivity:** Average productivity rates in East Devon are catching up with Exeter but remain consistently below the national average.
 - **Workspace:** There is high demand from employers to provide local employment, though the available supply of employment land and premises is critically constrained. This means some local employers must relocate in order to grow, contributing to high levels of out commuting.
 - **Wellbeing:** East Devon residents' sense of worthwhileness and life satisfaction was previously high but has decreased back down to the national and regional average since the pandemic. Reported anxiety has increased since 2018-19 to meet the regional average in 2021-22 with our happiness index score dropping below the regional and national average over the same period.
 - **Carbon:** Our carbon emissions per capita has decreased, but remains higher than neighbouring authorities, national and regional averages with transport (including commuting) accounting for 31% of our overall emissions. The amount of carbon emitted in East Devon will need to rapidly decrease in order to reach net zero by 2040.

2. Context

- 2.1 Endorsement of the LER work was sought alongside approval for its use in informing both the emerging Council Plan and in the development of a new 5-year Economic Development Strategy for East Devon.
- 2.2 Members noted that the data presented had far reaching consequences that would help shape future decisions in the district. They saw the significance of this reliable and transparent evidence as providing an important baseline from which to develop a robust

Economic Development Strategy. This, in turn, would inform an improved policy approach and direct actions in supporting delivery of our new Council Plan aims.

2.3 October Cabinet resolved:

1. That the report and detailed Local Economic Review which underpins it, be endorsed.
2. That the use of the Local Economic Review and up-to-date statistical evidence it comprises be used to inform the development of the emerging Council Plan.
3. That a new Economic Development Strategy for East Devon would be developed that would directly engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review.

3. Strategy Development

- 3.1 Since this Cabinet resolution was agreed, the Economic Development team have employed a strong project management approach in developing the new Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) presented at **Appendix A**.
- 3.2 Just as with the Local Economic Review, the work has been produced in-house, employing existing Economic Development Officer expertise and support from wider corporate teams, without recourse to external commissioning. The work has benefited from strong levels of engagement across Council services, most notably from Comms and we are grateful for this collaboration.
- 3.3 The work began with the initial development of the detailed Project Brief outlining the purpose, timeframe and process for developing the Strategy. This included an ambitious approach to maximising engagement and feedback from 1) our business community, stakeholders, and organisations in order to develop first draft of the Strategy, and 2) a district-wide consultation seeking views on this initial draft to inform a final draft to be developed. The brief was reviewed and agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Economy in November 2023 and work got underway.
- 3.4 To provide some context to the approach taken by the team in developing this work, an overview of project milestones delivered is presented in **Appendix B**.
- 3.5 The result of this work is the 5-year Economic Development Strategy document content now presented to Cabinet for review at **Appendix A**. If endorsed by Cabinet, the work will be subject to final design and content updates (to be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets and Interim Director of Place) with a digital version then being published to EDDC's website [here](#).

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Widely consulted on, we believe the Economic Development Strategy sets out a clear, shared vision for East Devon's economy from 2024 to 2029.
- 4.2 Aligned with the Council Plan, the work articulates a consistent message on our economic priorities. We feel it makes clear how we will direct resources in delivering an achievable set of outcomes, working with partners to strengthen future funding bids. We hope we have made clear the links to relevant strategies and plans already being delivered, as well as the objectives we share with our regional partners and local stakeholders.
- 4.3 The Strategy presents a clear policy programme. This will be effective in focusing the Council's resources and those of our partners in a) addressing our most pressing local economic challenges, and b) helping to both inform and deliver on our Council Plan priorities for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.

- 4.4 Should the work meet with members' approval, we invite Cabinet to endorse our final draft Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) and delegate approval of final design and content updates to the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets and Interim Director of Place enabling a digital version of the Strategy to be published.
- 4.5 This will ensure EDDC has in place a robust, transparent and effective Economic Development Strategy, making clear our most pressing local priorities (issues and opportunities) for investment and intervention whilst delivering on the [Council Plan](#) (2024-2028) priority for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.
-

Financial implications:

At this stage no additional funding is being requested, it should be noted that certain actions do rely on devolved funding and some on possible Council investment which in these cases that will have to be considered by Cabinet and Council on case by case basis if outside existing budgets and approvals.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.

Appendix A: Strategy Development Milestones

| TASK | PROGRESS | START | END | WORK DAYS |
|---|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Stage 1: Project Brief | | | | |
| Develop Project Brief | 100% | 1/10/23 | 16/10/23 | 11 |
| Seek endorsement from PH | 100% | 16/10/23 | 20/10/23 | 5 |
| Establish officer group to assign roles | 100% | 25/10/23 | 25/10/23 | 1 |
| Stage 2: First Consultation and Strategy Drafting | | | | |
| Prepare consultation | 100% | 30/10/23 | 10/11/23 | 10 |
| Consultation period | 100% | 13/11/23 | 15/12/23 | 25 |
| Review responses | 100% | 11/12/23 | 22/12/23 | 10 |
| Draft consultation version of EDS | 100% | 1/1/24 | 19/1/24 | 15 |
| Service & ADs review, PH update | 100% | 22/1/24 | 2/2/24 | 10 |
| Stage 3: Second Consultation and Strategy Finalisation | | | | |
| Prepare consultation | 100% | 5/2/24 | 16/2/24 | 10 |
| Consultation period | 100% | 19/2/24 | 8/3/24 | 15 |
| Review responses | 100% | 11/3/24 | 22/3/24 | 10 |
| Draft post-consultation version of EDS | 100% | 25/3/24 | 5/4/24 | 10 |
| Team review | 100% | 8/4/24 | 12/4/24 | 5 |
| Final draft development | 100% | 15/4/24 | 26/4/24 | 10 |
| Stage 4: Engagement and Endorsement | | | | |
| GDP service review | 100% | 18/4/24 | 26/4/24 | 7 |
| ADs review | 100% | 30/4/24 | 2/5/24 | 3 |
| ELT consideration | 100% | 3/5/24 | 7/5/24 | 3 |
| Overview meeting | 100% | 30/5/24 | 30/5/24 | 1 |
| Cabinet meeting | 0% | 10/7/24 | 10/7/24 | 1 |
| (Days remaining) | 100% | 11/6/24 | 10/7/24 | 29 |

Economic Development Strategy

2024–2029

eastdevon.gov.uk



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| | |
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Foreword



Cllr Paul Hayward

Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for
Economy and Assets

It is with great pleasure that I am introducing East Devon's Economic Development Strategy 2024–2029.

This document has been developed to address East Devon's unique set of opportunities and challenges, offering a clear set of economic priorities for the rest of this decade. We know that times have been challenging for many local businesses in recent years. This is why we feel it's important to make clear where East Devon District Council can have the greatest impact in supporting the development of our economy with the influence and resources available to us.

Our five policies reflect the areas in which we can be most effective in focusing collective efforts. They are an example of how even the largest and most complex issues of our time, such as climate change, can be addressed through directing local action. Every project we embark upon, whether it's developing the Enterprise Zone or establishing food festivals like Gate to Plate, can be linked back to one of these five core policies.

We're hugely grateful for the valuable insights and feedback provided by our most significant local employers, representative organisations and stakeholders in helping to shape the overall strategic direction of this work. What was clear in working together to develop this Strategy was that this continued collaboration would be just as essential for delivering on the agreed strategic objectives.

Whether it's ensuring the construction of new infrastructure, promoting employment and skills or protecting our natural landscapes, it's essential that we continue to strengthen our engagement with our local, regional and national partners to deliver shared economic priorities in the way our residents and businesses expect of us.

In setting a strategic direction for our priorities and actions for the next five years, we can ensure we deliver impactful, effective projects which target our core needs, make the most of emerging opportunities, and celebrate the unique character of our district.

Introduction

The strength of East Devon's economy lies in its strategic connectivity and diversity. Whether it is cutting – edge research and development at Exeter Science Park, nationally renowned restaurants on our coastline, or small enterprises tucked away in our rural hamlets, East Devon has a broad economic base, home to businesses of all sectors and sizes.

This diversity creates resilience, cushioning our economy from the worst impacts of the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. A robust economy, well – positioned in terms of our beautiful coast and countryside, proximity to Exeter and major transport routes, helps to make East Devon an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit.

East Devon's economy has its challenges. Most of these are driven by historic local trends such as lower wages, limited workspace provision in rural areas and higher house prices compared to national averages. The quality of our natural environment is a key economic driver, but rural employment development to improve the sustainability of our communities, can be challenging to deliver. By striking the right balance, we can reduce out – commuting and emissions whilst making the district more attractive for working age residents.

East Devon is already feeling the effects of wider social and global environmental challenges, such as our ageing, less economically active population, climate change and a biodiversity crisis, all of which require urgent attention.

With an informed Economic Development Strategy and a clear set of actions, we can more effectively tackle these challenges, further strengthening the diversity and resilience of our district economy. This is particularly important in responding to our most pressing global challenge of transitioning to a Net Zero economy, in our case, by acting decisively on some of the greatest opportunities for positive change in the district.

To make this Strategy as accessible as possible, we have included a glossary of key terms which can be found at the end of the document.



What is Economic Development?

Economics is the study of scarcity, whether it is the scarcity of physical things like natural resources and products, or of intangible things like ideas or time. 'Economic development' prioritises these scarcities in a way to improve the wellbeing of citizens, providing them with a good quality of life.

Previously, this meant chasing growth at any cost, focusing on conventional economic outputs with the social and ecological consequences viewed as secondary, or even irrelevant. This outdated approach is neither desirable nor sustainable.

Our approach to economic development is different. We view our economy as being embedded within a unique and sensitive environmental and social system. Economic growth should only happen where there is a proven link to the improved and equitable economic wellbeing and prosperity of our residents. In addition, economic growth needs to be bound together with both ecological regrowth and greater social pride and cohesion.

Why do we need a strategy?

East Devon members committed the Council to develop an Economic Development Strategy in the Council Plan 2024–28. Our decision to prioritise this work was shaped by our Economic Development team having both the required resource, and the ambition to inform our evolving strategic landscape at a critical time.

The national and global economic turmoil witnessed over recent years has prevented us from being able to reliably baseline the performance of our economy. This situation has stabilised to some degree and the results of the 2021 Census now provide a groundswell of evidence, enabling us to better identify and understand the district's various economic and demographic strengths and weaknesses.

We have witnessed an ongoing transfer of powers and funds to local authorities to aid economic development at a more localised level. Although these resources have been limited to date, they have nonetheless provided an effective tool for local authorities to set local priorities based on local need. This has helped us to act upon East Devon's core economic challenges and opportunities.

Having a clear and concise Economic Development Strategy for the district with a clear pipeline of projects will strengthen our hand for future funding bids and opportunities arising from further devolution. The Strategy is distinct from the Council Plan and emerging Local Plan but will help to outline in more detail the economic priorities set out in these documents.

Our aim is for the Strategy to provide the clarity and confidence needed for residents, strategic partners and inward investors.

Links to other information

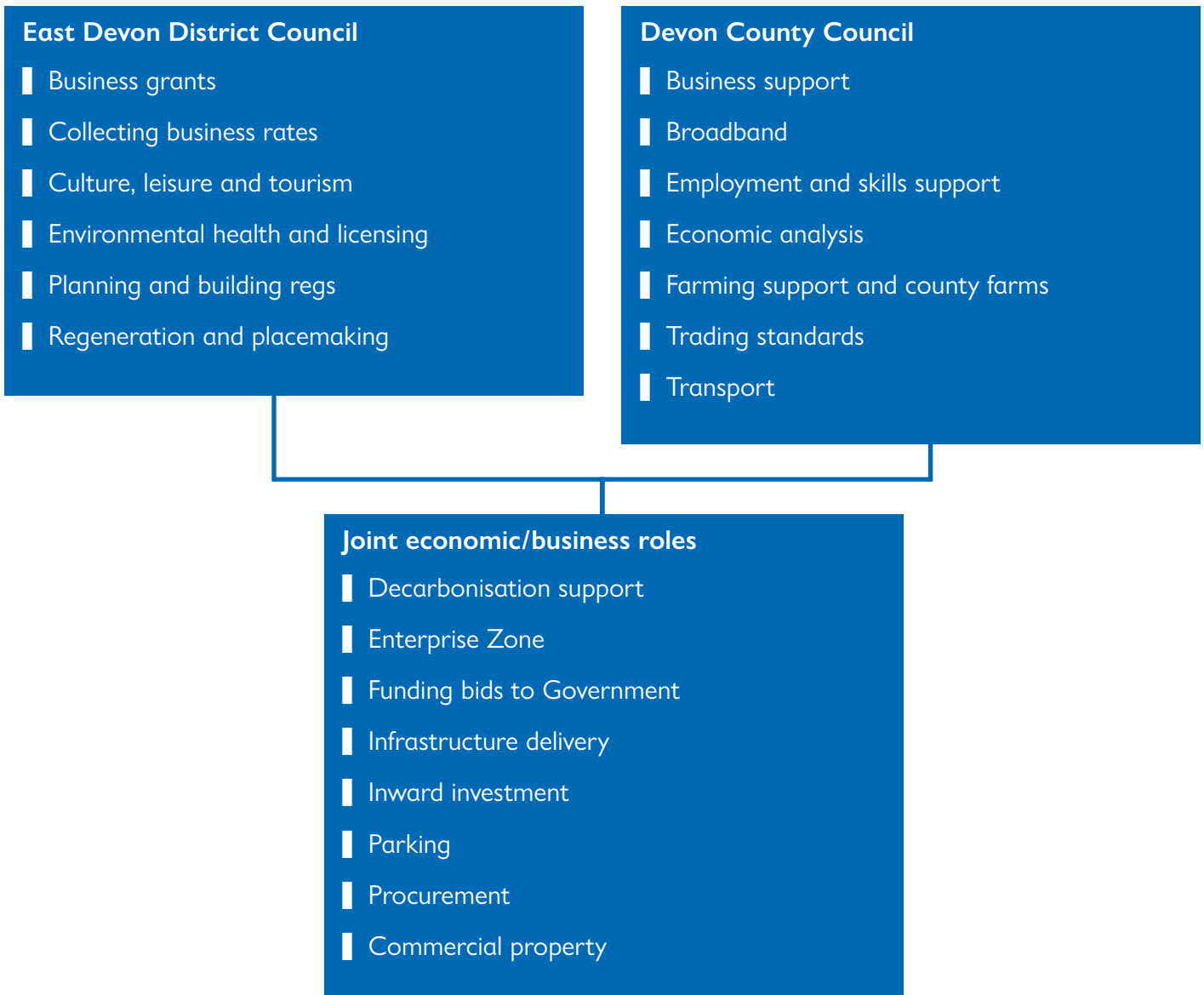
■ [Council Plan 2024–28](#)

Roles

This Strategy acknowledges the various roles played by local, regional, and national partners in supporting the economic development of East Devon. The Council's role is to provide additionality to what is already being delivered, avoid duplicating what our partners are doing and play to our strengths and specialisms as a district council.

The diagram below shows which economic activities and business services have traditionally been delivered by East Devon District Council and Devon County Council.

Economic/business roles



In addition to these responsibilities, one of the most important roles of a local authority is to be an enabler. By collaborating with local partners, we can help to facilitate those shared aspirations, as we can achieve more when we work together than we can apart.

Shared goals

Our Economic Development Strategy needs to align with wider strategic objectives at a regional, national, and global level. Where new strategies are developed at a regional level resulting from devolution for example, we will ensure that shared objectives are identified and can be acted upon at a local level.

To ensure there is alignment with longer term global priorities, each action presented within this Economic Development Strategy will be linked to one or more of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We have taken this approach to demonstrate to our residents and businesses how action at a local level can feed into critical global priorities.



The Sustainable Development Goals

un.org/sustainabledevelopment

Evidence

This Economic Development Strategy for East Devon has been developed using a wide evidence base. This includes data from the 2021 Census and other Office for National Statistics (ONS) datasets. Evidence commissioned by the Council has also been used, including the Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) produced to help inform the emerging Local Plan. This data was brought together to form a Local Economic Review endorsed by East Devon District Council Cabinet and published in October 2023.

Links to other information

Local Economic Review

4th highest

proportion of retirees out of England's 332 local authority areas

By 2040

Our carbon emissions are not falling fast enough to reach our Net Zero goal

58,000+

Economically inactive residents
46% of East Devon's population

+14%

increase in population from 2011 and 2021

Average wage

£29k < £31k

East Devon and the South West

UK average

Jobs in East Devon for every working age resident

0.74 jobs

Average productivity of the national average added per hour

£27 > £35

In 2011

In 2021

Actual pay

has outpaced inflation since 2011 in East Devon

6,730 businesses

registered in East Devon

30% of residents mainly work from home

3% Exmouth Town Ward unemployment rate

508,000sqm demand for industrial and logistics workspace significantly outstrips 17,000sqm supply

1.7% unemployment rate South West 2.1% England's average 2.9%

To sense – check this data and fill in the gaps, a series of in – person and online consultation exercises were organised with local businesses and stakeholders. The graphic below illustrates some of the main points of feedback.

“The low carbon sector is a huge opportunity

to attract talent and create high value jobs.”

“Green jobs present our biggest high – skilled employment opportunities.”

“Housing is a key constraint.

Can we ringfence homes for young people?”

“We need to focus on creating careers rather than jobs;

people need to see that staying here will provide them opportunities to move up.”

“Shift in what young people value creates a great **opportunity for East Devon to market itself on a lifestyle basis and attract young people.”**

“The real struggle is the lack of small commercial units.”

“We’re so busy trying to find workspace for our growing business, it is hard to focus on other business needs”

“There is no space available and **businesses will just leave rather than wait for workspace to come forward”**

Vision

A strategic vision gives purpose to the actions we take. The vision of this Strategy is linked to our definition of 'economic development', the evidence and our role. It aligns with other relevant visions and strategies, primarily the Council Plan and Local Plan.

Our vision is for East Devon to have a sustainable and equitable economy geared towards the improved wellbeing of our residents, prosperity of our businesses and protection of our natural landscapes. This vision is based on five key aspirations:

- A just transition to a Net Zero economy, displaying tangible progress towards decarbonisation and nature recovery.
- Our aspirational and traditional sectors to have the workspace and investment they need to thrive.
- Well – paid and productive careers that residents of all ages can be proud of.
- A more attractive offer for young adults to want to live and work in the district
- To provide agile, responsive, and quality public services that local businesses can rely on.



Policy programme

To fulfil our vision, we have developed five policies to focus our actions within five years. These policies have been developed to address core challenges from our Local Economic Review and stakeholder evidence base whilst also acknowledging the service specialisms and resources of East Devon District Council.



Industrial Policy

Our Industrial Policy will target public resources towards specific sectors and industries to provide the support they need to grow and prosper. A focused industrial strategy can promote ‘clustering’ where businesses within a specific sector establish a local ecosystem of competition, collaboration, and innovation.

The Council can action its Industrial Policy using grant funding programmes provided by Government and regional bodies. Our aim is to directly stimulate growth in both aspirational sectors with a high growth potential and businesses in traditional sectors seeking to modernise. In turn, this financial investment will unlock high – value job creation, higher productivity and new innovative products and services coming to market.

East Devon provides a unique economic offer with Devon’s only international airport and hosting a thriving Science Park. These advantages have shaped this Industrial Policy and the sectors we want to promote. To align with the wider Strategy, our Industrial Policy will promote clean growth and outcomes such as tackling climate change and minimising waste.

Policy outcomes should also be inclusive and aspirational by helping to create jobs which foster occupational pride and financial stability and prioritising areas of higher rural deprivation. This also means identifying opportunities to distribute the learning and benefits of high growth initiatives such as the Science Park across the wider district wherever possible.

An industrial policy can also be used as a strategic signal to central government and other sources of funding to unlock larger streams of investment for our target sectors. This will help to catalyse confidence in the private sector to invest in East Devon, demonstrating how the Council and business can work effectively in partnership.

Industrial Policy Priorities

This policy outlines how we will support our aspirational and traditional sectors, including through future grant funding schemes and other mechanisms of support. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase the number of well – paid and secure jobs.
- To increase the number of businesses experiencing productivity gains.
- Support the development of the Future Flight Innovation Zone centred on Exeter Airport.

The Policy will align with existing sectoral strategies, such as the Tourism Strategy and the West End Clean Growth Vision.

Links to other information

- [Tourism Strategy](#)
- [West End Clean Growth Vision](#)

| Industrial Policy priority | Funding/resource | Links to United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal |
|---|--|--|
| Invest and support projects linked to 'clean growth' including clean energy, green finance, sustainable transport and innovations in the circular economy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devolved funding. ■ Enterprise Zone investment. | <p>09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.</p> <p>12. Responsible Consumption and Production.</p> |
| Invest and support projects linked to new digital and data innovations, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and drone technology. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devolved funding. | <p>08. Decent Work and Economic Growth.</p> <p>09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.</p> |
| Support the development of the Future Flight Innovation Zone centred on Exeter Airport. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ Devolved funding. | <p>08. Decent Work and Economic Growth.</p> <p>09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.</p> |
| Invest and support projects to promote East Devon's renowned food and drink sector, including events and exploring specialist workplace provision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ Devolved funding. | <p>08. Decent Work and Economic Growth.</p> <p>09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.</p> |
| Invest and support projects linked to East Devon's Tourism Strategy to promote improved quality, collaboration, sustainability and accessibility across the sector. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ Devolved funding. | <p>08. Decent Work and Economic Growth.</p> <p>09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.</p> |
| Invest and support projects linked to our most rural businesses, including farm businesses seeking to diversify. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devolved funding. | <p>08. Decent Work and Economic Growth.</p> <p>09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.</p> |

Workspace Policy

There is clear market failure in the delivery of employment land in East Devon which will steadily degrade our economic wellbeing unless intervention is taken to address this. Including a Workspace Policy in this Strategy is a direct response to the challenge of insufficient employment land. The Council can action this policy by pooling resources including planning expertise, council – owned assets and engagement with landowners.

Additional employment land needs to reflect current and future need both across and within settlements. A number of East Devon’s existing employment allocations have viability constraints which are holding back delivery. This creates a risk that more of these sites intended to provide higher value employment could be lost to housing or to employment uses which only create a small number of lower skilled jobs. Supporting the development of these sites for high value commercial uses can help to strengthen pride in place and improve the economic resilience of our communities.

Any development must also be coupled with the right level of infrastructure, which requires effective coordination between different public sector bodies and essential utility providers. Prioritising the delivery of much needed employment land and premises will promote settlement self – containment and reduce the need for car – based commuting. We will encourage the redevelopment and intensification of existing low – performing commercial sites to minimise the need to develop new sites in environmentally sensitive areas. We will also support the development of non – allocated employment land where proposals comply with the Local Plan.

To align with the wider Strategy, we need to ensure that new workspace can accommodate aspirational careers which are well paid and secure. Our aim is to support the delivery of key allocations, including council – owned assets, by seeking funding from Government and investing our own funds where this can generate a reasonable return.

Workspace Policy priorities

This policy outlines how the Council will try to increase the supply of employment land and commercial premises in East Devon. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To sustainably increase the net supply of employment land and commercial premises across the district.
- To reduce the number of car journeys and overall distance required for commuting.
- Support the viability of employment allocations by exploring the use of Local Development Orders and working with partners to ensure their development.

This Policy will align itself with the relevant strategies and polices of the emerging Local Plan, any updated iterations of the National Planning Policy Framework and the findings of any viability assessments.

| Workspace Policy policy | Funding/resource | Links to United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal |
|---|--|---|
| Lead the delivery of the Enterprise Zone programme by investing in the delivery and effective marketing of new commercial space. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ Enterprise Zone budget. | 09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. |
| Explore the viability of developing small start – up units on vacant Council – owned land. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ East Devon District Council Investment. | 08. Decent Work and Economic Growth. 09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. |
| Support the viability of employment allocations by exploring the use of Local Development Orders and working with partners to ensure their development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. | 09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. |
| Ensure employment and skills plans are produced for larger residential and commercial developments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. | 08. Decent Work and Economic Growth. 09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. |
| Maintain an online platform to help inform growing businesses about available workspace and link them with relevant commercial agents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. | 08. Decent Work and Economic Growth. |

Environmental Policy

Climate change represents the largest market failure in our history. With East Devon District Council declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019 and setting a target to reach Net Zero by 2040, we need to take clear and decisive action across all services to support a just transition.

There is a clear gap in provision when it comes to supporting residents and businesses to reach Net Zero by 2040. Filling this gap requires attitudinal and behavioural change, enabled through accessible support and guidance. The Council will also seek to utilise a limited amount of grant funding to help those local organisations who lack the funds to deliver decarbonisation projects.

There is a significant cost associated with reliance on fossil fuels, including higher energy bills and penalties for companies violating environmental regulations. If we fail to align our actions with the global economic shift to clean energy, we risk being left behind, with the impacts felt most strongly by our poorest and most isolated residents.

Decarbonisation relies not just on equipment, but also on the skills required to retrofit buildings and deliver infrastructure. Infrastructure delivery will also need to be linked to environmental goals. For example, the delivery of active travel options, like new cycle paths and footpaths, can help to reduce the need for car-based commuting. This can lead to health and wellbeing benefits and lower transport costs.

There is a real opportunity to link local environmental action to East Devon's brand as a sustainable tourism destination. This includes preventative measures, such as our opposition to sewage discharging on East Devon's nationally renowned beaches. Local arts and culture projects focused on environmental issues can also help to strengthen a sense of local pride and solidarity, increasing the district's appeal to younger professionals drawn to our natural capital and a better work-life balance.

Our Environmental Policy will embrace opportunities to develop a circular economy, lower waste and inefficient spend on energy, and promote skills development in green sectors which are key to meeting carbon and biodiversity goals. Our actions will show that economic growth and ecological regrowth can work hand in hand.

Links to other information

- Climate Change Strategy
- Nature Recovery Declaration

Environmental Policy priority

This policy will outline how we will support the decarbonisation of our economy and promote biodiversity net gain. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase the number of businesses reaching Net Zero by 2040.
- To increase the take-up of clean energy equipment to lower bills and tackle poverty.
- To increase the number of residents upskilling into green jobs.
- To increase the quantity and quality of sustainable travel options.

The Policy will align with the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Nature Recovery Declaration.

| Environmental Policy priority | Funding/resource | Links to United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal |
|---|--|--|
| Provide training and specialist one to one support for organisations seeking to decarbonise, reduce waste and become more resource efficient. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ East Devon District Council business support budget. | 12. Responsible Consumption and Production. 13. Climate Action. |
| Provide decarbonisation grant funding to those organisations in most need. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devolved funding. | 07. Affordable and Clean Energy. 13. Climate Action. |
| Support the reskilling and upskilling of residents into retrofitting and other careers linked to clean growth. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devolved funding. | 04. Quality Education. 13. Climate Action. |
| Ensure that large scale employment development is coupled with sustainable travel options. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ Enterprise Zone funding. | 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. |
| Provide retrofitting grants to households in poverty who cannot access support from other schemes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devolved funding. | 01. No Poverty. 07. Affordable and Clean Energy. |
| Support projects which seek to directly link climate action and nature recovery with our local culture and tourism offer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ Devolved funding. | 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. 13. Climate Action. |

Social Policy

Our Social Policy will ensure that specific actions are taken to ensure that economic development is inclusive, equitable, and strengthens residents' pride in place. East Devon faces particularly unique demographic challenges, with one of the highest proportions of retirees in the country. Whilst residents living longer and healthier lives is a key measure of success, the attractiveness of East Devon as a retirement location could lead to further migration of retirees into the district.

This demographic shift has created a severe imbalance in age groups within the district and across separate communities, comparing Sidmouth and Cranbrook, for example. This can lead to negative social outcomes, such as a reduced sense of belonging for those in under-represented age groups. Ageing populations have also been linked to lower productivity, higher demands on public services, a growing reliance on low-value jobs and reduced housing availability for those of working age. This in turn creates a feedback loop, where more younger residents feel compelled to leave the district to find a quality career, affordable housing, and a better lifestyle.

An effective social policy can help to reshape this dynamic. The Council will explore ways for those at or near retirement to continue to play an active role in boosting the economy, be it through mentoring younger entrepreneurs or promoting community cohesion in a voluntary capacity. The Council will also seek to bring forward a suite of innovative and pioneering projects to increase the attractiveness of East Devon as somewhere for younger people to live and work, utilising drivers such as an improved culture and leisure offer alongside town centre regeneration.

Rebalancing these long-term imbalances in our demographic profile will take a long time, but with the right actions in place, we can begin to mitigate these challenges and promote social and economic opportunities.

Links to other information

- [Cultural Strategy](#)
- [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)

Social Policy priority

This policy will outline how we will help to improve pride in place and the social fabric of the district. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase the number of residents with an improved sense of pride in their community.
- To reduce the number of households facing poverty.
- To increase the number of younger working age adults (18-30 year olds) living and working in the district.
- To increase the number of residents who are economically and socially active.

The Policy will align with the Council's Cultural Strategy and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

| Social Policy priority | Funding/resource | Links to United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal |
|---|--|--|
| Develop bids to support high streets and regenerate town centres, focusing on sustainable retail and an attractive social offer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ East Devon District Council Investment. ■ Devolved funding. | 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. |
| Lead on the delivery of town centres for our new communities to improve pride in place. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ East Devon District Council Investment. | 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. |
| Fund cultural and leisure projects targeted to improve the lifestyle offer for young adults and promote the existing offer more widely. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. ■ Devolved funding. | 03. Good health and Wellbeing. 10. Reduced Inequalities. |
| Explore the viability of innovative projects to provide housing for young professionals in our coastal and market towns. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. | 10. Reduced Inequalities. 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. |
| Help coordinate employment support for economically inactive residents of all ages, including specialist support for those with disabilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Devolved funding. | 08. Decent Work and Economic Growth. 10. Reduced Inequalities. |
| Facilitate and promote voluntary and mentoring opportunities for those at or near retirement age. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Officer time. | 10. Reduced Inequalities. |

Resource Policy

All strategic documents must acknowledge the scarcity of time, money and staff resource available to deliver key objectives. Our resource policy will outline our approach to 'business as usual' and statutory duties, but also reiterate the need to be agile and adaptive to major disruptions. The most recent disruption was the COVID-19 pandemic, where the Council had to radically alter the services it provides.

Our Resource Policy sets out our priorities on how to manage these competing demands. This means being prepared for future challenges and opportunities whilst maintaining the same quality services our residents and businesses expect. We also need to prepare a pipeline of 'shovel-ready' projects relevant to all policies and priorities included in this Strategy. This will enable us to submit high-quality funding bids at short notice to future Government and regional funding opportunities.

Where a major disruption or opportunity relevant to this Strategy presents itself, we may need to prioritise this over other actions resulting from this work. These decisions will be based on which actions will have the most positive impact, offer the best value for money and have the clearest alignment with both the Strategy and our Council Plan.

The Strategy itself also needs to be adaptable, acknowledging that the economic and governance landscape can change very quickly, even within a five-year period. The Strategy may need to change to match these new realities, requiring a pragmatic, entrepreneurial and solutions-first mindset. Where this is the case, the core principles underlying this Strategy will remain constant, even if our priorities need to change.

Resource Policy priority

This policy will outline how we will conduct business as usual, whilst dealing with short-term and immediate economic opportunities and challenges. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase and maintain the quality of statutory services provided to businesses.
- To successfully act upon new inward investment and funding opportunities.
- To be flexible and adaptive in our response to immediate challenges and risks which threaten the stability of our local economy.

The policy will build on the lessons learnt from our COVID-19 experience, major redundancy responses, recent funding bid submissions and the importance of funding being devolved to the right level of local government.

| Resource Policy priority | Funding/resource | Links to United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal |
|---|------------------|---|
| Produce a Business Charter committing the Council to providing quality public services to local businesses which offer value for money. | ■ Officer time. | 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. |
| To ensure a responsive and efficient planning service for businesses and commercial developers. | ■ Officer time. | 09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities. |
| Continue to provide an agile and approachable inward investment service to land high-value, aspirational employers. | ■ Officer time. | 08. Decent Work and Economic Growth. 09. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. |
| Create a networking group of local businesses to share best practice, connect and collaborate. | ■ Officer time. | 08. Decent Work and Economic Growth. 17. Partnerships for the Goals. |
| Ensure that East Devon businesses and start-ups can access free and professional business support services. | ■ Officer time. | 08. Decent Work and Economic Growth. |

Next Steps



How will we measure success?

An annual report will be published providing a RAG (red, amber or green) rating for each policy priority along with a brief update on how each priority is being actioned. Success will be measured against the delivery of the priorities outlined in this Strategy whilst allowing for the flexibility provided in our Resource Policy.

The policy priorities listed within this Strategy will be used to set out a list of annual actions. These actions will be assigned to a particular department within the Council and then to a particular officer or group of officers. The chart to the right shows this 'golden thread' of how organisational objectives feed down to individual objectives. Each action will be measured against a target number of outputs and outcomes. All actions need to:

1. Provide additionality.
2. Avoid duplication.
3. Offer good value for money.
4. Be impactful.
5. Align with the Vision and Policies within this Strategy.

Where a particular priority or action cannot meet these criteria, it will be amended, removed or replaced with an alternative option where the criteria can be met. This will prevent the Strategy from becoming outdated.

We will continue to monitor the longer term economic, social, and environmental trends of East Devon, both through future datasets and the feedback we receive from businesses, partners, and stakeholders.

Our local actions alone cannot turn the tide of national and global pressures. However, by aligning our actions to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, we will work to maximise the positive impact of our actions and 'play our part' to address the global challenges impacting local residents.

A final monitoring report will be published in 2030 providing a detailed analysis of the Strategy, its actions, outputs and overall impact. This work will help to inform future strategies and actions aimed towards the economic development of East Devon.

Strategic structural chart

Local Plan



Council Plan



Economic Development Strategy



Service Plans



Officer objectives

Glossary

Aspirational sector

An industry with the potential to grow, innovate and create well-paying and high-skilled jobs, such as clean energy and robotics.

CCA

Refers to the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.

Clean Growth

Growing the size of the economy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.

Council Plan

A document produced by the Council which sets out the main priorities and actions the Council wants to take.

Devolution

The transfer of power and/or funding from central government to local government.

Economically inactive

Someone who is neither in work nor actively seeking employment. In contrast to 'unemployed people' who are not in work but are actively seeking employment.

Employment allocation

A piece of land allocated by the Council (in the Local Plan) for commercial uses which will host jobs (industrial, retail, etc).

Employment and skills plans

A document produced by a planning applicant which details how their proposal will achieve positive education and employment outcomes for local people.

Employment land

Land on which commercial premises have been built and where jobs are hosted.

Enterprise Zone

A defined area where businesses can receive incentives to set up and expand, including lower taxes or fewer regulations.

High-value job

A well-paying and high-skilled job.

Inward investment

Investment in the local area from businesses based outside the local area.

Local Development Order

The granting of planning permission for specific types of development at a defined location, subject to certain criteria and conditions.

Local Plan

A document produced by the Council which sets out planning policies and proposals for new development.

Market failure

When businesses do not act in the most efficient or rational way, leading to harm to those businesses and/or the wider public.

National Planning Policy Framework

A document produced by Government which sets out national planning policies and details how Local Plans should be developed.

Pride in place

Local people's satisfaction with where they live, local services and engagement in local culture and community.

Retrofitting

Fitting new systems or equipment to buildings previously built without them, typically to increase energy efficiency and/or lower energy consumption.

Service Plan

A document produced by each department of the Council which sets out the main priorities and actions (from the Council Plan) which that department will take.

Settlement self-containment

A settlement (village, town or city) where residents can access all their essential services and employment opportunities within that settlement.

Statutory services

Services the Council is required to provide by law.

Sustainable retail

Retail businesses and products which seek to minimise environmental and social harm.

Traditional sector

An industry which has been historically predominant in the locality, such as agriculture and tourism.



Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Update on the Peer Challenge recommendations and delivery plan

Report summary:

This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the Peer Challenge recommendations and the delivery plan to implement the recommendations.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

- (1) That Cabinet receive the Peer Challenge recommendations and endorse the delivery plan and the actions set out in it.
- (2) That Cabinet give delegated authority to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Director of Governance and Licensing and the Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination to purchase and implement a new performance, risk and complaints monitoring software system/s. Using monies from the Transformation Fund up to the amount of £250k.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the recommendations from the Peer Challenge are actioned and delivered appropriately.

Officer: Joanne Avery, Management Information Officer javery@eastdevon.gov.uk

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

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; There are reputational and organisational risks if we do not ensure that we address the recommendations from the Peer Challenge.

Links to background information [Appendix a – Peer Challenge delivery plan](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

The feedback report following the Peer Challenge 6-8th Feb 2024 set out a series of suggestions and recommendations for the council. The main recommendations were.

- Recruitment of a Chief Executive.
- Consideration of Cabinet working arrangements.
- Invest in councillor and officer development.
- Streamline the actions in your new Council Plan.
- Resist the temptation to undertake further external reviews.
- Develop a programme of external engagement and make outwardly focused work a priority for the new Chief Executive.
- Consider using councillor and officer ambassadors.
- Review visibility with housing tenants.
- Provide direction for leisure and culture provision.

In addition, there were other recommendations and suggestions throughout the feedback report all of which have been collated into a delivery plan at appendix a. Council officers have then provided information about how we can deliver those recommendations.

Currently we are looking to progress actions in all of the areas set out in the plan and updates on these actions are also included for information.

One of the main areas for transformation within the delivery plan is a project to commission a new performance, risk management and complaints monitoring system/s. This project would support the delivery of a range of recommendations including improvements to performance and budget monitoring, risk management, monitoring of review recommendations, improvements to reporting to Committees and the monitoring of the Council Plan actions and measures. We are in the beginning stages of this project and are working with Strata to identify business requirements and undertake some soft market testing.

In order to proceed with this project through the summer we are recommending that Cabinet provide us with the authority to progress the project to commission stage so that the system can be implemented as soon as possible. At this stage the costs are not fully known so we would be looking for authority to be given to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination to agree spend on this project for the first-year implementation phase of up to £250K. This budget would be to cover the system upfront cost, annual cost, Stata project implementation costs, and our own project implementation costs. The funding of this we could take from the Transformation Fund as this work will transform our management of performance and risk across all of our services bring much needed business insight.

Financial implications:

This is supplementary budget request of up to £250k to allow this project to progress at haste. Unfortunately, at this stage we do not have the details to produce an accurate estimate, but it is considered this sum should be sufficient. As this is implementation and year one costs and fits with our Financial Sustainability Model objectives it is felt appropriate, if agreed, that the budget is met from the Transformation Fund, however it likely that ongoing costs will have to be found through savings.

Legal implications:

The performance system will need to be procured in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules.

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) – Project progress update

Report summary:

Devon County Council (DCC) have been allocated £7,067,000 funding through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Capital Fund to facilitate the installation of EV chargers across Devon.

DCC have invited EDDC to be part of the project by selecting car park sites to have 22kWh chargers installed.

EDDC have already been part of several previous EV charge point projects working with DCC and other local authorities in Devon. This project in particular benefits from the LEVI capital fund which will be used to unlock previously unviable sites.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. That Cabinet provides authority for EDDC to enter into the collaboration agreement with Devon County Council to commit to the LEVI Project and provides delegated authority to the Director of Finance to agree the terms of the agreement in consultation with the Director of Governance.
2. That Cabinet approves the minimum list of Car Park sites to be included within the DCC LEVI project and provides delegated authority to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Director of Governance to add to or remove sites from the project.
3. That Cabinets provides authority for EDDC to enter into lease agreements and any other legal documentation required for the siting of the EV chargepoints and provides delegated authority to the Director of Finance to agree the terms of the legal documents in consultation with the Director of Governance.

Reason for recommendation:

The DCC LEVI project represents an opportunity for EDDC to provide additional EV chargers within District owned car parks that do not already contain them, including in some locations that may only be viable as a result of this funding stream.

There will be no capital cost to EDDC, and DCC have received funding for project management of the installation programme.

EDDC have worked with DCC on two previous EV installation projects and our collaboration with this project aligns with the principles and approach of the EDDC Parking Strategy, provides economies of scale as well as consistency of charging infrastructure across Devon.

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

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; The primary risk for this project is that of potential alternative use for any of the selected sites within the agreed lease term. This will result in EDDC having to provide financial compensation to the chosen supplier should it wish to end the lease contract. It is therefore important to find the balance between taking advantage of an available funding stream, and exposing the Council to additional risk should EDDC wish to use the sites for something else during term of the expected lease. A secondary risk is the loss of parking spaces within each chosen site to facilitate the installation of the chargepoints. 3 normal parking bays will be lost to accommodate the installation of 2 charging bays at each site.

Links to background information [Introductory Cabinet Report advising of our engagement with the LEVI project](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

LEVI Project overview

DCC were formally granted £7million from OLEV in April 2024 following a lengthy application process. The funding will help achieve the aims of the Devon EV Charging Strategy, including delivery of approximately 2,000 publicly accessible charge points across the County. As well as facilitating the installation of chargepoints in District owned car parks, the funding will enable the installation of chargepoints in Town and Parish owned car parks and support the delivery of on-street charging solutions for those without off-street parking.

LEVI project delivery

DCC have received funding to project-manage the delivery programme, which will comprise of various “lots”. Each lot will represent a different output from the project and will be subject to tender.

EDDC Car Parks

As far as car parks are concerned, the ambition of the LEVI project is to install at least 2 x 22kw chargepoints in as many District owned car parks as possible, with potential for up to 6 further sockets in the future.

DCC have invited EDDC to submit a list of car parks sites to be included in the project. These sites currently have no EV chargers in situ.

| Site Name | Postcode | Risk |
|------------------------------|----------|--|
| Camperdown Terrace Long Stay | EX8 1EJ | Future requirement for fleet charging |
| Church Steet | EX10 9RL | |
| Cliff Top Long Stay, Beer | EX12 3AQ | Requires additional hardstanding to be feasible |
| Coombe Lane Long Stay | EX13 5AX | |
| Foxholes Long Stay, Exmouth | EX8 2AY | Included within the scope of the Exmouth Placemaking Project |
| Maer Road Long Stay | EX8 2DB | Included within the scope of the Exmouth Placemaking Project |
| Manor Farm Estate (FREE) | EX10 0SN | |
| Manor Road Long Stay | EX10 8RR | Gamma charges due for installation |
| Mill Street Short Stay | EX10 8BY | Already a small P&D area |
| Poplar Mount Long Stay | EX13 5DZ | |
| School Lane (FREE) | EX10 0EJ | |
| Seaton Jurassic | EX12 2WD | |
| Silver Street Long | EX14 1QL | |
| Temple Street (FREE 2 hrs) | EX10 9BJ | |
| Canaan Way Long Stay | EX11 1EQ | |
| Estuary Long Stay Car park | EX8 1DB | Included within the scope of the Exmouth Placemaking Project |

By including a site in the project, we are effectively agreeing to its long-term availability as a parking place, as well as committing the perspective chargepoint operator to installing chargers at the site as part of the project. DCC will then subsidise any necessary grid upgrade costs to make installation at the site possible using the OLEV funding. The chargepoint operator will be responsible for funding the installation of the chargepoints and ensuring their future operation and maintenance.

After interest and support of the DCC project since its inception, we have now reached a decisive crossroads where we must choose to formally commit the sites we wish to be included in the project. If there is known uncertainty over the future availability of a site, or if it is deemed that the loss of parking spaces would be particularly detrimental to a particular car park, then those sites should be removed from the list at this point. It is possible as the project progresses to add sites, although these may not then be included in the initial delivery phase. Ultimately the chosen supplier will decide whether a site is a viable for them to install the EV chargers. They will carry out their own due diligence to assess sites and decide which ones from the list they are able to proceed with.

For each 2 charging bays installed, 3 normal parking bays will be lost. The below shows a conservative estimate of the average number of charging sessions that may be expected in year one, with a minimum revenue share of 3% and the risk of lost parking income based on likelihood of a specific car park reaching capacity. The number of average charging sessions will likely increase in-line with public EV ownership.

| Estimated Revenue Share - Year 1 | | | Likelihood of lost Parking Revenue | Potential lost revenue - annually |
|----------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Proposed site for LEVI Project | Estimated average monthly sessions - Year 1 | 3% yearly revenue share - 0.57 per charge session | | |
| Camperdown Terrace Long Stay | 20 | £ 68.40 | Low/Medium | £ 75.59 |
| Church St | 15 | £ 51.30 | Low/Medium | £ 10.12 |
| Cliff Top Long | 20 | £ 68.40 | Low | £ 5.55 |
| Coombe Lane Long | 15 | £ 51.30 | Low | £ 5.19 |
| Foxholes Long Stay | 35 | £ 119.70 | Medium | £ 144.63 |
| Maer Rd Long Stay | 20 | £ 68.40 | Low | £ 40.69 |
| Manor Farm Estate | 10 | £ 34.20 | None - Free Car Park | £ - |
| Manor Rd Long Stay | 25 | £ 85.50 | Low | £ 135.58 |
| Mill St Short Stay Section | 20 | £ 68.40 | High | £ 147.09 |
| Poplar Mount Long | 15 | £ 51.30 | Low | £ 74.57 |
| School Lane | 15 | £ 51.30 | None - Free Car Park | £ - |
| Seaton Jurassic Long Stay | 20 | £ 68.40 | Low | £ 100.31 |
| Silver St Long | 15 | £ 51.30 | Low | £ 49.88 |
| Temple Street | 15 | £ 51.30 | None - Free Car Park | £ - |
| Canaan Way Long Stay | 15 | £ 51.30 | Low | £ 23.36 |
| Estuary Long Stay Car park | 25 | £ 85.50 | Medium | £ 32.44 |
| TOTAL | 300 | £ 1,026.00 | Low | £ 845.00 |

Alignment with EDDC Parking Strategy 2024 -2031

The EDDC Parking Strategy was adopted by EDDC Cabinet in April 2024. It acknowledges that car park charging provision is not top of the hierarchy but will also provide an invaluable service to some motorists. The strategy approach is cautious, as it is expected that the private sector will invest heavily in EV charging infrastructure in the coming years, and therefore having a limited number of chargers in many locations will most likely be sufficient in terms of our role in providing these facilities for motorists.

The scale of the LEVI project and the potential geographical spread of chargers aligns with the principles and objectives of the EDDC Parking Strategy. The project could support the delivery of up to 60 chargepoints, predominantly targeted at residential use.

Principle - *To play our part in encouraging and supporting the transition to Electric Vehicles, whilst considering the non-fiscal potential of our car parks in achieving Net-Zero by 2040*

Objectives

Use available space within our car parks to help meet local and visitor electric charging (EV) need.

EDDC has already facilitated the provision of 40 EV chargers within its car parks and has plans to deliver up to an additional 73 in partnership with Devon County through the Government's LEVI (Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure) fund in 2024/25. The delivery of EV bays through lease agreements comes at the direct expense of parking availability within our car parks, as the bays can then no longer be used to meet ordinary parking need, and in fact the bays are required to be vacated once a charging session has ended to allow for continuous use. Recharging in car parks is not top of the EV charging hierarchy, but it can offer an essential and convenient service provision to residents without the capability to charge at home. Installing the right type of chargers in the most suitable car parks will be the future priority for EDDC, and this will be balanced with the need to cater for standard parking sessions too. The need for EV infrastructure will evolve over the coming years, as more private operators enter the market, therefore EDDC will be cautious not to over-commit valuable car parking assets that are also required to meet other priorities. In a classic case of the chicken and egg, motorists are hesitant to invest in expensive EV's, whereas charger providers do not have the quantitative evidence to justify their need. A measured and County wide approach to EV charging provision will offer consistency in service provision, as well as a holistic approach to ensuring sufficient EV charging capacity across the entire travel network.

Next steps

Once the collaboration agreement is signed by all parties, DCC will run the procurement process to select an appropriate supplier. The procurement will be led by DCC with a small panel of representatives from the wider authorities involved in the evaluation process. The tender documents have been prepared by DCC's procurement team, with the involvement from all authorities. The tender documents set out the required specifications, legal terms, and what is required and expected from the supplier. The suppliers will bid and provide details of the percentage of revenue share that they will be able to pay to the district authority landlords. The tender documents drafted by DCC requires potential suppliers to offer a minimum of 3% revenue share.

DCC will then enter into a concession agreement with the chosen supplier. EDDC will not be a party to this agreement but it will govern the relationship between DCC and the supplier and contain details of the project KPIs and obligations on the supplier in respect of the design, installation and maintenance of the EV chargepoints.

A standard lease document has been prepared by DCC which is based on those which have been used for the two previous DCC led EV charging programmes, with some additions and amendments to take into account the experience gained from those previous projects.

Once the supplier has been appointed, EDDC will be required to enter into a lease in respect of each selected site to allow the supplier to install the EV charge points.

The Lease will be for a term of 10 years, with a potential for a 1 year extension if the supplier meets certain KPI's set by DCC. This 1 year extension option has been designed to incentivise suppliers to ensure installation and connection is done as quickly as possible. This seeks to mitigate concerns and issues with previous sites where there have been delays.

Installation of the chargepoints will commence in 2025.

Summary

The DCC LEVI project represents an opportunity to deliver EV chargepoints in locations that would not otherwise be feasible, due to the utilisation of central government funding that will help overcome previous barriers to connection.

Although there is no direct Capital cost for delivering the chargepoints, there will be a risk of including sites within the project that may be subject to other plans during the lease period (minimum 10 years, maximum 11 years).Based on the stated minimum EDDC revenue share, income from the charging sessions will not be significant until EV ownership and chargepoint utilisation increase, however at this point competition from private industry will also be higher.

This project represents a relatively cautious approach to providing more EV charging provision within our car parks, which aligns with the EDDC parking strategy and is appropriate considering the slower than expected take up of EV's across the UK. Ultimately, it is not expected that the public will rely upon District Council car parks to meet their charging needs, however the availability of these chargers will be an attraction to our District in their own right, and will represent an important service provision for some, especially as EV ownership grows. The financial risk from lost parking income is low, and any financial loss should be more than covered by the revenue share contribution made by the chargepoint operator.

Users of the chargepoints will be required to pay the commercial rates set by the operator and these will always be more expensive than charging an EV vehicle at home using a domestic energy supply. EDDC will not have control over the commercial rates charged by the supplier,

however, utilisation will be required to ensure realisation of their projected financial returns throughout the lease period.

Financial implications:

The financial details are covered in the report. It is clear there is not a material financial return for the Council, but then there should not be a loss, the project is based on other objectives in line with the adopted Car Parking Strategy.

Legal implications:

Legal comments Cabinet approval is required for EDDC to enter into the Collaboration Agreement with DCC to commit to taking part in the LEVI project. Timescales have been very tight and Legal Services are still negotiating provisions within the collaboration agreement and the template leases to protect EDDC's position in relation to this project. A verbal update will be provided to Cabinet by the report writer.

Governance and procurement

The procurement of the supplier is being carried out by DCC who will then enter into a contract for the supply and operation of the chargepoints (the concession agreement). EDDC are named as a party to the procurement and therefore we understand that the procurement is being carried out on our (and the other partner authorities') behalf. Under the terms of the collaboration agreement, DCC will carry out the work involved in the procurement process. Our independent procurement advisors at DCC have confirmed that this process is being carried out lawfully. In addition to the procurement, although there is no direct cost to EDDC being involved in the project, for the purposes of the Key Decision process the project is likely to have a value in excess of £100,000, therefore making it a Key Decision. As the Key Decision has not been advertised on the forward plan for the requisite period, a general exemption will need to be issued. The legal team have had sight of, but have not fully reviewed the tender documents as this is outside the scope of our remit. EDDC obtains its procurement advice from DCC procurement team under the supervision of EDDC's inhouse finance team. The tender sets out the terms upon which the supplier will be appointed and contains a template copy of the lease for the supplier to see prior to them making their bid. Some terms of the project are still being finalised by DCC however at the point that the tender goes live, all of the terms will have been finalised and published as part of the tender process including the lease terms. Our proposed amendment to the collaboration agreement as mentioned below, is to seek to allow EDDC to exit the project, if we are not content with the final agreed terms or documentation.

Lease

We have reviewed the draft lease proposed for the project. This is substantially set out in the same way as the previous DELETTI projects, which EDDC have been a part of. There are some terms that are not clear enough as currently drafted in our view, and we are seeking to resolve these issues with DCC currently.

Collaboration Agreement

The collaboration agreement is an agreement to be entered into by DCC and all of the partner authorities to confirm that we wish to be a part of the project and will work together to help deliver it. It sets out the different stages of the project and who will be responsible for each part. We have proposed some amendments to the document to clearly define 'minimum sites' and 'additional sites' and to state that the list of 'minimum sites' can be altered up to the point the procurement goes live. This would allow us more time to ensure we are happy with our list of minimum sites so as to mitigate the risk of needing to withdraw a site and trigger any potential liability to DCC. We have also made some further amendments to ensure that DCC take any action we require under the terms of the concession agreement as we will not be a party to that document. DCC will run the relationship with the supplier and this is all governed by the concession agreement. This amendment therefore allows us to inform DCC of any issues with the supplier and if the supplier is in breach of one of their obligations, DCC will need to take such action that is appropriate to

resolve it. In light of the above information regarding the lease agreement, we have also requested an amendment to allow EDDC to exit the project, if the lease terms cannot be agreed by us. These amendments haven't been formally accepted yet by DCC and the other partner authorities and an update on this will be provided at the Cabinet meeting.

Concession Agreement

This document is to be entered into by DCC and the chosen supplier, it does not require EDDC to be a party to it however the Lease does make direct reference to it and therefore we have undertaken a basic review of it. It contains the provisions and KPI requirements that the supplier will be bound by.

Due diligence

Due to the time constraints, the legal team have carried out a very light touch form of due diligence to ensure the sites are owned with a freehold title clear of any restrictive covenants that may prevent the land being used for an EV charging point. This process will need to be repeated when exact locations in the car parks are identified to ensure that there are no conflicting rights/ownership issues which might preclude the installation of the charging points. Any sites with concerns will be removed from the 'minimum' site list prior to the collaboration agreement being signed. Sites have been categorised into 'red, amber, green' to denote their level of risk or issues that may need resolving to enable their inclusion in the project.

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Annual complaint monitoring and service improvement report 2023/24

Report summary:

The council's annual complaint monitoring and service improvement report for 2023/24 is attached as Appendix A

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Cabinet note the numbers and trends in terms of formal complaints dealt with during the year; the learning points which have been identified; and actions taken to address these.

Reason for recommendation:

The council is required by the Housing Ombudsman to publish our self-assessment against their complaint handling code, on an annual basis, as part of the complaint performance and service improvement report. This should be accompanied by Cabinet's response to the report.

The purpose of publishing the governing body's response to the self-assessment and to the report is to provide assurance that it is a true reflection of the council's complaint handling.

Officer: Melanie Wellman – Monitoring Officer mwellman@eastdevon.gov.uk
 Amy Gilbert-Jeans – Housing Performance Lead agilbertjeans@eastdevon.gov.uk
 Kate Symington – Information Governance Manager ksymington@eastdevon.gov.uk

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

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information [Governing-bodies-guidance-published-March-2022.pdf](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/Governing-bodies-guidance-published-March-2022.pdf)
([housing-ombudsman.org.uk](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk))

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in the report

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.

Appendix A

Annual complaint monitoring and service improvement report 2023/24

1. Complaints received

The council operates a two stage complaints process, with complaints initially being considered at stage 1 by the relevant Assistant Director (or equivalent post where there is no AD).

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response they receive they are entitled to ask for the complaint to be considered at the second stage of the process and a response is sent out by the relevant Director.

During the year 2023/24

We received:

300 Stage 1 complaints

69 Stage 2 complaints

77% of complaints were resolved at the first stage with the remaining complainants exercising their right to progress to the second stage of the complaints procedure

Stage 1 complaint average response time 28 working days

Stage 2 complaint average response time 30 working days

86% of Housing Service complaints were upheld/partially upheld*

*The % upheld rate is currently monitored only for housing complaints and since November 2023. This is being extended to include all corporate complaints for the current year.

2. All corporate complaints Stage 1

| Department | Oct 21 - Mar 22 | Apr 22 - Sep 22 | Oct 22 - Mar 23 | Apr 23 - Sep 23 | Oct 23 - Mar 24 | Trend Line | Overall Complaints % Last 5 Periods | Complaints % Oct 23 - Mar 24 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Housing | 76 | 54 | 63 | 74 | 133 | | 67% | 72% |
| Planning | 15 | 14 | 13 | 16 | 22 | | 13% | 12% |
| Revs & bens | 8 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 9 | | 6% | 5% |
| Waste management | 9 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 | | 5% | 3% |
| Env. Health (incl. Car parks PSH) | 4 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 3 | | 3% | 2% |
| Streetscene | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | | 3% | 3% |
| Building control | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | 1% | 1% |
| Licensing | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | | 1% | 1% |
| Information & Complaints | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | | 0% | 0% |
| Property | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 0% | 1% |
| Trees | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | | 0% | 0% |
| Countryside | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 0% | 1% |
| Democratic services | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | | 0% | 0% |
| Legal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | | 0% | 1% |
| Economic Dev | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0% | 0% |
| Electoral Services | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0% | 0% |
| Total | 118 | 85 | 97 | 116 | 184 | | 100% | 100% |

Housing Complaints Stage 1

| Sub Department | Oct 23 - Mar 24 | Complaints % |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Repairs | 99 | 74.44% |
| Estate Management | 18 | 13.53% |
| ASB | 7 | 5.26% |
| Housing Allocations | 3 | 2.26% |
| Housing Options | 3 | 2.26% |
| MSO/HSG | 2 | 1.50% |
| Rental | 1 | 0.75% |
| Total | 133 | 100.00% |

3. All corporate complaints Stage 2

| Department | Oct 21 - Mar 22 | Apr 22 - Sep 22 | Oct 22 - Mar 23 | Apr 23 - Sep 23 | Oct 23 - Mar 24 | Trend Line | Overall Complaints % Last 5 Periods | Complaints % Oct 23 - Mar 24 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Housing | 18 | 19 | 16 | 11 | 29 | | 61% | 62% |
| Planning | 6 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 13 | | 22% | 28% |
| Env. Health (incl. Car parks & PSH) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 4% | 4% |
| Building Control | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | | 1% | 2% |
| Revs & Bens | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | | 4% | 2% |
| Waste management | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | | 3% | 2% |
| Democratic Services | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | | 2% | 0% |
| Legal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0% | 0% |
| Licensing | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | | 1% | 0% |
| Property | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0% | 0% |
| Streetscene | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | | 2% | 0% |
| Total | 28 | 24 | 31 | 22 | 47 | | 100% | 100% |

Housing Complaints Stage 2

| Attribute | Oct 23 - Mar 24 | Complaints % |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Repairs | 17 | 58.62% |
| Estate Management | 5 | 17.24% |
| Housing Allocations | 3 | 10.34% |
| ASB | 2 | 6.90% |
| Housing Options | 1 | 3.45% |
| MSO/HSG | 1 | 3.45% |
| Total | 29 | 100.00% |

4. Learning Points

The Planning Service has seen an increase in the number of service failure complaints which have been driven by delays in determining planning applications. This has been attributed on the whole to an issue with staffing levels and volume of work being processed.

New planning officers have been recruited and this should reduce the number of these types of complaints in the long term.

As can be seen from the information, there is a significant increase in housing complaints. We can see trends in what is driving these complaints and these are generally related to the condition of properties; delays in carrying out repairs; quality of repairs; and communication challenges around appointments that ensures we are communicating efficiently and promptly with tenants.

Following our review of the senior management team across housing, we are now placing a much greater emphasis on complaints, both to ensure they are dealt with in a timely manner and that we are taking a “lessons learnt” approach to how we deal with them. We have revised our approach to how we respond to complaints in order to demonstrate an open, honest approach to where things have gone wrong. We are providing customers with more information in relation to what learnings we have taken from the complaint they have raised and this is positively raising the profile of changes we are making across the service.

We therefore consider this focus on resolution is driving a renewed energy for customers to access the complaints system with a confidence that they are being heard. This is likely in the short term to continue to drive higher numbers of complaints coming through but in the longer term we would hope to start to see complaint numbers in each category coming down.

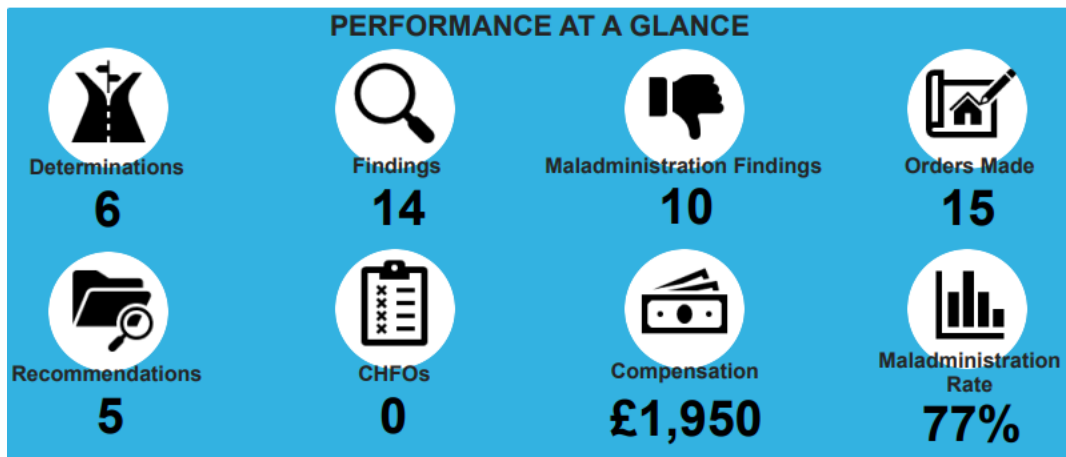
Key actions:

- Weekly meetings with contractor to discuss high profile cases and complaints and ensure complex repairs are on track.
- Staff training to improve communication both internally and externally with customers.
- Improvements in the sharing of information between teams relating to void properties
- Review of team set-up to ensure we have the right resources available to deal with demand coming into the service.
- Expanding the sub-contractor network to ensure no unnecessary delay in completing works
- Updating the asset management strategy with a focus on the planned and cyclical maintenance programme
- Working more closely and frequently with our contractors to learn from poor customer experiences
- Newly created Performance Team will oversee the details of complaints and will be highlighting the learning and improvements required. The Housing Performance Lead will work closely with service managers to ensure accountability and that key learning is implemented.

5. Landlord Performance Report from the Housing Ombudsman

A copy of the most recent landlord performance report is available here [Complaint outcomes - East Devon](#) This shows the council’s performance for the period 2022/23 as this is currently the most up to date performance data available. The Housing Ombudsman requires the council to make a copy of this report available with our annual self-assessment submission and they are therefore reviewing the timing of the publication of their performance reports, going forward.

In terms of our performance in 2022/23, this is summarised below:



Key to definitions:

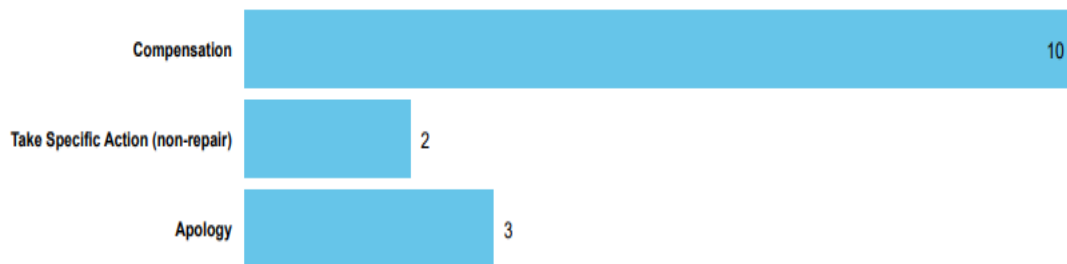
- Determinations: The number of cases decided upon during the year
- Findings: The number of findings on cases determined. Each category on a determined case has one finding
- Orders: Orders are made where the investigation has resulted in a finding on some level of maladministration. They are intended to put things right for the resident
- Recommendations: Can be made in any case as a way to improve service delivery and promote learning
- CHFO: Complaint handling failure order

Landlord Findings by Category | Cases determined between April 2022 - March 2023 Table 2.3

| Category | Severe Maladministration | Maladministration | Service failure | Mediation | Redress | No maladministration | Outside Jurisdiction | Withdrawn | Total |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Property Condition | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| Complaints Handling | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Anti-Social Behaviour | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Estate Management | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Moving to a Property | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 14 |

Orders Made by Type | Orders on cases determined between April 2022 - March 2023

Table 4.1



Order Compliance | Order target dates between April 2022 - March 2023

Table 4.2


| Order Complete? | Within 3 Months | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Count | % |
| Complied | 15 | 100% |
| Total | 15 | 100% |

6. Annual performance report from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2022/23

The summary statistics below show that there were 2 upheld decisions during the year. This equates to 1.3 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents compared with the average for similar authorities nationally which is 1.4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

The decisions referred to below related to the work of the Monitoring Officer in dealing with a complaint from a parish councillor and a complaint about the council's decision in relation to a planning application.

Complaints upheld



100%

100% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **59%** in similar organisations.

2
upheld decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **2** investigations for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



100%

In **100%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **100%** in similar organisations.

Statistics are based on a total of **1** compliance outcome for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



50%

In **50%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **15%** in similar organisations.

1
satisfactory remedy decision

Statistics are based on a total of **2** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

*In one case we were required to comply with Ombudsman recommendations but in the other case the ombudsman was satisfied with the remedy already provided by the council – hence there is only one compliance outcome above.



Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Revenue and Capital Outturn Report 2023-2024

Report summary:

This report sets out the revenue budget and capital outturn positions at the end of the financial year. The 2023/24 outturn position of the General Fund is a positive one with a surplus balance for reallocation of £0.648m.

The Council has again faced a challenging year with significant service demand and inflationary pressures in the supply of goods and services, such as temporary accommodation. Higher interest rates during 2023/24 have had a positive impact on our investment returns which have enabled the Council to mitigate against service pressures during 2023/24 but they will remain challenging for future years given the cost-of-living crisis and the impact this has on levels of demand and cost.

The report outlines the implications of these results on the Council's reserves and makes recommendations on reserve transfers.

The Council's General Fund balance at the end of the 2023/24 financial year is forecast to remain at £4.3m.

In respect of the capital programme, the report at section 5 reports capital expenditure of £13.973m against the approved budget of £27.198m.

The report also outlines the year end position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at section 4. This includes variance analysis of the outturn deficit and the use of earmarked reserves (previous underspends) to fund this position and also confirm the 31 March 2024 reserve balance position.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. That Cabinet considers and recommends to Council the outturn position for 2023/24 including the implications and proposals relating to the Balances and Reserves held by the Council.
2. That Cabinet recommend to Council the proposed reserve transfers contained within the report and give delegated authority to the Director Finance in consultation with the Finance Portfolio for any amendments to these transfers as additional year end data becomes available.

Reason for recommendation:

To accord with the Council's financial regulations, this report presents the outturn position for the Council's approved budgets for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Expenditure. This financial position will align to the Council's Statement of Accounts but the position in this report is presented in a style that accords to the budget setting and monitoring reports that members receive.

Members are asked to note the variations from the budgets identified within the report and consider the final position.

It is appropriate at this stage to reflect on the reserves and balances held by the Council and determine if these are the right reserves at the right levels going forward.

Officer: John Symes – Finance Manager, jsymes@eastdevn.gov.uk, 01395 517413

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Financial monitoring reports have kept members informed during the year of budget variations and the projected outturn position of the Council's finances. All predetermined Balance and Reserve levels were predicted to be maintained above the adopted minimum levels. The report also looks at the monies the Council holds in balances and reserves and considers these in the light of the Council's future financial position and future Government funding cuts and other emerging financial pressures e.g. inflationary pressures. Consideration is given to the Council's financial track record, internal and external audit reports on financial controls and is reflective of occurrences from external factors which affect the Council's finances. Two areas of risk to note from this report are the General Fund identified areas of service expenditure overspends/under achievement of income which will need careful monitoring in the current financial year and the HRA extremely high expenditure levels recorded in 2023/24, particularly the later part of the financial year, although this expenditure has been met from previous year underspends (reserves) this position cannot be repeated in 2024/25 and an additional report on the Cabinet Agenda addresses this point.

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report compares the outturn position (actual amount spent or income received for the year) against budgets set for the financial year 2023/24 for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme.
- 1.2 During 2023/24 budget monitoring reports have informed members of budget variations. Budget managers, with support from finance officers, are responsible for keeping budgets under scrutiny and providing the anticipated year-end financial position. This report contains the final position for the year and compares this outturn position against the budgets set.
- 1.3 The report looks at the effect the outturn position has on the Council's balances and reserves and considers future policy for holding these sums.
- 1.4 The General Fund Balance remains at £4.3m. As part of the approved 2024/25 budget a further £0.5m has been budgeted to add to the balance (making £4.8m). No further change is proposed as at 2023/24 outturn.
- 1.5 Please be advised that all numbers are not finalised as we are still awaiting information from other third parties. Estimates have been made where appropriate therefore no significant items or material variances to the below are expected.
- 1.6 The report contains the following sections:
- Section 2 General Fund Position
 - Section 3 Reserves Position
 - Section 4 Housing Revenue Account
 - Section 5 Capital Outturn

2. General Fund Position

- 2.1 The Council's Revenue Account, known as the General Fund, bears the net cost of providing day-to-day services. These are the portfolio/service totals identified in the Council's Income & Expenditure Account.
- 2.2 **23/24 Set Budget & Opening General Fund Balance**
The 2023/24 budget was set by Council with a Council Tax Requirement of £9.974m with the closing general fund balance in the 22/23 accounts of £4.3m. The following table shows the in year outturn variations versus set budgets with final General Fund surplus being **£0.648m**.

| General Fund Position | £000 | F/A |
|--|----------------|------------|
| Original Budget Requirement | 9,974 | |
| Approved Budget Variations during reporting period | 337 | A |
| Revised budget Requirement | 10,311 | |
| Surplus in Year v Revised budget | (0.985) | F |
| Final Outturn Position 31/3/2024 | 9,326 | |
| Final General Fund Surplus to allocate | (0.648) | F |

2.3 The following table shows the breakdown of the surplus into variation categories and the amount of variation against the set budgets within the year.

| Surplus/Deficit in Year v Budget | £m | F/A |
|---|----------------|------------|
| Cost of Service Variation | 2.699 | A |
| Investments and Financing Variation | (2.079) | F |
| Variations in Central Government Grants | (0.054) | F |
| Variations in Use of Earmarked Reserves | 0.601 | A |
| Business Rates Income Variation | (2.152) | F |
| General Fund Surplus against original budget | (0.985) | F |

2.4 **Cost of Service Variation to Budget in 23/24 (£2.699m (A))**

The variation across the council's portfolio of services is show in Appendix 1, notes 1 to 8, with associated commentaries made on material items within each service.

There are specific areas of material service overspend/under achievement of income that although it is considered has been addressed in setting the 2024/25 budget this will need careful monitoring in the year.

2.5 **Investment & Financing Variation/Treasury Management Activities (£2.079m (F))**

The interest income the council received in 23/24 was £3.153mm versus a budget of £1.137m. The continued rise of base rates and the associated impact on term deposit and money market rates resulted in a significant surplus to budget. The prediction at the time of budget setting was for a gradual decline in rates over the period however rates remain high resulting in this favourable position. A separate annual treasury management report will be presented to committee.

2.6 **Central Government Grants (£0.054m (F))**

The timing difference between the final announcement of some of the central government grants and the councils budget setting process has resulted in a favourable variation in 2023 with the annual service grant greater than initially expected.

2.7 **Variations in the use of Earmarked Reserves (£0.601 (A))**

The two material variations against budget within earmarked reserve releases/contributions relate to a lower than anticipated release of Transformation reserve funding in the year to fulfil specific projects (£0.3m) and an expected release of Revs and Bens new burdens funding which wasn't required due to additional central government grant funding within the year (£0.3m).

2.8 **Business Rates Income (£2.152m (F))**

The business rates income before earmarked reserve contributions in year was £9.4m versus a budget of £7.3m. The figure included within the set budget for the year was £6.7m which was net of any contribution to the business rates volatility reserve. This budgeted figure can be broken down as £3.1m of baseline funding plus a £3.3m uplift and £0.3m of gain relating to the Devon Pool.

This year an additional £0.5m was provided for to cover East Devon's portion of the 23/24 collection fund adjustment account deficit balance which stands at £1.2m (due to the reserve already holding £0.65m). Additionally, £1.9m of business rates income relating to the designated Enterprise zone has been allocated directly to the Enterprise zone reserve. The associated budget lines of business rates income versus revenue financing have been adjusted to reflect these entries.

2.9 **Transfer of Final General Fund Surplus Balance to the Transformation Fund (£0.648 (A))**

It is proposed that the final surplus balance remaining in 23/24 be transferred to the Transformation fund (uncommitted revenue earmarked reserve).

This proposal leaves the General fund balance per the agreed upper limit of £4.3m at 2023/24 year end.

3. **Reserves Position**

3.1 The overall General Fund Balance position at year end is given below, this shows the effect of the budgeted outturn variation after the transfer to the Transformation fund of £0.648m.

| General Fund Balance Position | £000 |
|--|----------------|
| Opening Balance 1/4/2023 | (4,300) |
| Budgeted Outturn variation 2023/24 after Transfers | 0 |
| Closing Balance 31/3/2024 | (4,300) |

3.2 The movement in General Fund Earmarked Reserves, in the year, can be seen in the below table with additional detail of movements provided in Appendix 2.

| General Fund Earmarked Reserves | £000 |
|--|-----------------|
| Opening Balance 1/4/2023 | (31,923) |
| Budgeted Outturn variation 2023/24 | (4,549) |
| Closing Balance 31/3/2024 | (36,472) |

4. **Housing Revenue Account**

4.1 **Annual Outturn & Proposed Contribution from Reserves for Consideration**

The summary tables of income and expenditure variations can be found at Appendix 3. For the 23/24 Outturn deficit for the year it is proposed to be cover from Earmarked reserves and borrowing, leaving the HRA Balance at the adopted level of £3.1m.

A summary by cost driver is as follows;

• **Supervision and Management +£1.39m**

- £0.2m overspend in staff related costs with £0.68m in Agency staff costs only partially offset by savings in salaries and associated costs.
- £0.3m overspend on temporary accommodation costs when decanting tenants for significant works
- £0.4m overspend on Stock condition survey (this was a known overspend and was due to be reserve funded)
- £0.3m on technical consultancy support within the Property and Asset team

- £0.2m on non-rental void related charges
- **Income +£0.407m due to lost income from void properties**
- **Supplies, Services & Other Costs +£5.3m mainly due to responsive repairs**
 - A £3.7m overspend in exclusions to the Integrated Asset Management Contract
 - £3m of jobs excluded from the Price per property (PPP) framework either due to the cost or type of job
 - £0.7m of jobs on properties excluded from the PPP framework
 - £1.3m of planned works and decoration undertaken by Ian Williams
 - £0.3m of disrepair legal fees and settlements
- **Interest income & charges -£0.530m from improved returns on investments**
- **Expenditure on Premises +£0.49m**
 - £3.6m spent on voids versus an original budget of £1.8m with other major repairs budgets unspent to offset the significant increase in void volumes.

This position of significant increase in spend with a reduction in income, has been previously highlighted to members, is of concern. As stated previously this position can be funded from reserves attributable to underspends in previous years set aside to fund increased expenditure on what was believed to be catch up repairs and maintenance, however, the picture is that this level of spend is required going forward. There is a separate report on this agenda that considers the 2024/25 HRA budget position.

4.2 Capital Expenditure and Associated Funding

- A total of 6 acquisitions were completed within the year (£1.6m) versus 11 right to buy sales reducing the stock.
- In 23/24 the council applied and received £0.9m of Government grant funding to be used on affordable housing investment. The conditions of the grant are;
 - £20k of the total grant to be allocated to each property
 - 40% of the residual balance to be funded by the grant
 - The residual balance to be funded by the HRA
 In 23/24 2 plots in Cranbrook were purchased and a 10% deposit was provided for a further 4 plots due to complete in 24/25 at a cost of £0.65m.
- During 23/24 there was £4.35m spent on capital related improvements to properties, blocks, major adaptations for disabilities and major voids works. The funding implications of this are;
 - £0.4m in non-ring fenced capital RTB receipts
 - £1.37m – the remaining HRA capital contribution after funding affordable housing
 - £2.5m in new borrowing
- The total revenue contribution to capital made from the Housing revenue account was £2.6m versus a budgeted figure of £0.88m.

| HRA Capital Expenditure Financing Summary | £ |
|---|-------------------|
| Gross Expenditure | 10,452,729 |
| Financing: | |
| Major Repairs Reserve / Contribution from Revenue | (3,842,609) |

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| Revenue Contribution to Capital Outturn | (2,617,628) |
| Local Authority Grant Funding (LAHF) | (300,000) |
| RTB 1-4-1 | (637,332) |
| Other Capital Receipts | (469,627) |
| S106 Funding | (67,922) |
| Borrowing | (2,517,611) |
| Total Financing | (10,452,729) |

4.3 23/24 Year End Reserve Levels

The below table shows the final reserve levels should the allocations proposed be approved.

HRA RESERVES

REVENUE

| Reserve Name | 2022 Year End | Movement | 2023 Year End | Comment |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--|
| HRA Balance | -3,100 | 0 | -3,100 | Adopted level of £500 per dwelling plus £1m buffer |
| HRA Volatility Reserve | -1,600 | 1,600 | 0 | Earmarked reserve in case of events impacting rental income |
| Capital Development Fund | -2,925 | 2,925 | 0 | Revenue reserve earmarked for new homes & climate change development |
| Landlord Services Reserve | -124 | 124 | 0 | Revenue reserve earmarked for Future Landlord Services Projects & C19 Catch up works |
| Planned Maintenance Reserve | -3,255 | 3,255 | 0 | Revenue reserve earmarked for Stock Condition and Catch Up Costs |
| Fire Risk Assessment Reserve | -1,468 | 1,468 | 0 | Revenue reserve earmarked for FRA Building works and Lift replacement |
| TOTAL USEABLE REVENUE RESERVES | -12,472 | 9,372 | -3,100 | |

CAPITAL

| Reserve Name | 2022 Year End | Movement | 2023 Year End | Comment |
|--|---------------|-------------|---------------|--|
| HRA Capital Receipts | -5,731 | -366 | -6,097 | To be used to fund the 40% Government RTB funding of replacements only |
| Hra Retained Capital Receipts - Grants | 0 | -609 | -609 | |
| TOTAL USEABLE CAPITAL RESERVES | -5,731 | -975 | -6,706 | |

5. Capital Budget

The revised net capital budget (after grants and contributions) for 2023/24 was £27.2m; the outturn position is lower at £14.0m. This often reflect total scheme budgets and the majority to be re-profiled into 2024/25, or later years as schemes come forward.

| Capital Programme Portfolio Summary 2023/24 | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| | Portfolio | Budget after revisions | Actual | (Under)/ Overspend |
| | | 2023/24 | 2023/24 | 2023/24 |
| Line | | £ | £ | £ |
| 1 | Corporate Services | 1,227,732 | 214,376 | (1,013,356) |
| 2 | Community - Housing General Fund | 1,451,383 | 987,694 | (463,689) |
| 3 | Economy and Regeneration | 7,546,117 | 1,534,577 | (6,011,540) |
| 4 | Environment | 2,681,262 | 885,266 | (1,795,996) |
| 5 | Street Scene | 14,136,651 | 2,065,348 | (12,071,303) |
| 6 | Strategic Development | 1,250,000 | 0 | (1,250,000) |
| 7 | TOTAL GF GROSS EXPENDITURE | 28,293,145 | 5,687,262 | - 25,746,723 |
| 8 | Community - HRA | 3,856,710 | 10,452,729 | 6,596,019 |
| 9 | TOTAL GROSS EXPENDITURE | 32,149,855 | 16,139,991 | (16,009,864) |
| 10 | Corporate Services | - | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | Community - Housing General Fund | (1,342,796) | (1,094,688) | 248,108 |
| 12 | Economy and Regeneration | (2,249,000) | 0 | 2,249,000 |
| 13 | Environment | (531,449) | (14,645) | 516,804 |
| 14 | Street Scene | (828,630) | (157,384) | 671,246 |
| 15 | Strategic Development | - | 0 | 0 |
| 16 | TOTAL GF EXTERNAL FUNDING | (4,951,875) | (1,266,717) | 3,685,158 |
| 17 | Community - HRA | - | (900,216) | (900,216) |
| 18 | TOTAL EXTERNAL FUNDING | (4,951,875) | (2,166,933) | 2,784,942 |
| 19 | Corporate Services | 1,227,732 | 214,376 | (1,013,356) |
| 20 | Community - Housing General Fund | 108,587 | (106,994) | (215,581) |
| 21 | Economy and Regeneration | 5,297,117 | 1,534,577 | (3,762,540) |
| 22 | Environment | 2,149,813 | 870,621 | (1,279,192) |
| 23 | Street Scene | 13,308,021 | 1,907,965 | (11,400,056) |
| 24 | Strategic Development | 1,250,000 | 0 | (1,250,000) |
| 25 | TOTAL GF NET EXPENDITURE | 23,341,270 | 4,420,544.78 | (18,920,725) |
| 26 | Community - HRA | 3,856,710 | 9,552,513 | 5,695,803 |
| 27 | TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE | 27,197,980 | 13,973,058 | (13,224,922) |

Financial implications:

The financial details are included in the report.

Legal implications:

Any legal implications are identified in the report and no further comment is required.

**APPENDIX 1 – Cost of Services
General Fund Revenue Budgets 2023/24**

| Portfolio Budget - Net Expenditure | Actuals 2023/24 | Budget 2023/24 | Variation | %age Var | Notes |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Corporate Business | 171,228 | 169,520 | 1,708 | 1% | 1 |
| Corporate Services | 3,330,817 | 2,677,565 | 653,252 | 20% | 2 |
| Economy And Regenrtn Portfolio | 516,257 | 454,014 | 62,243 | 12% | 3 |
| Environment Portfolio | 4,238,133 | 4,345,821 | -107,688 | -3% | 4 |
| Finance | -695,997 | -1,200,085 | 504,088 | -72% | 5 |
| Strategic Development & P'Ship | 373,784 | -166,297 | 540,082 | 144% | 6 |
| Street Scene Portfolio | 12,163,186 | 11,262,529 | 900,657 | 7% | 7 |
| Sustainable Homes & Communitie | 1,935,657 | 1,791,117 | 144,540 | 7% | 8 |
| Portfolio Totals | 22,033,065 | 19,334,184 | 2,698,882 | 12% | |
| Interest Receipts (Net of investment management fees) | -3,153,162 | -1,137,335 | -2,015,827 | 64% | |
| Interest Payable | 402 | 300 | 102 | 25% | 9 |
| PWLB Interest | 79,761 | 94,990 | -15,229 | -19% | |
| Principal Repayments | 369,000 | 417,000 | -48,000 | -13% | |
| Net Expenditure | 19,329,067 | 18,709,139 | 619,928 | 3% | |
| Government Grants | | | | | |
| New Homes Bonus Grant | -1,025,642 | -1,025,642 | 0 | 0% | |
| Rural Services Delivery Grant | -264,583 | -264,441 | -142 | 0% | |
| Lower Tier Services Grant | -1,548,128 | -1,530,145 | -17,983 | 1% | 10 |
| New Services Grant | -89,895 | -107,777 | 17,882 | -20% | |
| Revenue Support Grant | -123,786 | 0 | -123,786 | 100% | |
| Savings Target | 0 | -70,000 | 70,000 | 100% | |
| Use of Reserves | | | | | |
| Capital Reserve Transfers | 83,684 | 0 | 83,684 | 100% | |
| Use of Collection fund surplus Income | -208,139 | -207,814 | -325 | 0% | |
| Use of Collection fund surplus MIRS | -150,996 | -150,996 | 0 | 0% | 11 |
| Use of Accumulated Absence Reserve | -7,671 | 0 | -7,671 | 100% | |
| Use of Other Earmarked Reserves | 4,534,018 | 4,009,071 | 524,946 | 12% | |
| Budget Requirement | 20,527,929 | 19,361,395 | 1,166,534 | 6% | |
| Business Rates Income | -9,401,174 | -7,249,166 | -2,152,008 | 23% | 12 |
| Business Rates MIRs | -1,800,852 | -1,800,852 | 0 | | |
| Council Tax Requirement | 9,325,903 | 10,311,377 | -985,474 | -11% | |

Notes

1 No Material Variations

There is a budgeted £0.4m variation due to anticipated recoverable salary costs across the portfolio plus other unallocated staff related costs contributing 0.06m and an increase in the

2 corporate bad debt provision of £0.04m. Overall Employee costs across the whole portfolio were materially within the set budget of £20.2m with permanent salaries showing savings of £0.8m offset by overspends in Agency staff costs of £0.6m and other less material movements.

3 An overspend of £0.2m within Building control due to lower than anticipated fee levels has been partially offset by less material savings elsewhere.

4 The variation has been driven by underspends in staffing costs across the Environment service.

5 Variations relating to the Housing Benefit subsidy contributed an additional £0.3m and lower than expected Car Park operations costs/income (£0.29m) has driven the majority of the deficit within Finance. These were offset by less material savings across finance.

6 Lower than expected planning fees income despite the change in fee structure in the latter part of the year has provided a deficit contribution of £0.3m. A further £0.2m variation to budget is due to Enterprise zone expenditure which is equally offset by increases in business rates income and the associated contribution to Enterprise zone earmarked revenue reserves.

7 There are 3 material variations within the street scene service in 2023. A deficit within Refuse and Recycling of £0.6m driven by the revised cost plus fees structure with Suez has been partially offset by better than anticipated performance within Green Waste (£0.2m). A further £0.3m deficit is due to anticipated savings within Public conveniences not being realised, however this is offset with agreed/anticipated use of earmarked reserves.

8 Higher levels of Homelessness Accommodation expenditure than predicted (£0.2m).

9 Higher levels of returns than budgeted.

10 Additional central government grants announced after the councils budget setting process was completed

11 The two material variations within earmarked reserve releases/contributions relate to a lower than anticipated release of Transformation reserve funding in the year to fulfil specific projects (£0.3m) and an expected release of Revs and Bens new burdens funding (£0.3m).

12 Better than anticipated business rates income

APPENDIX 2 – General Fund Earmarked Reserves

| REV/CAP RES | Reserve Category/Strategic Line | Reserve Name | -31,923 2022 | -4,549 Movement | -36,472 2023 |
|-------------|--|--|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Capital | Asset Maintenance Reserve | Asset Maintenance Reserve | -609 | 43 | -566 |
| Capital | Capital Res It Projects | Capital Res It Projects | -3 | 0 | -3 |
| Capital | Eth Refurb Reserve | Eth Refurb Reserve | -31 | 0 | -31 |
| Revenue | 42021 C19 Reserve (Ex 93595) | 42021 C19 Reserve (Ex 93595) | -33 | 0 | -33 |
| Revenue | 42021 Financial Resilience Posts X 2 Extended To August 2024 | 42021 Financial Resilience Posts X 2 Extended To August 2024 | -225 | 70 | -155 |
| Revenue | Business Rates Volatility Res | Business Rates Volatility Res | -650 | -522 | -1,172 |
| Revenue | Contingency Reserve For 46091 Hardship Fund | Contingency Reserve For 46091 Hardship Fund | -200 | 0 | -200 |
| Revenue | Corporate Services Reserves Bs | Community (Was Dip) Consultatn | -6 | 0 | -6 |
| Revenue | Corporate Services Reserves Bs | Covid19 Emergency Fund Reserve | -80 | 0 | -80 |
| Revenue | Corporate Services Reserves Bs | Edms Reserve (From Transformat | -33 | 0 | -33 |
| Revenue | Corporate Services Reserves Bs | Elect Reg Reserve | -44 | 0 | -44 |
| Revenue | Corporate Services Reserves Bs | It Repacem (Systmon) Res | -20 | 0 | -20 |
| Revenue | Corporate Services Reserves Bs | Mobile Working Res Via Capital | -5 | 0 | -5 |
| Revenue | Corporate Training Reserve | Corporate Training Reserve | -14 | 1 | -14 |
| Revenue | Cv T&T Contain Outbreak Mngt Fund Reserve | Cv T&T Contain Outbreak Mngt Fund Reserve | -159 | 0 | -159 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Asset Management Plan Reserve | -18 | 0 | -18 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Building Control It Enhancemen | -144 | 0 | -144 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Business Support And Adv Res | -67 | -40 | -107 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Changing Places Reserve | -132 | -110 | -242 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Comm. Invest Framework Reserve | -85 | 0 | -85 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Economic Ptshp And Initive Fnd | -54 | 0 | -54 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Ex & Seaton Visitor Cntr Res | -31 | 0 | -31 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Labgi Reserves | -62 | 8 | -55 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Ocean Venue Sinking Fund | -50 | 0 | -50 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Old Drill Hall Dem Via Capital | -2 | 0 | -2 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Portas Towns Pilot Reserve | -1 | 0 | -1 |
| Revenue | Economy Reserves Bs | Relocation Allowances Reserve | -158 | 0 | -158 |
| Revenue | Eddc Elections Reserve | Eddc Elections Reserve | -19 | 189 | 169 |
| Revenue | Eh Comf Funds | Eh Comf Funds | -42 | 39 | -2 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Aonb Landscape Fund | -78 | 21 | -57 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Car Pks Ticket Machine Rsrve | -28 | 0 | -28 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Climate Change Reserve | -747 | -205 | -953 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | E Devon Crime And Disorder | -214 | 0 | -214 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Eh Protection Reserve | -26 | -39 | -65 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Grants For Arts Reserve | -102 | 80 | -22 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Hls Reserve | -197 | -3 | -201 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Licensing Reserve | -9 | -7 | -16 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Manor Pvlm Sidmth Res | -7 | 1 | -5 |
| Revenue | Environment Reserves Bs | Wild Wetlands Project | -58 | 0 | -58 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | 100percent Nndr Reserve | -996 | 138 | -858 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Community Fund Reserve | -41 | -22 | -63 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Land Charges Sur/Defi Reserve | -36 | 0 | -36 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Localised Ctax Support Reserve | -141 | 0 | -141 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Mtfp Risk Reserve | -2,936 | 0 | -2,936 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Nndr Project Revenue Reserve | -34 | 0 | -34 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Parish Support Reserve | -55 | 0 | -55 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Parishes Together Reserve | -50 | 8 | -42 |
| Revenue | Finance Reserves Bs | Revs & Bens Reserve | -10 | -52 | -62 |
| Revenue | Gen Res Transform Fund | Gen Res Transform Fund | -2,114 | 275 | -1,839 |
| Revenue | Homes 4 Ukraine 42022 Emp Costs 23-24 Reserve | Homes 4 Ukraine 42022 Emp Costs 23-24 Reserve | -58 | 58 | 0 |
| Revenue | Homes 4 Ukraine 42022 General Reserve | Homes 4 Ukraine 42022 General Reserve | -1,369 | 222 | -1,146 |
| Revenue | Members Reserve | Members Reserve | 0 | -5 | -5 |
| Revenue | Placemaking Strategy Reserve | Placemaking Strategy Reserve | 0 | -8 | -8 |
| Revenue | Private Sector Hsg Reserve | Private Sector Hsg Reserve | -94 | 58 | -35 |
| Revenue | Reserve For 42023 Asylum Dispersal Grant 3 | Reserve For 42023 Asylum Dispersal Grant 3 | 0 | -118 | -118 |
| Revenue | Small Community Grants Fund Re93080 | Small Community Grants Fund Re93080 | -4 | 0 | -4 |
| Revenue | Strata Savings Reserve | Strata Savings Reserve | -138 | 138 | 0 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | 3 Towns Regeneration Reserve | -7 | 6 | 0 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Consortium Payment Reserve | -350 | 0 | -350 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | East Devon Great Trees | 0 | -15 | -15 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Enterprise Zone Reserve | -2,028 | -1,812 | -3,840 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Hndu Expansion Areas Res | 0 | 35 | 35 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Hnip Revenue Reserve | -14,511 | -2,799 | -17,310 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Local Plan Inspection Reserve | -128 | 0 | -128 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Neighbourhood Planning Reserve | -141 | 52 | -89 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Ngp Masterplanning Reserve | -270 | -113 | -382 |
| Revenue | Strategic Develmt Reserves Bs | Planning Reserve | -111 | -534 | -646 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | Beach Huts Reserve | -60 | -1 | -62 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | Honeyditches Interpret Panel | -13 | 0 | -13 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | Lpsa2 Reserve | -34 | 0 | -34 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | Ottery Cycle Path Dowry (Coler | -12 | 0 | -12 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | Plant & Equip - Pks & Pls Grds | -84 | 20 | -64 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | Plant & Equip - Street Cleansg | -53 | -3 | -56 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | Streetscene Reserve | -86 | 5 | -81 |
| Revenue | Street Scene Reserves Bs | War Memorial Maintenance Reser | -20 | 0 | -20 |
| Revenue | Sustn Homes & Comm Reserves Bs | Community Led Housing Reserve | -722 | 69 | -653 |
| Revenue | Sustn Homes & Comm Reserves Bs | Housing Task Force Reserve | -345 | 268 | -77 |
| Revenue | Treasury Management Reserve | Treasury Management Reserve | -275 | 0 | -275 |
| Revenue | Ukspf Reserve | Ukspf Reserve | -150 | 56 | -93 |

APPENDIX 3 – HRA outturn Variances & Commentaries

| Year to Date | | | INCOME | 23/24 Outturn | | |
|--------------|------------|---------|----------------------|---------------|------------|---------|
| Actuals | Budget | Diff | | Actuals | Budget | Diff |
| - | - | - | | - | - | - |
| 19,498,769 | 19,911,900 | 413,131 | Gross Property Rents | 19,498,769 | 19,911,900 | 413,131 |
| -209,149 | -231,110 | 21,961 | Garage Rents | -209,149 | -231,110 | 21,961 |
| -686,427 | -658,510 | -27,917 | Other Income | -686,427 | -658,510 | -27,917 |
| - | - | - | | - | - | - |
| 20,394,346 | 20,801,520 | 407,174 | | 20,394,346 | 20,801,520 | 407,174 |

| Year to Date | | | EXPENDITURE | 23/24 Outturn | | |
|--------------|------------|-----------|----------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|
| Actuals | Budget | Diff | | Actuals | Budget | Diff |
| 11,097,257 | 5,763,318 | 5,333,939 | Repairs & Maintenance | 11,097,257 | 5,763,318 | 5,333,939 |
| 9,513,737 | 8,123,651 | 1,390,086 | Supervision And Management | 9,513,737 | 8,123,651 | 1,390,086 |
| 645,236 | 617,240 | 27,996 | Other Expenditure | 645,236 | 617,240 | 27,996 |
| 3,854,726 | 3,356,710 | 498,016 | Capital Charges & Bad Debt | 3,854,726 | 3,356,710 | 498,016 |
| 25,110,957 | 17,860,919 | 7,250,038 | <i>(excl Depreciation)</i> | 25,110,957 | 17,860,919 | 7,250,038 |

| | 23/24 Outturn | | |
|---|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Actuals | Budget | Diff |
| Net Interest Expense | 2,030,001 | 2,559,580 | -529,579 |
| Earmarked Reserve Release | -9,370,133 | -40,000 | 9,330,133 |
| Revenue Contn to Capital Financing | 2,623,521 | 880,000 | 1,743,521 |
| | | | - |
| Total Financing | -4,716,611 | 3,399,580 | 8,116,191 |

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Financial Review, Revised Budget & Sustainability Plan

Report summary:

The report summarises the current financial pressures facing the HRA, highlights the need for additional new borrowing to meet budget shortfall in 2023/24 and for capital investment in 2024/25 to ensure regulatory compliance. It sets out plans to improve the short-term sustainability of the HRA and outlines work underway to consider longer term options for the effective management and maintenance of the Council's Housing stock.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet Recommend that Council;

1. Approve £2.5m of additional borrowing to balance the HRA budget for the 2023/24 financial year.
2. Approve a revised HRA Budget for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 3, and a revised Capital Programme Budget as set out in Appendix 4.

The approval to include:

- a) That up to £1.75m be allocated from the HRA Balance Reserve to fund the 2024/25 forecast revenue budget shortfall.
 - b) That a target annual revenue saving of £250k per annum be sought over 3 years to replenish the HRA Balance Reserve.
 - c) That £4.4m of Voluntary Revenue Provision be used to reduce the level of additional borrowing required within the HRA.
 - d) That £7.3m of new borrowing be agreed to fund the 2024/25 Capital Programme.
3. Note that £2.415m of savings and/or new additional revenue is required in 2025/26. This is needed to achieve a balanced budget, meet the increased cost arising from new borrowing in 2024/25, contribute toward the replenishment of the

HRA Balance Reserve and fund additional new borrowing for Capital Programme investment in 2025/26.

4. Note the work currently underway to investigate options and establish a longer-term strategic plan to ensure the sustainable and effective management and maintenance of the Councils Housing stock.
5. Approve a £35k budget within the HRA to increase provision to a Full-Time HRA accountant to support the service.

Reason for recommendation:

To balance the budget and provide the necessary investment for regulatory compliance and for the provision of good quality safe, affordable and warm homes for our residents.

Officers: Housing Strategy, Enabling and Project Manager, Director for Finance & Director for Housing & Environment

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

Climate change Low impact

Risk: High Risk;

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Housing Revenue Account: Financial Review, Revised Budget & Sustainability Plan

Executive Summary

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is facing significant financial pressure in the immediate and longer term. The current approved budget is insufficient to meet minimum standards and achieve regulatory compliance and therefore requires revision.

The current financial pressure arise from a range of factors including an historic underinvestment for the last decade, increased consumer and regulatory standards, general cost price inflation, restrictions in rent increases, net zero expectations, disrepair claims, high void and decant costs and other issues such as financial management. External advisors are stating that similar cost pressures are being seen in other stock holding local authorities.

A significant budget overspend in 2023/24 has required the allocation of the entire £9.3m 'useable' HRA reserves, part of which was set aside for 'catch up' repairs. In addition, a further £2.5m of new borrowing is now required to balance the books for 2023/24. In setting the 2023/24 budget the use of reserves was identified as being required in year to support additional expenditure, but it was envisaged a revised budget would come forward in year based on stock condition findings – this was not finalised in year.

The current (2024/25) HRA revenue budget is projected to be overspent by £1.71m in the current year. It is proposed, that up to £1.75m from the HRA Balance Reserve be used to fund this shortfall. With regard to the capital budget, the HRA requires an additional £7.3m of new borrowing to fund capital investment in order to achieve regulatory compliance and meet other existing capital commitments.

A Financial Sustainability Plan is in place to address and respond to the short-term financial pressures facing the HRA. This plan sets out a range of measures to increase income and deliver savings over the next 1 – 2 years and will include any recommendations from the Chartered Institute of Public Finances & Accounting (CIPFA), who have been appointed to undertake a Health Check of the HRA.

This report seeks to outline the immediate requirements for the HRA, however, it is important to note from the outset that there are multiple stages required to ascertain the full needs of the HRA moving forward

Looking ahead, further significant additional capital investment will be required over the medium and longer term to remain compliant and meet the investment requirements identified in the Stock Condition Survey. Savills have been appointed to provide specialist business and financial advice and to review longer term options for the effective

management and maintenance of the housing stock. This is to ensure the Council provides safe, high-quality, and regulatory compliant homes for our residents. An update on this work will be provided during the autumn.

| Report Content | Point Number |
|---|---------------------|
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| • Key Financial Pressures | • 4 |
| • Internal Financial Review 2024 | • 5 |
| • 2023/24 Budget Outturn | • 6 |
| • 2024/25 Revised Budget | • 11 |
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| Section 2 – Future HRA Business Plan | |
| • HRA – Short Term Sustainability Plan | • 39 |
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| HRA Summary Outturn 2023/24 | Appendix 1 |
| Indicative 5 Year Capital Programme | Appendix 2 |
| Revised HRA Revenue Budget 2024/25 | Appendix 3 |
| Revised HRA Capital Budget 2024/25 | Appendix 4 |
| Proposed Timeline | Appendix 5 |

The Housing Revenue Account Overview

1. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is responsible for all income and expenditure related to the provision of council housing. The HRA is a ringfenced account within the General Fund with strict legal and accounting rules to maintain separation from General Fund expenditure.
2. The HRA consists of capital and revenue elements. Capital is typically physical items that add value to the property such as doors, windows and boilers etc. Revenue is typically low-level repairs, staff and labour costs etc. The Council is allowed to borrow to fund capital expenditure, but not revenue.
3. The following outlines the key budget areas and headline figures for the HRA.

Revenue Budget

- **Income:** The primary sources of income for the HRA are Tenant's rents and service charges. The forecast income is expected to be circa £21m.
- **Repairs and Maintenance:** This includes all major expenditure which falls into the revenue category and includes equipment testing, decoration, minor works and the majority of our responsive repairs work. The budgeted spend is approximately £8m.
- **Supervision & Management:** Administrative and operational costs associated with managing the housing stock. This is budgeted at £9.75m
- **Financing / Debt Servicing:** Financing costs of the existing £84.6m borrowing amounts to an annual cost of £ 2.8m

- **The Capital Programme Budget**

The capital programme is part of the HRA but is recorded separately. The Capital programme provides for investment in major repairs and building upgrades, Right To Buy replacement acquisitions etc.

The Capital programme for the current year amounts to £13.2m, reducing to a net figure of £9.2m with grant funding, Right To Buy receipts and a 'depreciation' contribution from the revenue account. The capital programme includes an amount of £6.44m for major repairs, improvements and compliance works.

(Depreciation: An amount set aside from income to invest toward capital works to maintain an asset i.e. for wear and tear)

HRA – Key Financial Pressures

4. The financial pressures facing the HRA have arisen due to a number of factors:
 - **Historic Under-investment**
As members will be aware, a significant portion of the Council's housing stock is old and requires extensive and costly repair, maintenance and fabric upgrades. This includes meeting new standards for energy efficiency

and safety regulations to meet increased regulatory compliance standards. A lack of cyclical and planned maintenance appears to have contributed to general deterioration in our stock. This historic underinvestment may have exacerbated current repair costs in certain cases.

- **Void Rates**

Void turnaround times have a significant impact on revenue and the Council has experienced higher than average void times. The Council also has a significant number of long-term voids and properties requiring significant investment to be brought back into use. Underinvestment in our stock has, in some cases, resulted in voids requiring additional works once they have become void. This in turn has led to increased void turnaround times.

- **Inflation and Cost Increases**

General inflation and specific increases in construction and maintenance costs and materials and labour have made it more expensive to maintain and improve our housing stock. We are working with our contractors (Ian Williams in particular) to find cost savings across our portfolio through negotiation of different contractual terms and furthermore through efficient planning and issue of planned works.

- **Debt Levels**

The HRA carries £86.4m of debt from self-financing. Servicing this debt requires significant annual expenditure of approximately £2.6m p.a. Interest rate increases in recent years will affect the cost of new borrowing.

HRA Internal Financial Review 2024

5. Following an internal review by the new senior housing team in early 2024, it became clear that the HRA was facing significant financial pressure. The key issues facing the HRA have arisen from an apparent underinvestment in both cyclical and planned maintenance. More recently, higher regulatory and consumer standards have placed further cost pressures on the budget along with cost price inflation and the impact of covid on our ability to undertake certain works.

2023/24 Budget Outturn Overview

6. The final HRA outturn for 2023/24 shows a significant budget overspend in both Capital and Revenue. The Revenue budget was overspent by £7.1m, the Capital Programme budget was overspent by £5.1m.
7. The key areas of major overspend were Responsive Repairs, Programmed Maintenance and Supervision and Management. The Budget outturn positions are included at Appendix 1

Reserve Position

8. The opening Reserve position for last financial year (2023/24) showed £12.47m in reserves. This consisted of £9.37m in useable reserves, and £3.1m in the HRA Balance Reserve. The Balance Reserve is considered to be the minimum operational reserve for unexpected shocks and is set at a level considered prudent by the s.151 officer to maintain solvency.

Table 1: HRA Reserve Position

| Reserve Name | 22/23 Year End Balance (£m) | Reserves Used in 23/24 (£m) | 23/24 Year End Balance (£m) |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| HRA Balance Reserve | 3.1 | 0 | 3.1 |
| HRA Volatility Reserve | 1.6 | 1.6 | 0 |
| Capital Development Fund | 2.925 | 2.925 | 0 |
| Landlord Services Reserve | 0.124 | 0.124 | 0 |
| Planned Maintenance Reserve | 3.255 | 3.255 | 0 |
| Fire Risk Assessment Reserve | 1.468 | 1.468 | 0 |
| | 12.472 | 9.372 | 3.1 |

9. The entire useable reserve of £9.37m has been allocated to fund the revenue budget overspend as well as financing the capital programme expenditure.

Additional Borrowing Required

10. As highlighted above, the final outturn position for 2023/24 resulted in an HRA capital shortfall of £2.5m. This necessitates an additional new borrowing requirement. This additional £2.5m of borrowing, at indicative current rates of 5%, will add an additional £130k per annum to the interest burden i.e. a bottom line revenue expenditure/pressure on the revenue account.

Revised Budget 2024/25

11. The current year's budget 2024/25 was set as part of the annual budget setting process and was approved by Council alongside the General Fund Budget. This is published in the Council's Budget Book. A copy of the approved 2024/25 budget is shown alongside the proposed revised budget for 2024/25 at Appendix 3.

Revenue Budget

12. The full scale of the financial challenges facing the HRA became apparent early in 2024, with the full extent being established at the end of the financial year in April of this year.

13. The extent of cost pressures, budget overspends, and backlog repairs were not reflected in the budget for 2024/25. Members were advised in the budget setting report that the budget would be a rollover from the previous year. This was because we needed to establish the costs for new and existing vacant posts, were awaiting details from the stock condition survey and other spend priorities.
14. Budget pressures have not abated and forecasting clearly suggests that the current Revenue budget is insufficient and is likely to be significantly overspent in the current year. The budget also failed to provide sufficient resources for capital programme investment. For this reason, a revised budget has been prepared that more accurately reflects the forecast outturn and includes additional borrowing to provide sufficient capital investment to achieve regulatory compliance.
15. The revised budget provides for an increase in revenue expenditure for responsive repairs, maintenance and compliance works. There has been adjustment to how certain expenditure is accounted for in terms of Revenue or Capital, with a significant proportion of expenditure previously shown in the revenue budget now being shown in the capital programme. This is purely an accounting change and improves the way the HRA is structured to enable better understanding, management, and financing.
16. The forecast outturn position arising from the new budget amounts to a revenue budget shortfall of £1.34m. This figure includes the additional financing cost of the £2.5m new borrowing required to meet the 2023/24 budget shortfall.
17. The revenue budget shortfall in the current year is forecast to increase from £1.34m to approximately £1.71m allowing for the finance costs of £7.3m of additional borrowing required to fund the essential capital programme, as detailed below.
18. It is proposed, and included in the report recommendation, that the forecast revenue budget shortfall for the current year be met from an allocation of up to £1.75m from the £3.1m HRA Balance Reserve.
19. In summary, the HRA is facing a revenue budget shortfall of £1.71m and requires £7.4m of capital investment. The recommendation in this report is to fund the revenue element from reserves, and the capital element from new additional borrowing.
20. As stated, the HRA Balance Reserve currently stands at £3.1m, at its adopted level. The Balance is held to protect the Council against the risk of costs associated with unforeseen events along with appropriate insurance and to deal with uneven cash flows. The sum to be held is a recommendation to Council from the S151 Officer. There is no set formula in determining the appropriate level of the Balance, but a common approach is to allow a sum per property.
21. In our case this is £490 per property giving £2.1m as the minimum sum to hold with headroom added of £1m giving our £3.1m at the top of the range. This report recommends using up to £1.75m of the Balance in the current year to meet

revenue costs bringing the estimated HRA Balance Reserve down to £1.35m, this being £0.75m below the minimum level.

22. Under normal circumstance this would not be a position the S151 Officer would support, but having reviewed options and the need for the authority to meet compliance standards within its housing stock, this is seen as acceptable on the understanding that realistic budgets have now been reflected for the 2024/25 revised budget position and steps are to be taken to rebuild the reserve which will need careful monitoring by the Council.
23. A copy of the proposed revised budget for the current year 2024/25 is included at Appendix 3.

Capital Budget

24. The capital programme consists of several areas of essential spend to ensure our housing stock complies with various regulatory standards such as fire, gas and electrical safety etc, and that our homes are of a decent standard. This includes tackling damp and mould, urgent structural repairs, fire safety works and a general requirement to ensure that kitchens and bathrooms meet an acceptable minimum standard.
25. A significant programme of investment is now required to meet regulatory standards. The following table provides a headline summary of the programme of investment required in the current year. This requires a total investment of £6.44m.

Table 2: Forecast Capital Programme 2024/25

| Expenditure | Units/ Measures | Cost - £ |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|
| Kitchens | 100 | 750,000 |
| Bathrooms | 50 | 200,000 |
| Roofs: Condition D (Risk of imminent failure) | 6 | 132,000 |
| Windows | 24 | 150,000 |
| Heating/ Boilers | 100 | 500,000 |
| Capital Major Works See Separate List | | 1,210,000 |
| Decarbonisation Programme (Lad Mop Up). | 35 | 750,000 |
| Adaptations | | 400,000 |
| Sew Treatment Plants | 14 | 500,000 |
| Fire Doors | 300 | 450,000 |
| CO2 & Detection | 2700 | 400,000 |
| Fire Risk Assessment Actions - Capital | 0 | 1,000,000 |
| | | £ 6,442,000 |

26. In addition to the £6.44 m of planned works, the Capital Programme also includes capital expenditure on Voids, Responsive Repairs and RTB replacement

acquisitions. The total Capital Programme Budget amounts to £13.262m as summarised in the table below

Table 3: Proposed Capital Programme Budget 2024/25

| Capital Programme Budget 2024/25 | |
|---|----------------|
| Major repairs | £6.44m |
| RTB Replacement Acquisitions | £3.32m |
| Voids | £2.5m |
| Responsive repairs | £1m |
| Total | £13.26m |

27. The £13.26m gross expenditure is offset by various income such as grant funding, RTB receipts and a depreciation contribution from the revenue account (money set aside from rents to fund major repairs). The **net** expenditure after allowing for this amounts to £9.2m

Table 4: Budget 2024/25 Funding Requirement

| | Expenditure (£m) | Funding Required (£m) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Revenue Budget | 20.5 | 1.71 (forecast overspend) |
| Capital Expenditure (Gross) | 13.3 | 9.2 (net capital expenditure) |
| Total Expenditure | 33.8 | |
| Total Funding Required | | 10.91 |
| HRA Balance Reserve Allocation | | -1.71 |
| Balance to be Funded 2024/25 | | 9.2m |

Additional Funding / New Borrowing

28. The new funding requirement for the current year 24/25 amounts to £9.2m as outlined above. A further amount of £2.5m is also required balance the budget shortfall for 23/24. This takes the total new additional funding required to a total of £11.7m
29. It is proposed, and included in the recommendation, that the £11.7m be partially reduced through the use of a one-time contribution of £4.4m of Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) funding. This leaves a remaining balance of £7.3m to be funded through additional new borrowing.
30. VRP (Voluntary Revenue Provision) is where the Council has made an overpayment on existing debt, which can then be utilised to offset further borrowing. For example, over previous years we have made additional payments to the HRA to the amount of £4.4m which means that this amount is available for us to borrow this financial year. We are proposing that we utilise this in order to reduce the overall amount we need to borrow.

31. It should be noted that the annual cost to the HRA revenue account from £7.3m of new additional borrowing amounts to approximately £365k per annum. This increased cost will place additional revenue pressure on the HRA and will need to be met through a package of efficiency savings across the board, through budget control, a recruitment freeze on non-essential posts, income maximisation and a minimal level of strategic asset disposals.
32. Our calculations assume that monies will be borrowed from the Public Works Loan Board, however the Council Treasury Management Strategy will determine if internal borrowing is more beneficial thereby reducing overall costs.

Home Safeguard – Capital Investment

33. Home Safeguard is a community alarm service provided to residents of our older persons housing stock. The service requires specific hardware to be installed in each property. The existing hardware will shortly become obsolete and requires replacement across the stock, at capital cost of up to £1.2m.
34. This cost will require further additional borrowing and will add to the overall total HRA debt burden. It is however proposed that the capital investment cost be offset by an appropriate service charge in 2025/26 and future years. Service charging will cover the capital and borrowing costs and will have a net neutral impact on the revenue account. Details of the Home Safeguard scheme and associated capital requirement will be set out for approval in a subsequent report.

Social Housing Decarbonation Fund – Round 3 Bid

35. As members will be aware, we have been committed to decarbonising our stock and EDDC have previously applied for available funding. Unfortunately, due to the match funding element and budgetary constraints as outlined, it has been necessary to decline the latest round of funding. This does not mean that we will not apply for future funding however; it simply means that with a more robust, thorough and planned programme of works we can ensure that funding applications not only help improve home efficiency for our customers, but will also ensure that our most 'in need' stock is targeted with appropriate decarbonisation measures.

Future HRA Business Plan

Budget 2025/26

36. Detailed budget preparation for next year's budget will commence in September. This will link with work being undertaken by Savills to review and assist with our short-term financial plan and options for the longer-term management of the stock.
37. The 25/26 Budget will need to achieve the following.
- A significant reduction in revenue expenditure in the range of 10 %
 - A target revenue contribution of £250k to replenish the HRA Balance Reserve
 - A significant capital programme of circa £12m for continued capital investment.
 - Capital receipts from the disposal of non-performing assets to assist funding of the Capital Programme.
38. The required budget reductions and efficiency savings amount to an estimated £2.415m, although this is an early calculation and is highly likely to change. This has been calculated based on a requirement to reduce forecast budget overspends and cover the interest payment on new borrowing. This is summarised below.

Table 5: Indicative Revenue Savings Required

| Indicative Revenue Savings Required | Cost / Saving Required |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Revenue Budget Overspend 24/25 – To be reduced to 0 in 25/26 | £1.3m |
| Replenish HRA Balance over 3 years | £250k |
| Revenue costs for £7.4m, additional borrowing 2024/25 | £365k |
| Revenue costs for an estimated £10.m additional borrowing 2025/26 | £500k |
| Total | £2.415m |

HRA - Short Term Sustainability Plan

39. Immediate action is necessary to stabilise the financial position of the HRA whilst work is undertaken to establish longer term options for the effective management and maintenance of the housing stock.
40. A short term 'Sustainability Plan' has been adopted and will ensure strategic management, prudential investment, budget control and will deliver a programme of income maximisation and cost reduction. This plan includes the following.

Strategic Review of Expenditure

41. A mini budget review has taken place in the current year with a number of cost savings identified in the existing budget, this has included a decision to not recruit to a limited number of posts and small savings in areas of non-essential spend.
42. A further, more detailed exercise, including industry benchmarking, will be required prior to the 2025/26 budget setting process to identify opportunities where significant cost savings can be achieved, without compromising service quality. This may include renegotiating contracts, improving operational efficiencies, adopting new technologies and approaches to service delivery.

Income Maximisation / Diversification

43. Maximising income will be a key priority in future years. This may include marginal rent increases above standard through a programme of 'rent flexibility' and the introduction of 'affordable rents' on a small number of Council properties. It will also include ensuring the effective management of service charging to ensure that costs are adequately recharged to tenants, leaseholders and freeholders where appropriate, including for sewage treatment plants etc
44. It will also be necessary to explore other opportunities to diversify income streams. This could include developing mixed-use properties, commercial leasing, or partnerships with private developers or service operators to generate additional revenue.
45. We will also continue to explore grant funding opportunities.

46. Enhanced Financial Planning & Budget Control

47. The recent internal Financial Review has identified a number of areas for improvement in the monitoring and management of the HRA budget. Following further reporting from CIPFA, Housing and Finance Departments will need to implement more robust financial planning and forecasting to better manage cash flows and anticipate future financial needs. Strict budget controls should also be adopted, which could include a moratorium on recruitment to non-essential posts authorised by ELT. Furthermore, additional training must be given to all managers with budget holding responsibility, and awareness of cost saving approaches to be employed across all areas of the Housing Department.
48. Historically, EDDC have completed works that do not fall under legal responsibility as social landlord which has resulted in increased costs and impact on the HRA. In order to improve budgetary spend and improve efficiencies, additional support from corporate communications is needed to communicate and outline appropriate responsibility of repair to tenants.

Effective Asset Management

49. Effective asset management is a core activity for housing providers. This involves having a clear understanding of the value and investment requirements of the stock, and disposing of assets which don't perform against a set criteria. This

criteria is primarily financial, but also includes social value i.e. we may opt to retain an asset where it fails the financial test but meets a particular social or priority need.

50. Asset disposals are typically properties that are uneconomic to maintain and where the cost of repairs exceed the value of the asset. This assessment is typically undertaken through a formal valuation approach termed Net Present Value or NPV. A formal 'Acquisitions and Disposals Policy' will be presented to Members for approval in the autumn and will provide the framework for any disposals.

Advocate for Policy Change

51. The financial pressures facing the HRA are not unique to EDDC. Many stock holding authorities are experiencing similar pressures. This is partially due to the imposition of higher consumer and regulatory standards and net zero aspirations, but with limited additional investment to meet these increased cost burdens. EDDC should engage with policymakers at a national level to advocate for additional funding and greater flexibility in HRA financing.

Debt Restructuring

52. Evaluate the possibility of restructuring existing debt to achieve more favourable terms, reducing annual debt servicing costs and freeing up resources for other priorities.

Community Engagement

53. We will continue to engage with our tenants and seek their input on our plans for improving the housing stock and how resources are allocated. Community engagement is a top priority to ensure that we listen and understand our tenants, needs, views and priorities and that these are reflected in our plans and decisions.
54. We have listened to the responses given within the Tenant Survey and there has been a consistent level of dissatisfaction with EDDC repairs service for some time. Whilst figures have improved in the latest round of surveys, we have to consider how we keep tenants informed and engaged in their housing service; help them to understand their rights; make reporting repairs an easy and technologically advanced service and ensure that we provide prompt and accurate updates on the progress of works at their homes. This approach will require sufficient support from the Communications Department and other colleagues throughout EDDC

HRA Business Plan & Options Review

55. The financial pressures facing the HRA are immediate but also likely to extend over the medium and longer term. As highlighted, the major cost pressure is the investment required to bring the stock up to a decent standard. This will require a long-term business plan, typically a 30-year plan.

56. The level of investment has yet to be determined and will follow from the recent Stock Condition Survey. The indicative 5-year Capital Programme investment requirement is estimated at approximately £60m with a longer-term investment requirement beyond 5 years expected to be in excess of £100m. These are initial estimates at this stage.
57. This level of expenditure can be met, in part, through a contribution from the revenue account to the Capital Programme, i.e. through rental income. The HRA is however likely to require additional borrowing in future years to provide the required additional capital.
58. The Council have recently engaged Savills to assist with a short-term financial plan and to provide high level advice on the options available to the Council for the most efficient and effective long-term management and investment in our stock.
59. The absolute priority for the Council must be our tenants, and to meet our obligation to provide safe, warm and decent homes which meet the required regulatory standards. All options should therefore be considered in order to achieve this. A full and thorough options appraisal will need to be completed within which there are many options for consideration, namely; a continued programme of income maximisation, effective asset management, cost reductions and efficiencies, partnering arrangements, shared services or the transfer of stock to a new or existing registered provider.
60. The headline review being undertaken by Savills will guide further work in this area and assist the Council in establishing a sustainable medium and longer-term strategy. An update report will be provided in the autumn.

Continuing Service Improvement

61. Whilst we are responding to certain financial pressures, the Housing Service remains committed to a programme of continuous service improvement. Housing are pleased to report the following excellent performance results on rent collection and significant improvements in our repairs and voids performance.

Repairs (Ian Williams(IWS))

- In the last six months we have reduced our outstanding Work In Progress data (WIP) from 1500 jobs to circa 830 (as of 27th June 2024). This has been done by careful management of more complex work and improve triage at first point of contact
- We have significantly reduced the number of open damp and mould jobs (24 as of 27th June 2024) by better triage, faster inspection by Surveyors and proactive advice.
- We are exploring humidity monitoring and damp and mould treatment kits this year to help with DMC issues.
- 97% of emergencies have been completed within target
- 95% of responsive repairs have been completed within target
- We have carried out a whole data reconciliation exercise to align our data and are bringing EDDC and IWS IT teams together for the first time in 5 years to look at interface issues

- Customer satisfaction with IWS is over 90% on responsive repairs
- Average time to complete a responsive repair is 11 days against a target of 28 days

Voids

- We have identified 30 homes where major work is required and are putting together a plan to tackle these including the use of external grant funding
- We have streamlined our void processes and reporting mechanisms to ensure long term or strategic voids do not impact on turnaround data for 'general' voids
- We have weekly multi- agency progress meetings chaired by our new Void Manager
- We have now built better links with Liberty Gas who also hold an important part in the void process and are working with them to reduce the time they are in the void
- We are working with IWS to iron out inclusions and exclusions on the price per void delivery model with further meetings taking place next week to identify opportunities for efficiencies
- Pre inspections started taking place with the customer in situ during June which should further reduce our turnaround times with specs and contractors lined up to deliver on day one of the void

Income Collection

- Income collection is currently at 99.18%, which is above target, and on track (target is 98%, and we are only 1% below the top quartile - last year our final income collection figure was 100.46%). This level of income collection means we are maximising our tenanted assets and strengthening our budget based on rental income. This, coupled with the improvement in Void times, should see a further increase in the HRA income generation this year.

Financial Challenges – Implications & Risks

62. The council has a clear duty as a responsible landlord to ensure adequate investment in the housing stock. The current financial challenges have a number of implications and risks including.

Implications

- **Regulatory Compliance:** This requires all housing to meet certain standards and for the testing, servicing, repair and replacement of equipment including gas, electricity and fire safety equipment. Failure to meet these standards would result in the intervention by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- **Tenant Satisfaction:** inadequate maintenance increases dissatisfaction among tenants, affecting community relations and increasing administrative burdens in terms of complaint handling.

- **Service Quality:** Inability to maintain or improve housing stock can lead to deteriorating living conditions for tenants, including conditions such as damp and mould which have serious health and safety implications.

Risks

- **Rent Increase.** The expected rent increase for 2025/26 is calculated as CPI plus 1%. This is anticipated to amount to 3%. This formula can be factored into our short and medium term plans. However, any change in central government policy that sought to restrict or reduce rent increases, could have a significant impact on our overall income.
- **Cost inflation.** Current trends indicate a significant easing of inflationary pressure across the board. However, inflation can be affected by unforeseen global shock or events. A significant increase in materials and labour costs, without a corresponding increase in rental income, would have a significant impact on the Councils financial ability to maintain the stock.
- **Increased Regulatory Standards / Policy change.** Increasing consumer and regulatory standards have placed additional cost burdens on the Council. We believe that most of these pressures are understood and reflected within our plans. However, there is a risk that further changes to standards or obligations could place additional pressure on the HRA finances.
- **Disrepair claims.** A significant rise in claim for disrepair is a significant risk. The ability to claim compensation has been widely publicised on social media and elsewhere with some compensation firms cold calling and door knocking. A rise in claims is anticipated and is considered to be a medium to high risk.
- **Capital / Revenue Split miscalculation.** Responsive repairs budget has been estimated as £4m with 25% estimated to be capital. £3m therefore appears in the revenue budget and £1m in the capital budget. Should the position change and less than 25% be delivered as capital and instead be delivered as revenue, this may result in a revenue budget overspend. This risk is considered low to medium.

Question & Answer

Q: How will the budget pressures affect our ability to meet our climate change objectives?

A: A significant proportion of the proposed investment is to improve the fabric of our buildings and improve thermal efficiency. The programme also includes boiler replacements and other measures which contribute toward meeting our Net Zero targets. However, our climate change objectives will continue to be aspirational whilst we are needing to prioritise responsive repairs and compliance works within a restrictive budget.

Q: What happens if a provider doesn't meet regulatory compliance?

A: The Regulator of Social Housing would be alerted and would conduct an investigation. Upon conclusion, they would issue a Regulatory Judgment which would then be published outlining the standards that were not met by the provider. The Regulator considers compliance within the areas of Governance, Financial Viability and Consumer Standards. Depending on the severity of the judgement, different steps would be put in place; this could be creating an action plan to address key issues, the downgrading of performance standards and/ or remedial action by way of formal interventions.

Q Will rents have to rise to pay for additional investment in the stock?

A: There are no plans to increase rents for our existing tenants above the standard annual rent increases which are calculated with reference to a government formula and introduced in April each year. We will review options for 'flexible' or 'affordable rents' for some new tenancies. This is common practice amongst Registered Providers and will be an important source of additional income in future years. Any proposed change will be subject to Member approval.

Q Will we also be reviewing service charges.

A: A review of service charges will be completed during this financial year to ensure costs are being appropriately recharged. A working group, including tenants will be formed to consider the approach taken within this, and a full communications and consultation process will be undertaken to ensure that we provide financial inclusion support to those tenants who may find the introduction of service charges financially challenging.

Q: Why was the revenue budget overspent by £6.3m in 2023/24 but only forecast to be overspent by £1.5 m in 2024/25?

A: A review has identified that some capital expenditure was included in the Revenue budget. This type of expenditure now appears in the 24/25 Capital Programme, the cost of which will be met by the proposed borrowing.

Q: What will the new borrowing be spent on?

A: Our programme of investment will ensure our homes are safe and of a decent standard. Our programme will include compliance works such as testing and replacing fire safety equipment and resolving outstanding fuel poverty issues, major structural repairs and other such actions.

Q - Are the Council considering selling the Housing Stock?

A : Whilst this may be a potential option, Officers have no immediate recommendation for selling our stock. The Council have appointed Savills to review our financial position and establish options for the longer-term management of the Housing stock. This options

appraisal may include delivering efficiency savings, partnering, shared services, disposing of poorly performing assets or stock transfer. However, it is important to stress that **all** possible options will be considered as part of due diligence and a further report will be provided during the autumn.

Q: Will budget pressure affect our ability to build new affordable homes on our garage sites?

A: The Housing Task Force are continuing to progress multiple sites across the district. If the income from rents and grant funding covers the development and borrowing costs, development will proceed. Building new homes will not divert resources from improving the existing stock.

Q: How much debt does the HRA have, and how will we repay additional borrowing?

The Council borrowed around £86m under self-financing arrangements. This, and any new borrowing, is paid back from annual rental income. The current annual repayment is approximately £2.6m p.a. or around 13% of our income.

Q: What improvement have been made to budgetary management?

A: The new management team have identified a number of areas for improvement in budget setting, financial management and budgetary control. The Council has also commissioned Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to undertake review our budget management and accountancy practices. The outcome of this will be reported to Members in due course.

Q Are we disposing of any assets?

A: Potentially. Disposing of non-performing assets is standard practice amongst registered providers and is routinely carried out as a matter of good asset management. This process allows for capital receipts from poorly performing assets to be re-invested into our stock and toward the development or acquisition of new homes. An options appraisal will be undertaken for each potential disposal

Q. Will staff be affected by the budget pressures?

A: We are not currently anticipating a planned reduction in staff numbers. A reduction in staff costs will be sought but it is anticipated that any reductions will be achieved through natural wastage, i.e not recruiting to non-essential vacant posts. Longer term options will be reported in due course.

Q: Are we tackling damp and mould and other hazards?

A: Damp and mould is one of the key areas for investment, alongside other areas of compliance such as fire, gas and electrical safety. The revised budget has been developed to ensure we address these issues and maintain regulatory compliance.

Q: Can saving be made to the revenue budget in the current year 2024/25?

A: Budget savings will require a detailed 'Zero Budget' exercise which is a lengthy process. This is scheduled for later in the year with savings applied to future budgets. In the meantime, a new system of budgetary control has been introduced, alongside a number of process and system changes. It is anticipated that these will assist in controlling the budget and avoid overspending the revised budget.

Q; Are the budget pressures affecting our tenants?

A: Our stock has experienced underinvestment in previous years but the revised budget and capital programme aim to address a backlog of major repairs issues. We are also

achieving significant improvements in the delivery of tenant services such as responsive repairs.

Financial implications:

The financial details and implications are set out within the report. There are significant financial risks identified; the reduction in the HRA Balance to below the adopted level, the significant savings that are required from the HRA in 2025/26 going forwards, a reduction in the order of 10% of the gross budget, and an increase in borrowing. The implications in borrowing will have to be updated and reflected in the Council prudential indicators. Because of the level of savings required close monitoring and reporting on progress will be required to give Council assurance.

As stated in the report this addresses immediate concerns, but further reports will be presented on the longer implications and options in managing the HRA.

Legal implications:

The legal implications of being unable to maintain our housing stock to the required level are outlined in the body of the report, including the risk of regulator intervention and a potential increase in disrepair cases which can generate significant costs and mean that tenants are living in substandard properties. Local authority housing revenue accounts operate within a framework that considers both reserves and balances. While there isn't a universally applicable minimum level of reserves, authorities should maintain general reserves appropriate for the risks they face. The S151 Officer has advised that it is not appropriate to lower our minimum levels, so the reserves will need to be built back up to the adopted level over a period of time. It is important therefore that Members receive regular reports (as is proposed) as to the progress that is being made and that due regard is taken to the advice of the S151 Officer.

Legal services will continue to offer advice and support as needed whilst options for the future are considered and brought to members.

Appendix 1: HRA Outturn Summary - 2023/24

| HRA Outturn Summary - 2023/24 | | | |
|---|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| INCOME | Actuals | Budget | Diff |
| Gross Property Rents | -19,498,769 | -19,911,900 | 413,131 |
| Garage Rents | -209,149 | -231,110 | 21,961 |
| Other Income | -686,427 | -658,510 | -27,917 |
| | -20,394,346 | -20,801,520 | 407,174 |
| EXPENDITURE | | | |
| Repairs & Maintenance | 11,097,257 | 5,763,318 | 5,333,939 |
| | | | |
| Supervision And Management | 9,513,737 | 8,123,651 | 1,390,086 |
| | | | |
| Other Expenditure | 645,236 | 617,240 | 27,996 |
| | | | |
| Capital Charges & Bad Debt | 3,854,726 | 3,356,710 | 498,016 |
| <i>(excl Depreciation)</i> | 25,110,957 | 17,860,919 | 7,250,038 |
| FINANCING | | | |
| Net Interest Expense | 2,030,001 | 2,559,580 | -529,579 |
| Earmarked Reserve Release | -9,370,133 | -40,000 | -9,330,133 |
| Revenue Contribution to Capital Financing | 2,623,521 | 880,000 | 1,743,521 |
| Total Financing | -4,716,611 | 3,399,580 | -8,116,191 |
| | | | |
| | Actuals | Budget | Diff |
| Surplus/Deficit | 0 | 458,979 | -458,979 |

Appendix 2: Indicative 5 Year Capital Programme

| Capital Programme Investment | Measures / Items Completed by Year | | | | | | | Total Est. Cost £ |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------------------|
| | 2024/25 | Yr 1 | Yr 2 | Yr 3 | Yr 4 | Yr 5 | Total | |
| Kitchens | 100 | 251 | 256 | 200 | 200 | 200 | 1207 | 9,802,500 |
| Bathrooms | 50 | 150 | 150 | 150 | 150 | 150 | 800 | 3,000,000 |
| Roofs: Condition D | 6 | 6 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 107 | 440 | 9,636,000 |
| Windows | 24 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 349 | 2,230,000 |
| Heating/ Boilers | 100 | 280 | 280 | 280 | 280 | 280 | 1500 | 7,000,000 |
| Capital Major Works | NB.1 | | | | | | | 4,670,000 |
| LAD Mop Up | 35 | 109 | | | | | 144 | 2,250,000 |
| Adaptations (Major) | NB.2 | | | | | | | 2,400,000 |
| Sewage- Treat-Plants | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 500,000 |
| Fire Doors | 300 | 600 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 400 | 2500 | 3,900,000 |
| Damp /Mould:CAT1&2 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 3000 | 600,000 |
| CO2 & Detection | 2700 | 2700 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5400 | 800,000 |
| Fire Risk Actions | NB.3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,500,000 |
| Total | | | | | | | | £ 59,981,500 |

- NB1 – Capital / Major works include major projects such as reroofing large blocks or major structural repairs etc. These are included in the Capital Programme as a single figure but listed separately. A copy of the planned Major Works is available on request.
- NB2 – An amount of £400k pa has been budgeted. The number of adaptations varies but the current programme has 3 significant adaptations to meet the particular needs of households with disabilities etc.
- NB3 – FRA actions are anticipated to be a one-off Capital Programme activity to address any outstanding works.

Appendix 3: Revised Revenue Budget 2024/25

| Revised Revenue Budget 2024/25 | | | - Proposed Budget 2024/25 | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| | | | Existing Budget 2024/25 | Revised Budget 2024/25 | Variance |
| 1 INCOME | 1 Gross Property Rent inc Garages | 1 Gross Property Rents | -21,088,320 | -21,088,320 | 0 |
| | | 2 Garage Rents | -220,150 | -155,293 | 64,857 |
| | 2 Other Income | 1 Other Income | -738,070 | -692,645 | 45,425 |
| 1 INCOME Total | | | -22,0346,540 | -21,936,258 | 110,282 |
| 2 EXPENDITURE | 1 Repairs & Maintenance - General | 1 Responsive Maintenance | 2,945,390 | 3,900,000 | 954,610 |
| | | 2 Annual Programmed Maintenance | 1,520,920 | 2,027,000 | 506,080 |
| | 2 Repairs & Maintenance - Special | 1 Compliance | 650,050 | 1,033,401 | 383,351 |
| | | 2 Other Works | 710,160 | 1,018,958 | 308,798 |
| | 3 Supervision & Management | | 9,303,501 | 9,745,313 | 441,812 |
| | 4 Other Expenditure | 1 Other Exp non-Sewerage | 686,070 | 723,999 | 37,929 |
| | | 2 Sewerage | 45,740 | 8,866 | -36,874 |
| | 5 Capital Charges & Bad Debt | 1 Adjustment to Bad Debt Provision | | | 0 |
| | | 2 Reval Deprn and Impair | 950,420 | 2,028,300 | 1,077,880 |
| | | 3 Major Repairs Expenditure | 2,800,900 | | -2,800,900 |
| 2 EXPENDITURE Total | | | 19,613,151 | 20,485,836 | 872,686 |
| 3 FINANCING | 1 Interest on Balances | | -458,600 | 0 | 458,600 |
| | 2 Loan Principal & Interest repayments | | 2,663,160 | 2,787,280 | 124,120 |
| | 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 | 0 | 10 |
| | 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 | 0 | 950,420 |
| | | 4 TFR to EARRES | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | 5 Cont to Capital | 1,179,259 | 0 | -1,179,259 |
| | 6 Other | | | 0 | |
| 3 FINANCING Total | | | 2,433,389 | 2,787,280 | 353,891 |
| Grand Total | | | 0 | 1,336,858 | 1,336,859 |

Appendix 4 - Revised Capital Programme 2024/25

| Project | Revised 2024/25 |
|---|------------------------|
| | £ |
| 2024/25 RTB Replacement Acquisitions | 3,320,310 |
| Sewerage Plants | 500,000 |
| Fire Doors | 450,000 |
| CO2 & Detection | 400,000 |
| FRA Actions | 1,000,000 |
| LAD Mop-up | 750,000 |
| Social Service Adaptations | 400,000 |
| WNDW RENEWAL | 150,000 |
| Replacement Bathrooms | 200,000 |
| Roofing Renewal | 132,000 |
| Replacement Kitchens | 750,000 |
| Gas Boiler Replacement | 500,000 |
| Capital Major Works | 1,210,000 |
| Capitalised Responsive Repairs | 1,000,000 |
| PPV Voids | 2,500,000 |
| GROSS EXPENDITURE | 13,262,310 |
| | |
| Major Repairs Reserve / Contribution from Revenue | -2,028,300 |
| Local Authority Grant Funding (LAHF) | -600,000 |
| RTB 1-4-1 | -975,155 |
| Other Capital Receipts | -468,000 |
| S106 Funding | |
| | |
| Net Expenditure | -9,190,855 |

Appendix 5- Outline of projected timeline (subject to change due to matters beyond our control)

Headline HRA Roadmap

Completed

- HRA – Internal Financial Review
- Capital programme – Internal review.
- CIPFA Appointed for HRA Health check
- 2023 Outturn Budget Review
- 2024 Budget revision exercise

- Savills Appointed for financial plan and longer terms options appraisal.

July

- Revised Budget to Council

August

- Major works / capital programme implementation (Subject to budget approval)

September – November

- HRA update Report to Members – CIPFA Savills, Stock Condition reports etc
- HRA Zero based budget/ Efficiency savings exercise
- Disposals Policy approval
- Income maximisation review
- HRA Capital and Revenue expenditure Benchmarking exercise
- Budget / medium term financial plan formulation

2025

- Efficiency programme implementation
- Income maximisation programme implementation
- Medium term financial plan / Budget approval



Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Productivity Plan

Report summary:

When the Local Government Finance Settlement was published in late 2023 it included a requirement for Councils to publish a Productivity Plan. In April 2024, further guidance was received from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) setting out the requirements for the plan.

This report sets out the Productivity Plan for East Devon District Council which must be submitted to Government by 19th July 2024 and published on the Council's website.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. The Cabinet consider the Productivity Plan at Appendix A and subject to member comment approve the content and publication of the Productivity Plan.
2. It is recommended that Cabinet delegate to the Director of Finance to make any minor amendments to the Productivity Plan arising through the meeting.

Reason for recommendation:

There is a requirement for all Councils to submit a Productivity Plan to the Government (DLUHC) by 19th July 2024.

Officer: Director of Finance sdavey@eastdevon.gov.uk

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

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

- 1.1 As part the 2024/25 Government Finance Settlement all Councils were asked to produce productivity plans. The plans are intended to help Government understand what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are and whether there are any gaps and what more the Government needs to do to unlock future opportunities.
- 1.2 The expectation is that the Plan should be short (3 to 4 pages maximum) and there is no set format or template, there are four main themes/question areas that are asked to be addressed:
 - Transformation of services to make better use of resources.
 - Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design.
 - Ways to reduce wasteful spending within all Councils, and
 - Identify any barriers that currently impact efficiency that the Government could help to reduce or remove.
- 1.3 In February 2024, the Council had a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) which forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of sector-led improvement put in place by Councils and the Local Government Association (LGA), to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. The CPC concluded that ***'we are an ambitious Council that is keen to make a positive difference to residents' lives and the environment in East Devon.'***
- 1.4 The CPC stated that ***'EDDC has an excellent financial track record and has successfully managed the General Fund budget, without recourse to use of reserves. The council has developed a Financial Sustainability Model (FSM) which is a process that undertakes reviews to ensure value for money, drives efficiencies to see what savings can be achieved and forms an evidence base that the council has done what it can.'***
- 1.5 The Council has a good record in the areas required to be demonstrated in the Productivity Plan and a focus on continuous improvement supported by external

reviews by industry experts as outlined in our Plan. We have a recently adopted Council Plan setting our agreed priorities.

- 1.6 Within the plan, as requested, areas have been identified where it is felt Government support is required to further productivity, these include:
- The Council spends in key areas that bring proven health and wellbeing benefits to our residents through sports, leisure, parks and gardens and countryside provision, including linking with General Practitioner referrals. The Council receives no direct contribution or funding which puts services at risk with the current resources available – Government needs to think of this as a whole system cost and provide councils with funding which reduces overall public expenditure.
 - The Council is affected by the challenges in accessing affordable housing locally. The Council's temporary accommodation costs have grown exponentially and are projected to be over £500,000 for this financial year. Extra funding from Government is needed to meet these ever-increasing costs and to alleviate the issue long term by providing direct grants to fully fund house building. An issue this Council has lobbied for many years is the ability to retain and use all Right to Buy Receipts from Council Houses sales at the discretion of the Council, but more importantly to end the Right to Buy scheme leaving more properties available for social housing.
 - A stable financial environment for local government is needed – in the immediate future we need details of the finance settlement for 2025/26 and 2026/27.
 - Councils should be able to set their own levels of planning fees with the ability for the service to break-even and not as a cost to the council tax payer.
 - There should be no council tax referendum limits and local democracy and elected members should be able to determine the local levels of taxation.
 - End competitive bids for funding.
 - Take away outdated practices; need for council committees to meet in person replaced by virtual meetings and public notices to published in the local press replaced by online. Also the excessive details required in annual accounts and transparency code.

The Productivity Plans it is intended will be considered by a new productivity review panel, made up of sector experts including the Office for Local Government and the Local Government Association.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications

Legal implications:

There are no significant legal implications to be added to this report.

Context

The recent Local Government Finance Settlement stated that all Councils are required to produce productivity plans to help Government understand what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are and whether there are any gaps and what more the Government needs to do to unlock future opportunities.

The Plan needs to cover specific themes, as set out in this document, and is expected to be three to four pages in length.

The Council

We are one of eight Devon districts with the largest population of 150,800 residents growing at more than twice the national average. Our population is the 3rd oldest average of any district with the contrast to the west of the district with over 60% of the population being of working age. The area is rural with a mix of market and coastal towns, renowned for its beautiful countryside with two thirds designated as National Landscape and almost the entire coastline being part of a World Heritage Coast.

The recently adopted Council Plan has four priority areas – A supported and engaged community (with the need to support the provision of affordable housing), carbon neutrality and ecological recovery, a resilient economy that supports local business and financially secure and improving quality services.

Continuous Improvement – challenging ourselves

We are keen to ensure we challenge ourselves and continually improve, in February 2024 at our request the Local Government Association undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) of the Council, this forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. We set out our context for the review in the [CPC Position Statement](#) and the CPC concluded we are an ambitious Council that is keen to make a positive difference to residents' lives and the environment in East Devon, the [CPC feedback report](#) overall was extremely positive. Further we requested external reviews from the [Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#), the [Planning Advisory Service](#), and [Investors in People](#), again all of which were positive and included recommendations for further improvement, all positively accepted with implementation being monitored by Council.

Productivity Theme One – How have we transformed the way we design and deliver services to make better use of resources.

The necessity to find savings is captured in the Council's [Financial Plan 2024-2034](#) which includes our Financial Sustainability Model (FSM) outlining key enablers to help us deliver savings/increase income. The enablers being:

- ✓Systems Thinking (Vanguard) ✓Digital Transformation ✓Customer Access
- ✓Performance Management Data ✓Asset Management ✓Income Maximisation

In the past we have utilised systems thinking (Vanguard) to design our services around the customer, driving out inefficiencies and generating cost reduction. Service reviews have started again, adopting our own principles in line with systems thinking but

reflecting that the organisation has changed, with more emphasis on assurance and a focus on internal monitoring and corporate awareness. Our corporate contact centre and revenues team have started a review bringing in the Transformation Enablers listed in Theme Two below which links with the FSM model and is intended to be rolled out across the Council.

We have successfully worked with other Council's to create savings, provided resilience, and gained additional expertise through shared IT provision (saving on average over £300k a year), Internal Audit (£100k a year), Procurement (£35k a year), Engineering (£20k a year). We are now looking to explore revenue collection and waste and recycling.

We have plans on income generation where we offer valued services to the public who choose us as their provider such as telecare services or where we offer valued discretionary services we are looking for public donations or to charge to help retain them. This includes the necessity to introduce toilet charges to retain and invest in this discretionary service.

We have recently realigned services to provide clarity of purpose and alignment with corporate priorities with clear ownership and responsibility for service performance.

We have invested in economic growth and the sustainability of existing business in the district, providing staff to support businesses with various initiatives and grants to encourage green growth for example. We have used our Enterprise Zone designation to invest, including spending £5m on the purchase of land to aid a new town centre and business development that had faltered. We have invested in significant infrastructure such as a key road enhancement beyond that expected of a district council to facilitate economic growth and prosperity, funding being returned through retained business rates achieved through growth. **The rebasing of business rates is a significant risk to this Council, we need to retain the growth achieved to ensure these investments remain viable.**

On average we have had to find new savings in the order of £700k every year, this is on a net budget of currently £19m, easy wins disappeared a long time ago.

[Productivity Theme Two – How do you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources](#)

In partnership with two other local authorities, we have created a successful local authority IT Company (Strata Services Solutions) to deliver IT resilience, financial savings and to aid transformation. The [2024/25 adopted business plan](#), defines the transformational enablers that will be delivered to achieve financial savings required by the Medium Term Financial Plan and links to the Council's digital and customer access strategy (as referenced in the FSM), aligned to its partner authorities through Strata.

Transformational enablers

- End user computing – Enabling users to work natively on their Windows laptop utilising Microsoft applications.
- Contact centre and telephony – Replacing existing technology alongside work on the Web and CRM Enablers to modernise and streamline the customer-facing elements of our business.
- CRM and forms – To enhance customer experience and reduce administration and cost.

- Enterprise middleware architecture – Essential development in the communication between CRM and the many back-office systems we have.
- SharePoint – Document storage, retrieval and collaboration are key requirements to deliver our digital goals.
- Bookings – Many of our activities require the booking of an asset, particular around income generation and currently no system exists.
- Notifications – most transactions require a notification whether within the council or to our customers, this needs to be developed to allow staff to embed these into processes to create efficiencies and a better service.
- Power Platform – Utilising Microsoft products to achieve efficiencies through workflow, data analysis or the building of chatbots.
- Data and data warehouse – Key enabler to deliver most outcomes.
- Web content and chatbots – To deliver improvements in website content and chatbots (including AI-powered) for improved service and to gain efficiencies.

Efficiencies to be achieved through AI runs through the Business Plan. For example, we are currently exploring Copilot that could have immediate benefits.

Savings totals have not been allocated to the delivery of these enablers, but as a broad indicator we will look to deliver £100k - £200k in 2025/26 which will continue annually.

Productivity Theme Three - Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems

Key areas raised under this heading have been covered in Theme One, to add the CPC report concluded EDDC has an excellent financial track record and has successfully managed the General Fund budget, without recourse to use of reserves. The council has developed a Financial Sustainability Model (FSM) which is a process that undertakes reviews to ensure value for money, drives efficiencies to see what savings can be achieved and forms an evidence base that the council has done what it can.

Questions under this theme did raise specific points to address that the Government is interested in and have not been covered elsewhere:

- *Time and money spent on equality, diversity and Inclusion (EDI)* – The council has recently appointed a part time (0.6FTE) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor as Council and the recent LGA Peer Challenge identified a need for increased focus on this area. The role will review and update policy, ensure that robust impact assessments are taking place in line with the Equality Duty and undertake member and officer training. Salary costs for this role (including oncosts) are £30k per annum. No additional budget has been set aside for training or other activity. It is considered this will also help with our recruitment and retention of staff.
- *Percentage of staff budget spent on agency and consultants* – Reports have been presented to our Scrutiny Committee to monitor this spend and reasons for engagement and consideration of best value. Latest report [consultancy spend report](#).
- *What proportion of your pay bill is spent on trade union facility time* – We do not fund any dedicated trade union officers, we allow employees who are trade union officers of our local UNISON Branch to carry out trade union duties in work time to support employee engagement and relations. Due to recent personnel changes in

the local UNISON Branch, we are in the process of obtaining up to date information on time spent by these employees on trade union facility time but we anticipate that this will continue to be a minimal part of their overall role with the council.

Productivity Theme Four– The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove

The Council spends in discretionary areas that bring proven health and wellbeing benefits to our residents through sports, leisure, parks and gardens and countryside provision, including linking with General Practitioner referrals. The Council receives no direct contribution or funding which puts services at risk with the current resources available – Government needs to think of this as a whole system cost and provide councils with funding which reduces overall public expenditure.

The Council is affected by the challenges in accessing affordable housing locally. The Council's temporary accommodation costs have grown exponentially and are projected to be over £500,000 for this financial year. Extra funding from Government is needed to meet these ever-increasing costs and to alleviate the issue long term by providing direct grants to fully fund house building. An issue this Council has lobbied for many years is the ability to retain and use all Right to Buy Receipts from Council Houses sales at the discretion of the Council, but more importantly to end the Right to Buy scheme leaving more properties available for social housing.

A stable financial environment for local government is needed – in the immediate future we need, by early summer, details of the finance settlement for 2025/26 and 2026/27. It would be helpful if this included:

- Addressing the future of the New Homes Bonus scheme,
- The timing for the business rates baseline reset, or better the clarification this will not happen, or if it does, the transitional arrangements for those authorities likely to be severely affected,
- Indicative council tax referendum principles,
- The continuation of current funding streams such as the rural services delivery grant, and the continuation of a Funding Guarantee of at least 4%.

This will enable us to put together a Financial Plan for consideration by Members in September 2024. Our longer term ask of the Government would be to have a multi-year finance settlement, so that the Council can plan strategically for at least the next 3 financial years. The Council would also like to see the following changes made by Central Government, to help Council drive further efficiencies:

- Councils should be able to set their own level of planning fees, so the service is not a cost the council tax payer.
- There should be no council tax referendum limits and local democracy and elected members should be able to determine the local levels of taxation.
- End competitive bids for funding.
- Take away outdated practices; need for council committees to meet in person replaced by virtual meetings and public notices to published in the local press replaced by online. Also, the excessive details required in annual accounts and transparency code.

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Information Security Management System policies update

Report summary:

In conjunction with Strata, Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council we have prepared a set of new Information Security Management System policies for agreement and sign off by Cabinet. This project coincides with our work towards the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) in which we must ensure that our Information security and data management related policies are relevant and fit for purpose so that we can continue sharing data with the DWP.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

- (1) That Cabinet review and agree the proposed Information Security Management System specific policies for implementation with the council.
- (2) That Cabinet allow for the delegated authority to be given to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination to agree future changes to the Information Security Management System policies. This also includes authority to sign off future new policies that maybe required to support Information Security Management within the council working with Strata.
- (3) That Cabinet allow for the delegated authority to be given to the Director of Governance and Licensing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination to agree future changes to the Data Protection and Document Retention policies only in relation to supporting the MoU with DWP work.

Reason for recommendation:

These policies need agreement and sign off for implementation within the council. The delegated authority being required for future changes to the policies is due to the fast pace of change and security detail contained within them. It is also required to support the work towards the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department for Work and pensions as this is time sensitive.

Officer: Joanne Avery, Management Information Officer javery@eastdevon.gov.uk

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

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: High Risk; We need to ensure that we have the appropriate security policies in place for the use of our ICT systems.

Links to background information [Appendix a – Information Security Management System policies](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

We have been working in conjunction with Strata, Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council to review our full suite of Information Security Management System policies to ensure that they are consistent across the councils and Strata. This will ensure that all four organisations are working within information security best practice.

The policies reviewed are:

- Acceptable use
- Access control
- Artificial Intelligence
- Asset Management
- Incident Management
- Operations Security
- Physical Environment
- Remote Working

These policies have been reviewed by the Legal Team and agreed for sign off. However due to the fast paced and changing nature of information security we have recommended that future changes to these policies be agreed Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination.

There may also be a necessity to amend the policies so that they help to support the MoU with the DWP that is currently being worked through by the Revenues and Benefits team. The MoU sets out the framework and operating policy through which the council will access and use DWP, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Home Office data vital to providing services within the Revenues and Benefits team. This work is time sensitive and again we are requesting that any changes needed to the policies in relation to this work are agreed Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination.

In addition to this the Data Protection and the Document Retention policies are also being reviewed in relation to requirements for the MoU and may need some changes to ensure that we

are fully compliant for this. These changes will not be substantive to the policy and due to the time frame for ensuring we are compliant with the MoU we are recommending that any changes required are agreed and signed off by the Director of Governance and Licensing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination.

Financial implications:

There are no significant financial issues to be raised at this time.

Legal implications:

There are no significant legal issues to be raised at this time.

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10th July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan consultation

Report summary:

East Devon District Council together with other local authorities has previously authorised the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to undertake a review of the AONB Management Plan by March 31st 2025, as required under Section IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The review process is well underway; key issues, new challenges and opportunities have been identified, including through stakeholder engagement, and approval is now sought for public consultation on a draft of the reviewed Plan to take place during September and October 2024. This will inform any changes to be made and once finalised the revised Management Plan will be recommended by the National Landscape Partnership for adoption by each of the local authorities by the end of March 2025.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet agrees to the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership undertaking public consultation on the reviewed Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan for 2025-2030.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to carry out the consultation on the reviewed Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan. East Devon District Council, with other local authorities, has authorised the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to review the Management Plan on their behalf. Consultation is a standard component of statutory Plan preparation, involving a consultation period during which consultees, including the public, can comment on the draft Plan.

Officer: Tim Youngs, Manager – Blackdown Hills National Landscape, email tim.youngs@devon.gov.uk or telephone 01392 383608; Charlie Plowden, Assistant Director – Countryside & Leisure, cplowden@eastdevon.gov.uk

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

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

1.1 Under Part IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, East Devon District Council, together with other local authorities is required to produce a Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills AONB (now known as National Landscape) and review it at intervals of not more than five years (exceptionally, Defra authorised a 12-month extension to the review of the current Plan). Along with the other relevant local authorities, East Devon District Council has authorised the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership to perform this duty on its behalf; this work is co-ordinated by the National Landscape team.

1.2 The CROW Act (and as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) and guidance from Natural England provides advice on the scale, nature and content of Management Plans. A Management Plan should serve to highlight a shared long term vision for the National Landscape and contain ambitions, targets and actions that seek to further the statutory purpose, i.e. to conserve and enhance the designated AONB. The delivery of the Plan will be subject to availability of funding from Defra, the local authorities, and other parties.

1.3 The Partnership has taken the opportunity to undertake a more thorough review than in the previous cycle to ensure that the Plan remains fit for purpose and up to date. The Plan is expected to contribute to Government's Environmental Improvement Plan (including targets) and it is important to make sure it addresses the significant issues of the climate emergency and nature recovery, taking account of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Plans and local authority climate action plans.

1.4 To help identify important matters and considerations for inclusion, discussions and workshops have been held with key partners, Partnership Management Group, and representatives of partnership organisations, in advance of a wider public consultation on a draft reviewed plan.

1.5 Public consultation on the Draft Plan for 2025-30 is proposed to take place in September to October (6 weeks). Details of specific promotion and engagement opportunities during that period are still to be determined, but an option could be to hold a session with Councillors for example if there were interest. Further to the public consultation period, the Draft Plan will be revised and a final draft version will undergo formal consultation with the statutory consultee, Natural England.

Following this, the Management Plan will be finalised and recommended by the National Landscape Partnership to the Council (and the other relevant local authorities) for adoption as the statutory Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications resulting from the report.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report

Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan Review: Briefing Paper July 2024

1. Introduction

Management Plans are a vital tool to help protect and enhance our National Landscapes¹.

A Management Plan provides a shared long term vision for the National Landscape and contains ambitions, targets and actions that seek to further the statutory purpose, i.e. to conserve and enhance the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Under the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW)*, it is a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce Management Plans for their National Landscapes and to review these at five yearly intervals. The Review aims to reflect significant changes to legislation, policy and the environmental context to ensure that the Plan remain valid and up to date.

The latest review process is well underway for the Blackdown Hills, and the National Landscape team has been tasked with leading this work on behalf of Devon County Council, Somerset Council, East Devon and Mid Devon District Councils.

2. Drivers for change

The Plan must address the significant issues of the *climate emergency* and *nature recovery*, taking account of, and contributing to, *Local Nature Recovery Strategies* and the hierarchy of *climate strategies* and action plans.

Work and priorities for the National Landscape set out in the Management Plan are required to contribute to Defra's *Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23)*. This sets the goals for enhancing England's natural environment, including the targets to;

- protect 30% of our land and sea for nature through the Nature Recovery Network by 2030 ('30 by 30')
- restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2042; and, halt the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030, increasing it above 2022 levels by 2042.

Specifically, a *Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (TOF)* sets the ambition for how Protected Landscapes are expected to achieve 3 outcomes from EIP23 through a number of targets:

- Goal 1: Thriving plants and wildlife
- Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Goal 10: Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

The *Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) (2023)* amended and strengthened the CRoW Act in respect of Protected Landscapes, to;

- Require relevant authorities in England to 'seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of the National Landscape. This replaces a 'duty of regard' to the purpose in previous legislation.
- Allow the Secretary of State to make provision to require relevant authorities in England 'to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review' of a National Landscape's Management Plan and for the Plan to contribute to meeting specific targets set under the Environment Act 2021.

3. Our response

We have;

- ▶ Reworked the plan into 4 main themes – Place, People, Nature, Climate.
- ▶ Collectively revised the Vision to 2050 and agreed some shared guiding principles (high level statements of intent and ambition; what's needed to realise the vision and meet or exceed national targets and deliver what's needed for the place).

¹ Since 2023, AONBs are known as National Landscapes. The designation remains an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is referred to as such in legislation and policy. References here to National Landscape are synonymous with AONB.

4. Structure and content

| | <i>Proposed Sections</i> | <i>Remarks</i> |
|----|---|---|
| a. | Purpose and role of plan | <i>Its audiences and uses</i> |
| b. | Policy landscape | <i>Legislative background – CRoW, LURA, EIP, relevant authorities etc.</i> |
| c. | Navigation | <i>i.e. the evidence sits behind, action and priorities are front-loaded; how to quickly find the section you need, explain terminology</i> |
| d. | Special Qualities (summary) | <i>i.e. why is the place special/ reasons for designation and what do we need to conserve and enhance?</i> |
| e. | Vision 2050 | <i>Sets strategic direction</i> |
| f. | The Themes: Place People Nature Climate | <i>Strategic priorities framework; topics including - Landscape, heritage, land use & land management, ecosystem services Community, access, inclusion, economy, transport Nature recovery, species, habitat and wildlife site management Greenhouse gases, carbon storage, pathway to net zero, adaptation</i> |
| | - Objectives - Guiding principles - TOF targets | <i>What we want to achieve See explanation in section 3.above 2030/2040 TOF milestones and what this Man Plan aims to achieve by 2030 towards these (apportionment)</i> |
| | - Current status | <i>Where are we currently in relation to the targets and indicators, data in 'State Of' Report</i> |
| | - Priority Actions - Policies | <i>Concise list of bullet pointed actions What needs to be done to achieve the objective, along with high level actions</i> |
| | - Evidence | <i>Key issues, opportunities and challenges under Forces for Change. Describes the significance to the Blackdown Hills and the local context</i> |
| g. | 5-year Delivery Plan | <i>High level actions</i> |
| h. | Annexes | <i>Further detailed information, such as Special Qualities, TOF data</i> |

5. Review process so far

- Identification of forces for change
- Evaluation of current plan, fitness for purpose and its usage
- Appraisal of other plans and strategies (own and others)
- 'State of the National Landscape' report covering range of topics in current Management Plan
- Public survey (online and at some events)
- Stakeholder workshop (audience included Partnership Management Group, representatives of partnership organisations, local councillors, farming representatives, parish councils)
- Workshop with 'community resilience' activists and presentation at Parish Network meeting
- Information exchanges with the other Devon and Somerset National Landscapes

6. Next Steps

Public consultation on the Draft Plan for 2025-30 is proposed to take place in September to October (6 weeks). Details of specific promotion and engagement opportunities during that period are still to be determined, but an option could be to hold a session with Councillors for example.

The Draft Plan will be revised as necessary, and a final draft version will undergo formal consultation with the statutory consultee, Natural England.

The Management Plan will then be finalised and recommended by the National Landscape Partnership to partner local authorities for adoption by end of March 2025 as the statutory Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape.

7. Recommendation

To agree to the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership undertaking public consultation on the reviewed Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan for 2025-2030.

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Update on the Scrutiny Review recommendations and delivery plan

Report summary:

This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the Scrutiny Review recommendations and the delivery plan to implement the recommendations.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet receive the Scrutiny Review recommendations and endorse the delivery plan and the actions set out in it.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review are actioned and delivered appropriately.

Officer: Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance, melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk

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

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; There are reputational and organisational risks if we do not ensure that we address the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review.

Links to background information [Appendix a – Scrutiny Review delivery plan](#)

[Link to Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

The feedback report following the Scrutiny Review set out a series of suggestions and recommendations for the council. The main recommendations were.

- Review Terms of Reference of the three Scrutiny Committees.
- Consideration of short-term investment to the Scrutiny Committee.
- Assign a senior officer to provide expertise and advice at the Committee meetings.
- Provide learning and development opportunities to Committee members.
- An in-depth look at the Scrutiny Protocol and terms of reference for the committees.
- That the approach to work programming for scrutiny is redesigned so anchored by long term strategic issues.
- Improved work-programming.
- Cross-party pre-meetings in advance of scrutiny sessions.
- Scrutiny support and training for officers.
- A process to track recommendations made and impacts arising.

The recommendations have been collated into a delivery plan at appendix a. Council officers have then provided information about how we can deliver those recommendations and the resources required to support this.

Currently we are looking to progress actions in all of the areas set out in the plan and updates on these actions are also included for information.

Financial implications:

There are no significant financial issues to be raised at this time.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Forward Plan of Key Decisions - For the 4-month period: 1 August 2024 to 30 November 2024

This plan contains all the Key Decisions that the Council's Cabinet expects to make during the 4-month period referred to above. The plan is rolled forward every month.

Key Decisions are defined by law as “an executive decision which is likely: –

- (a) to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Council's area.”

In accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000, in determining the meaning of “significant” in (a) and (b) above regard shall be had to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State.

A public notice period of 28 clear working days is required when a Key Decision is to be taken by the Council's Cabinet even if the meeting is wholly or partly to be in private.

The Cabinet may only take Key Decisions in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of the Constitution and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to information) (England) Regulations 2012. A minute of each Key Decision is published within 2 days of it having been made. This is available for public inspection on the Council's website <http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk>, and at the Council Offices, Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Industrial Estate, Honiton. The law and the Council's constitution permit urgent Key Decisions to be made without 28 clear days' notice of the proposed decisions having been published provided certain procedures are followed. A decision notice will be published for these in exactly the same way.

This plan also identifies Key Decisions which are to be considered in the private part of the meeting (Part B) and the reason why. Any written representations that a particular decision should be moved to the public part of the meeting (Part A) should be sent to the Democratic Services Team (address as above) as soon as possible. **Members of the public have the opportunity to speak on the relevant decision at the meeting in accordance with the Council's public speaking rules.**

Obtaining documents

Committee reports in respect of Key Decisions include links to the relevant background documents. If a printed copy of all or part of any report or background document is required, please contact Democratic Services (address as above) or by calling 01395 517546.

| Key Decision (date added to FP) | Portfolio (Lead Officer) | Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision | Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N] | Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered | Date of Cabinet meeting | Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons] |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Sidmouth and East Beach BMP – Approval to enter design and construction contracts | Assistant Director StreetScene | | | | | Part A |
| Recycling and Waste: - MRF/Baling Plant Refurbishment/Site Compliance - vehicle refurbishment programme | Assistant Director StreetScene | | | | | |
| EDDC lifeguard service provision and funding (26/02/24) | Assistant Director StreetScene | | | | | Officer Decision |
| Colyton Land disposal | Housing Enabling Officer | | | | | Part A |
| Feniton Flood Alleviation Scheme, Phase 4 contract award | Assistant Director Streetscene | | | | | Part A |
| Procurement of CBRE through the Crown Commercial Services Framework to undertake work in relation to the second new community | Delivery Manager | | | | | Part A |

| Key Decision (date added to FP) | Portfolio (Lead Officer) | Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision | Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N] | Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered | Date of Cabinet meeting | Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons] |
|---|---|--|---|--|----------------------------|--|
| Home Safeguard – Digital Monitoring Platform (23/05/24) | Assistant Director – Housing Statutory Services | | | | 4 September 2024 | Part A |
| Individual property: external and internal repairs and refurbishment | Assistant Director Housing | | | | | Part B Officer Decision |
| Individual property: external and internal repairs and refurbishment | Assistant Director Housing | | | | | Part B Officer Decision |
| Colyford Road and Fosse Way Viability Assessment | Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation | Colyford Road and Fosse Way Viability Assessment | No | Asset Management Forum | 4 September 2024 | Part A *possibly some Part B including the SOBC as they are commercially sensitive confidential |
| Cloakham Lawns Employment Site Viability Assessment | Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation | Colyford Road and Fosse Way Viability Assessment | No | Asset Management Forum | 4 September 2024 | Part A *possibly some Part B including the SOBC as commercially sensitive confidential |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------|--|--|------------------|---|
| Exmouth Town and Seafront Placemaking Plan Adoption | Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation | Placemaking Plan and appendices | Yes some Strategic Outline Business Cases (SOBC) | Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group | 4 September 2024 | Part A *possibly some Part B including the SOBC as commercially sensitive confidential |
| Place and Prosperity Fund acquisition | Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation | None | Business case/Appraisal of proposal | Place and Prosperity Investment Board | 4 September 2024 | Part B under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 |

| page 140 | Key Decision <i>(date added to FP)</i> | Portfolio (Lead Officer) | Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision | Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N] | Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered | Date of Cabinet meeting | Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons] |
|----------|--|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------|--|
| | Site Acquisition | Project Manager Place, Assets & Commercialisation | | | | 4 September 2024 | Part B |
| | Formation of an Exmouth Town and Seafront Subgroup | Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation | Steering Group ToR | | Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group | 4 September 2024 | Part A |
| | Council Depots Review | Project Manager Place, Assets & Commercialisation | | | | 4 September 2024 | Part A |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|----|------------------------|------------------|---|
| Hayne Lane Masterplan | Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation | Hayne Lane Masterplan | No | Asset Management Forum | 4 September 2024 | Part A *possibly some Part B including the SOBC as commercially sensitive confidential |
| Recycling & Waste Contract Replacement and future services | Assistant Director - StreetScene | PH Team workshop notes and options appraisal | | | 4 September 2024 | Part B extraordinary meeting (commercially sensitive) |

| page 141 Key Decision (date added to FP) | Portfolio (Lead Officer) | Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision | Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N] | Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered | Date of Cabinet meeting | Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting |
|--|------------------------------|---|--|---|-------------------------|---|
| Exmouth Emergency Seawall Repairs: Consultant fees forecast to go above £100k Exmouth BMP: Consultant fees forecast to go above £100k | Engineering Projects Manager | | | | | Part A |
| Individual property: external and internal repairs and refurbishment | Assistant Director Housing | | | | | Part B Officer Decision |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Towards Zero Carbon Development in the West End: Interconnector Project Final Investment Decision | Assistant Director Growth, Development & Prosperity | Full Business Case | | | | Part B |
| Strategic Development Review – Exeter Science Park Limited (01/03/24) | Assistant Director Growth, Development and Prosperity | | N | | | Part B (information relating to finance) |
| Key Decision (date added to FP) | Portfolio (Lead Officer) | Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision | Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N] | Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered | Date of Cabinet meeting | Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons] |
| Procurement Support from Devon County Council – renew 5-year SLA (01/05/24) | Director of Finance | | | | | Officer Executive Decision |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Plot 337 Clover Way Cranbrook | Director of Housing Health & Environment | | | | | Part B Request for Officer Executive Decision |
| Plot 340 Clover Way Cranbrook | | | | | | |
| Plot 341 Clover Way Cranbrook | | | | | | |
| Plot 378 Clover Way Cranbrook | | | | | | |
| Plot 529 Clover Way Cranbrook | | | | | | |
| Plot 533 Clover Way Cranbrook | | | | | | |
| Plot 100 Plumb Park Exmouth | | | | | | |
| Plot 101 Plumb Park Exmouth | | | | | | |
| Plot 102 Plumb Park Exmouth | | | | | | |
| Plot 103 Plumb Park Exmouth | | | | | | |
| Plot 104 Plumb Park | | | | | | |
| Exmouth East Devon Tennis Centre, Roof Works. Appointment of contractor (19/03/24) | Simon Allchurch / Jorge Pineda-Langford | | | | | Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision |
| Sidmouth Manor Pavilion Theatre and Art Centre, Internal Decorations and Refurbishment (19/03/24) | Steve Parker / Jorge Pineda-Langford | | | | | Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|---------------------------|--|
| Exmouth the Pavilion Theatre, Flytower and Auditorium Works. (19/03/24) | Steve Pratten / Jorge Pineda-Langford | | | | | Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision |
| Exmouth Withycombe Changing Rooms, Decarbonisation / Boiler replacement Works (19/03/24) | Paul Manning / Jorge Pineda-Langford | | | | | Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision |
| Exmouth the Pavilion Theatre, Roof Works (19/03/24) | Paul Manning / Jorge Pineda-Langford | | | | | Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision |
| Decarbonising TDDC swimming pools (20/03/24) | Jorge Pineda-Langford | | | | | Appointment of consultants to undertake design work. Officer Decision |
| Green Waste Collection Vehicle 5 - RCV quotation (22/03/24) | Assistant Director StreetScene | | | | | Request for Officer Executive Decision |
| Fraud Strategy Delivery Plan | Portfolio Holder Finance Assistant Director – Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, Fraud & Compliance | | | Audit & Governance 19 September 2024 | Cabinet 2 October 2024 | Part A Approve the Fraud Strategy Delivery plan |

Members of the public who wish to make any representations or comments concerning any of the Key Decisions referred to in this Forward Plan may do so by writing to the Leader of the Council c/o Democratic Services (as above).

July 2024

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted