



## **Agenda for Cabinet**

### **Wednesday, 5th March, 2025, 6.00 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

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Tuesday, 25 February 2025

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**[www.eastdevon.gov.uk](http://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 meetings (Pages 4 - 12)

The minutes from Cabinet held on 5 February 2025 and the Extraordinary Cabinet held on 17 February 2025.

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

There are two late items which officers recommend should be dealt with in the way listed at agenda items 11 and 24.

6 Confidential/exempt item(s)

To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the Press) have been excluded. There are four items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

7 Minutes of Strata Joint Executive Committee held on 28 January 2025 (Pages 13 - 16)

- 8 Minutes of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 29 January 2025 (Pages 17 - 20)
- 9 Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 30 January 2025 (Pages 21 - 27)
- 10 Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2025 (Pages 28 - 32)
- 11 Minutes of Overview Committee held on 20 February 2025 (Pages 33 - 37)

### **Key Matters for Decision**

- 12 UK Shared Prosperity Fund Plan 2025-26 (Pages 38 - 61)
- 13 River Axe SAC Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund governance (Pages 62 - 77)
- 14 Trees, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy for East Devon 2024-2034 (Pages 78 - 85)
- 15 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – Habitat banks, monitoring, and fees (Pages 86 - 110)

### **Matters for Decision**

- 16 **Discretionary Planning Fees Review** (Pages 111 - 142)
- 17 **Council Plan delivery plan update** (Pages 143 - 145)
- 18 **Strata Business Plan 2025/2026** (Pages 146 - 219)
- 19 **Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan') to be formally 'made'** (Pages 220 - 224)
- 20 **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 Matters for Decision**

- 21 Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 February 2025 (Pages 225 - 227)
- 22 Investment / Placemaking opportunity in Exmouth (Pages 228 - 233)
- 23 Review of Leisure Subsidy for 2025/26 (Pages 234 - 237)
- 24 Cranbox Modular Space Delivery in Cranbrook Town Centre (Pages 238 - 243)

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it would be helpful if you could let the democratic services team know you plan to film or record so that any necessary arrangements can be made to provide reasonable facilities for you to report on meetings. This permission does not extend to private meetings or parts of meetings which are not open to the public. You should take all recording and photography equipment with you if a public meeting moves into a session which is not open to the public.

If you are recording the meeting, you are asked to act in a reasonable manner and not disrupt the conduct of meetings for example by using intrusive lighting, flash photography or asking people to repeat statements for the benefit of the recording. You may not make an oral commentary during the meeting. The Chair has the power to control public recording and/or reporting so it does not disrupt the meeting.

Members of the public exercising their right to speak during Public Speaking will be recorded.

[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 February 2025**

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

The meeting started at 6.02 pm and ended at 8.23 pm

#### **129 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet held on 8 January 2025 were agreed.

#### **130 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations given.

#### **131 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

#### **132 Matters of urgency**

There were two late items that officers agree should be dealt with in this way recorded at Minutes 145 and 147.

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

There was one item that officers recommended should be dealt with in this way recorded at Minute 147.

#### **134 Minutes of Poverty Working Panel held on 18 November 2024**

Members noted the Minutes of the Poverty Working Panel held on 18 November 2024.

#### **135 Minutes of the joint budget meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee held on 15 January 2025**

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of the joint budget meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee held on 15 January 2025.

The Chair thanked officers and Members of both committees for their contribution to the meeting.

#### **Minute 44 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26**

That the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2025 / 2026 including the associated fees and charges schedule be approved.

#### **136 Minutes of Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum held on 14 January 2025**

Members noted the Minutes of the Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum held on 14 January 2025.



### 137 **Play park renewal contract 2025**

The report sought delegated authority to award a play park renewal contract.

#### **RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

Grant delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Streetscene in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment to award the play park contract to the preferred supplier.

#### **REASON:**

To enable the Assistant Director to award the contract to the preferred supplier following completion of the tender exercise.

### 138 **Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26**

The Director of Finance updated Members that Cabinet adopted the draft Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2025/26 on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025. A joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees reviewed those budgets on 15<sup>th</sup> January and the Housing Review Board considered the Housing Revenue Account budget on 30<sup>th</sup> January.

The Overview and Scrutiny committees and the Housing Review Board proposed no amendment to the draft budget. The Local Government Finance Settlement was published on the 3rd February, the only change to affect the council compared with the provisional settlement published just before Christmas was knowing the National Insurance grant/reimbursement sum for 2025/26. This did not meet the full cost estimated for increased national insurance contributions next year, with a shortfall in the General Fund of £324k required to be met from the General Balance and a £54k shortfall in the Housing Revenue Account which would reduce the contribution to be made to the HRA Balance to £0.196m (draft budget sum was £0.250m).

As part of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities the council was required to set prudential indicators as part of its budget setting process, these indicators were detailed in the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 – Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, included the Capital Strategy to be recommended for adoption by Council.

#### **RECOMMENDED to Council:**

1. To propose the Net Expenditure Revenue General Fund Budget for 2025/26 of £25.392m, requiring £0.394m to be met from the General Fund Balance.
2. A Council Tax increase is approved of £5 a year giving a Band D council tax of £171.78 a year for 2025/26.
3. That the Housing Revenue Account Estimates with a net budget of nil (total expenditure met by income) is approved with a 2.7% increase on Council dwellings rents.
4. That the Net Capital Budget totalling £31.223m for 2025/26 is approved

#### **REASON:**

There was a requirement for the council to set a balanced budget for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and to set a Council Tax for 2025/26.

### 139 **Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 and Capital Strategy 2025/26**

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) produced a Code of Practice for treasury management for Public Services. One of the main recommendations of the code was the requirement for an annual Treasury Management Strategy to be adopted formally by the council. There was also a requirement to set prudential indicators relating to all treasury activities that the authority would undertake in the forthcoming financial year.

The presented draft Capital Strategy formed part of the annual budget setting approval process. This draws together various adopted strategies and agreed process of the council that govern how it managed capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Capital Strategy brought these areas together in one overarching document.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code required local authorities to produce a capital strategy to demonstrate that capital expenditure and investment decisions were taken in line with desired outcomes and to take account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

**RECOMMENDED to Council to:**

- 1a. Adopt this Treasury Management Strategy including the Prudential Indicators for 2025/26.
- 1b. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.
- 1c. Approve the Annual Investment Strategy, creditworthiness criteria and updated list of counterparties.
2. Adopt the Capital Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29.

**REASON:**

The Council was required to adopt formally a Treasury Management Strategy and set prudential indicators before the beginning of the new financial year. To comply with good practice there was a requirement for the Council to have in place an adopted Capital Strategy.

**140 Financial Monitoring Report 2024/25 - Month 9 December**

The report gave a summary of the Council's overall financial position for 2024/25 at the end of month nine (31 December 2024). Current monitoring indicated that:

- The General Fund Balance was currently projected to be above the adopted level, no action was recommended for members consideration at this stage. Forecasts indicated a favourable position of £662k was predicted. The council continued to see a significant favourable position in treasury management interest.
- The Revised Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget approved by Council (July 2024) agreed the use of the HRA Balance up to £1.750m in year, with the acceptance this would take the HRA Balance below its minimum adopted level of £2.1m to £1.350m, to be replenished in future years. Expenditure was being maintained within this parameter with ongoing analysis on future spending plans and projections to gain assurance on this position to financial year end.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

Acknowledge the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process up to Month 9.

**REASON:**

The report updated Members on the overall financial position of the Authority at set periods and included recommendations where corrective action was required for the remainder of the financial year.

141 **Councillor DBS checks and Safeguarding Protocol**

Members were updated on the progress in relation to the introduction of Councillor basic Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks, since the Council adopted a Protocol introducing DBS checks for Members on 17 April 2024 .

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

Note the update to the DBS checks and Safeguarding Protocol.

**REASON:**

The Council had decided as part of its Safeguarding Policy to undertake DBS checks for members. The report ensured that Cabinet were up-to-date in relation to the progress made in implementing the Protocol

142 **Community Grants**

The report provided an update on the current community grants issues and the initial proposal on how this would be moved forward.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

1. Agrees to the re-setting of the Community Grants Schemes from 2025/26.
2. Agrees the combining of the Community Buildings Grant, Small Community Grants and the Action on Poverty Grants funds into one grant scheme across the following two years (25/26 & 26/27).
3. Request the Community Grants Panel to recommend the final co-designed scheme to Cabinet for approval, ensuring it reflects the Council plan priorities and takes account of need.
4. Agrees to the change in the Community Grant Panel Terms of Reference to remove the reference to the Lead officer being the Community Engagement and Funding Officer and replace this with the Benefits and Financial Resilience Manager which sits under the Finance Directorate.

**REASON:**

To ensure the council supported the VCSE sector with a new and updated grant scheme for 2025/26.

143 **Forward Plan quarterly review**

Members agreed the contents of the forward plan for key decisions for the period 1 March 2025 to 30 June 2025.

144 **Calendar of meetings 2025/2026**

To consider the calendar of meetings for the Council's 2025/2026 civic year.

**RECOMMENDED to Council:**

that the calendar of meetings timetable for 2025/2026 civic year be referred for approval to the annual meeting of the Council, subject to discussions with the Chairs of the meetings listed.

**RESOLVED:**

that the 2025 Annual Council meeting be held on Wednesday 14 May.

**REASON:**

Adopting an annual calendar of meetings was to meet the legal requirement to hold an Annual Meeting, and such other meetings as were necessary for the conduct of the Council's business in accordance with its Constitution.

145 **Devolution update**

The Director of Place provided an update on proposals relating to devolution and local government reorganisation. This follows the publication of the English Devolution White Paper on the 16 December 2024. This was the subject of a report considered by Cabinet on the 8 January and then full Council on the 9 January. The report set out the key options in relation to the potential configuration of both strategic and principal authorities. It also highlighted that further clarification, in terms of the process for submitting proposals for unitary authorities and whether the planned County Council elections scheduled for May would be postponed, was still awaited from national government.

Following a Secretary of State announcement on 5 February it was confirmed that the Devon County Council elections would take place in May 2025 which meant that the Local Government Reorganisation proposals would likely be implemented in April 2028 as opposed to April 2027. A further Ministerial letter had also been received that day setting out further details of the process for submitting proposals for the establishment of unitary councils.

The Chair expressed his concern in relation to the short response timeline the Government had set for submission of initial proposals for 21 March 2025 and for final proposals for 28 November 2025. He paid tribute to EDDC officers and wished to reassure them they had his complete support and that their welfare was paramount.

Discussions included the following:

- The need to keep residents updated.
- The possibility to a cross party working group to assist the council in the process.
- The need to be realistic and focus on priorities.
- The need to have trust and confidence in officers and leadership to take this through the initial process.
- Acknowledgement that this was unsettling for all involved hence the importance for interim arrangements.
- This was the worst time financially for councils to be going through this.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

Note the contents of the report and receives additional reports as further clarification was received and the proposals developed.

**REASON:**

To ensure Cabinet was fully engaged in the devolution and local government reorganisation proposals.

146 **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 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).

147 **Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) - Project progress update - Part 2**

**RESOLVED:**

The recommendations as set out in the report were agreed.

**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
P Arnott	Leader of the Council
P Hayward	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets
S Hawkins	Portfolio Holder Finance, Group Leader of Cranbrook Voice
T Olive	Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning

**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 Peter Faithfull  
Councillor Steve Gazzard  
Councillor Mike Goodman  
Councillor Richard Jefferies

**Also present:**

**Officers:**

Jo Avery, Management Information Officer  
Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer

Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Richard Easthope, Parking Services Manager  
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health  
John Symes, Finance Manager  
Katie Webb, Property Lawyer  
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

Chair .....

Date: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Extraordinary Cabinet held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 17 February 2025**

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.50 pm

#### **148 Declarations of interest**

There were none given.

#### **149 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

#### **150 Matters of urgency**

None.

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

There was one item officers recommended should be dealt with in this way recorded at Minute 153.

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

##### **RESOLVED:**

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).

#### **153 Recycling & Waste Future Services model business case (2026 contract replacement)**

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the recommendations as outlined and amended during the meeting were agreed.

#### **Attendance List**

##### **Present:**

##### **Portfolio Holders**

P Arnott  
S Hawkins  
P Hayward

Leader of the Council  
Portfolio Holder Finance, Group Leader of Cranbrook Voice  
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets

N Hookway	Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
S Jackson	Portfolio Holder Communications and Democracy
G Jung	Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment
D Ledger	Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes & Communities
T Olive	Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning
M Rixson	Portfolio Holder Climate Action & Emergency Response

**Cabinet apologies:**

J Loudoun	Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination
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**Also present (for some or all the meeting)**

Councillor Aurora Bailey  
Councillor Brian Bailey  
Councillor Ian Barlow  
Councillor Kim Bloxham  
Councillor Colin Brown  
Councillor Roy Collins  
Councillor Peter Faithfull  
Councillor Paula Fernley  
Councillor Richard Jefferies  
Councillor Eleanor Rylance  
Elaine Anning, Global City Futures  
Chris Maidstone, Global City Futures

**Also present:**

**Officers:**

Gareth Bourton, Interim Corporate Lead Recycling and Waste  
Lou Hodges, Recycling & Waste - Service Manager  
Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer  
Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Anne Mountjoy, Growth Point Communications Officer  
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)  
Andrew Wood, Director of Place  
David Robertson, Project Manager Recycling and Waste

Chair .....

Date: .....



**STRATA - JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****TUESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2025**Present:

Councillors Bialyk (Chair), Arnott, and Palethorpe

Members Attendance:

Councillors Radford

Apologies:

None

Officers in Attendance:

Steve Mawn, Director of IT and Digital Transformation

Jo Yelland, Strategic Director for People

Neil Blaney, Director of Place

Simon Davey, Strata Board Director

David Sercombe, Head of Business Systems & Business Intelligence

Suzanne Edwards, Strata Finance Manager

Andrew Hopkins, Head of Service, Digital and Data

Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

**These decisions will take effect from 10.00 a.m. on 4 February  
unless called-in or identified as urgent in the minute**

**1. MINUTES**

It was proposed by Cllr Palethorpe and seconded by Cllr Arnott that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

A vote was taken, and all were in favour.

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**3. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES**

None.

**4. QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES**

None.

**5. STRATA BUSINESS PLAN 2025-2026**

The Director of IT and Digital Transformation introduced the item to the Committee. He highlighted the continuing improvements to IT and systems across the partner councils that were identified in the previously adopted business plan. Improvements in 2025/26 would include enabling a move to the cloud-based systems, which would replace the need for physical server rooms across the council estate. The Business Plan also included information on the Operational Management Plan, the Customer Relationship Management system, and the telephony replacement for Skype and contact centre. Other areas of the plan highlighted were the rollout of systems such as MyAccount to Exeter, which was part of an overall improved customer experience.

In response to a question from a member of the Committee, the Director advised how the cloud-based system would work, and that it would be very secure as evidenced by its use by Central Government and Law Enforcement. Microsoft had spent considerable funds in order to ensure the quality of the system.

Other comments were concerns around the implementation of AI and the interest in a flexible solution for shared services.

It was proposed by Cllr Palethorpe and seconded by Cllr Arnott that the Strata Business Plan 2025-2026 be approved by the Committee and that it be brought to the partners' Full Council meetings for further approval.

A vote was taken, and all were in favour.

Resolved

that the Strata Business Plan 2025-2026 be approved by the Committee and that it be brought to the partners' Full Council meetings for further approval.

**6. STRATA BUDGET MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE OCTOBER 2024-25**

The Strata Finance Manager introduced the item to the Committee. It was highlighted that an underspend of £305,000 was forecast for the year and that these funds would be used to resource the partner councils' move to a cloud-based system.

The Head of Business Systems and Business Intelligence informed the Committee that Strata had surpassed its strategic target of completing cases on time, with a 92 percent rating. This was down from its previous rating of 96 percent however this was likely due to an increase of cases in the preceding months. The company would look to increase its service desk officers. The customer satisfaction rating was 4.6 out of a possible 5, and it was noted that if the rating fell considerably that Strata would carry out performance reviews with the partner councils to discuss improvements.

In response to a question regarding Members accessing their Council calendars on external devices, the Director for IT and Transformation informed the Committee that this had been disabled due to security concerns resulting from confidential agendas being attached to calendar invitations. The Director would email members a short statement confirming this. Partner Councils could meet with Strata to discuss a further solution if needed,

It was proposed by Cllr Palethorpe and seconded by Cllr Arnott that the Strata Budget Monitoring and Performance be noted.

A vote was taken, and all were in favour.

Resolved

That the Strata Budget Monitoring and Performance be noted.

The meeting started at 4.10 pm and finished at 5.00 pm.

Chair  
Cllr Phil Bialyk

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**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL****Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at Online via the Zoom app on 29 January 2025****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.00 am

**19 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2024 were agreed as a true record.

**20 Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Geoff Jung, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Ward member for Woodbury and Lymptone, which includes Greendale Business Park.

**21 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

**22 Joint operations and contract report**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager gave the Board a joint contract and operational update for the third quarter of 2024/25.

Throughout the quarter excellent service levels had continued. The main focus had been on preparing for the Christmas period, with the usual communications as well as the usual suspensions of the green waste service and bulky collections service over the Christmas catch-up period to allow for the reallocation of resources. The Christmas collection period went without any reportable issues.

A key highlight of the quarter was the completion of the 12 week absorbent hygiene product (AHP) trial which had gone smoothly.

Missed collections remained low, below contract thresholds, with missed assisted collections down 12% for the same quarter for 2023. Missed assisted collections were continuing to be addressed by identifying the newer crews and offering them support where needed from an experienced supervisor team.

Agency staffing levels were at a year to date low, with most staff being inducted into the SUEZ model. There continued to be ongoing development of staff within SUEZ. The Board noted the significant reduction in sickness levels, down from 11.09% in December 2023 to 2.7% in December 2024. The SUEZ Contract Manager was congratulated on the improved figures and he reported that this had improved moral amongst the teams, as well as improving collections, performance and overall creating a smoother operation.

Work was continuing well in the MRF, which was fully staffed due to a successful recruitment drive. Electric forklifts were being used in the depot, with positive feedback received. It was noted that revenue for materials were falling across the market nationally. Joint commodity markets were reviewed monthly due to the volatility.

In response to questions relating to the health and safety statistics the SUEZ Contract Manager reported that all road traffic accidents and personal injuries were reported, no matter how minor. The two Riddor accidents were individual errors, not operational errors and were lost time riddors. Incab cameras were used as well as CCTV around the vehicles, which had full trackers. The health and safety statistics were low for a municipal contract. A request was made for a benchmark comparison to be made across the industry nationally.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the SUEZ Contract Manager benchmark the EDDC/SUEZ contract's personal accident figures across the industry nationally and report back to the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

## 23 **Performance framework**

The Board noted the performance report which showed performance across the contract. It highlighted eight parts of the contract that officers focused on and allowed officers to look for areas of improvement and put plans in place if necessary. The Recycling and Waste Service Manager highlighted the overall good performance and reported that the contract had never invoked a penalty.

## 24 **Absorbent Hygiene Product trial update**

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer provided the Board with an update on the absorbent hygiene product (AHP) trial, including the three different containers used, resident feedback and the potential for district-wide rollout. The trial covered 200 properties in the Cranbrook and Exeter area. It began in September and concluded after 12 weeks in December. Mid Devon District Council were looking to conduct a similar trial.

The trial had been very well received by residents. A questionnaire had been sent out at the end and so far 50 responses had been received. Feedback from residents was that the communications materials were easy to understand. All were satisfied with the size of the container. Residents liked the caddies, but the crews preferred the sacks. Around a third had used the woven sack, which was more cost effective but had been prone to blowing away in windy weather. It was noted that this could be solved by using sacks with a weighted bottom, as per the existing recycling sacks. Residents were happy with the weekly collections and found them more convenient than using the black waste bins. 12 tonnes of waste had been collected, which equated to 1 tonne per week, or 7 kg per household, which was as anticipated.

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer advised the Board that Devon County Council (DCC) had confirmed that DEFRA would report nappy recycling in England in the same way as Wales. The whole product would be counted for recycling and it was expected that at least 60% would be recycled. This meant that DCC would pay the recycling credits and recycling rates would increase. It was noted that the Nappicycle recycling plant gate fee was the same as the energy from waste plant gate fee.

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer also reported that Nappicycle were very close to receiving a lifecycle valuation of their entire process. The SUEZ Permitting Manager had submitted a new permit the day before to the Environment Agency which included AHP. There had been a very positive site inspection in November 2024.

It was noted that the next steps were to put together costings and potential income into a business case which could be shared and discussed at the next meeting of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board. The EDDC communications team were keen to issue press releases regarding the success of the trial. Members agreed that it was a great initiative and that reusable nappies should also be promoted.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked the Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer for his update and the positive issues coming forward.

## 25 **SUEZ organisational changes**

Vincent Masseri, SUEZ General Manager introduced himself to the Board and updated those present on SUEZ organisational changes. He explained that SUEZ had been reorganised regionally within the UK, with all municipals now under one umbrella and reporting to one managing director. Vincent Masseri was a manager for the south west region and would be working more closely with the East Devon Contract Manager in the future. The SUEZ General Manager reported that the organisational changes within SUEZ was a positive move.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked SUEZ for its good working relationship with East Devon District Council.

## 26 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager presented the green waste accounts to the Board and introduced and thanked the accountant for producing them. It was noted that the total profit for the service was £394,762. A request was made for a high level summary of the costs involved in collecting the green waste.

The Recycling and Waste Contract Manager advised the Board that it was his last Board meeting as he was leaving the organisation. He thanked the Board for all their support and engagement and gave particular thanks to the Democratic Services Officer for all her help over the years.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Board Members:**

#### **Councillors present:**

P Fernley  
G Jung (Chair)  
M Rixson  
T Olive  
M Goodman

#### **Officers present:**

L Hodges, Recycling & Waste - Service Manager  
A Wood, Director of Place

#### **Suez present:**

V Masseri, General Manager  
J Gatter, Contract Manager

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

I Barlow  
C Brown  
C Burhop  
R Collins

**Officers in attendance:**

Gareth Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager  
Jessica Prosser, Recycling Officer  
John Hudson, Accountant  
Steve Joyce, Recycling & Waste - Operations and Projects Officer  
Steve Maclure, Recycling & Waste - Operations and Projects Officer  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

**Suez representatives in attendance:**

Jessica Prosser, Recycling Officer

**Board Member apologies:**

Andrew Hancock, Assistant Director – Streetscene, EDDC

Chair .....

Date: .....



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

**Housing Review Board on 30 January 2025**

**Minute 36 Housing finance report**

that Cabinet approve the draft revenue and capital estimates and the financial modelling element presented is noted, subject to suitable key performance indicators being introduced for the Housing Review Board to be able to monitor major capital repair expenditure.

**Minute 37 Electrical compliance audit**

that Cabinet approve that the Housing Review Board receive a progress report on the nine actions referred to in the SWAP housing electrical safety report at the July meeting Housing Review Board.

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Housing Review Board held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton, EX14 1EJ on 30 January 2025**

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

The meeting started at 10.05 am and ended at 12.20 pm

#### **29 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2024 were agreed.

#### **30 Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Jenny Brown, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Honiton Town Council.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Sarah Chamberlain, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Employed by Exeter City Council in the housing department.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Steve Gazzard, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Tenant of East Devon District Council.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Tim Dumper, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Declarations of interest.

Rob Robinson, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Tenant of East Devon District Council.

Declarations of interest.

Rosemary Dale, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Sheltered housing tenant of East Devon District Council.

11. Housing performance report - quarter 3.

Councillor Tim Dumper, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Non-remunerated director of a firm that worked closely with Acuity.

#### **31 Public speaking**

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

#### **32 Matters of urgency**

There were none.

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

There were none.

34 **Housing Review Board forward plan**

The Director – Housing and Health presented the forward plan and advised members that the forward plan acted as a reminder of agenda items to come forward to future meetings. The forward plan had been derived from previous meetings and requests, as well as the housing service plan. Service managers were currently reviewing realistic timeframes against each topic. Members were reminded that they could add further reports and topics for discussion to the next forward plan by either informing herself or the Democratic Services Officer

The Director – Housing and Health advised the Board that the report on the individual garden maintenance scheme had been delayed due to staff illness, but would be brought to the next meeting of the Housing Review Board. The April Board meeting would also include reports on an update on the review and replacement of Home Safeguard equipment within the housing stock, a review of progress on the Resident Involvement Strategy and an initial draft of the Tenancy Strategy.

35 **Housing Service staffing update**

The Assistant Director – Housing (Regulated Services) gave the Board an update on the housing service staffing. He reported that he had been permanently appointed to the post of Assistant Director – Housing (Regulated Services). The Corporate Lead for Property and Assets role had gone out to advert and it was hoped that an appointment to this post would be made by mid March 2025.

A request was made for a written staffing update report and for an up-to-date housing structure chart outlining the key strategic roles. A request was also made for information on the number of officers employed across the housing service and the turnover rate. It was noted that although some of this organisational information was provided to councillors at Personnel Committee this was not readily available to all members of the Housing Review Board and that it was not housing service specific.

36 **Housing finance report**

The Director of Finance's report presented the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26 relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the financial monitoring and outturn forecasting versus budget of the current financial year to the end of December 2024. Recommendations from the Housing Review Board would be presented back to Cabinet in February 2025 to finalise the 2025/26 budget proposals to recommend to Council.

The HRA recorded expenditure and income on running the council's own housing stock and related services or facilities, which were provided primarily for the benefit of the council's own tenants. The HRA was a ringfenced account within the General Fund with strict legal and accounting rules to maintain separation from the General Fund. The HRA must always remain in surplus, and this must be considered when setting each year's budget and when planning for the future.

The HRA consisted of capital and revenue elements. Capital was typically asset enhancing items such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows etc or a project of more minor works to multiple properties. Revenue was typically low-level repairs and maintenance with regards to spend on assets plus staff and service costs, overheads etc. The Council

was allowed to borrow to fund capital expenditure, but not revenue without specifically required central government permission.

The initial budget presented to the Housing Review Board was a roll over budget from the previous year, with few changes from 2023/24. The 2023/24 HRA outturn and capital spend far exceeded the expectations that were included within that year's budget, requiring the contribution of all HRA earmarked reserves and adding an additional £2.5m to the HRA's borrowing requirement in order to maintain the £3.1 adopted level of the HRA balance. Therefore, shortly after the start of the current financial year it was established that the proposed 2024/25 budget was insufficient to meet the needs and demands of the housing service and provide the investment required to ensure regulatory compliant homes. A revised budget was approved by Council in July 2024.

During the 2024/25 financial year there had been numerous significant budget movements within the HRA (virements) which in effect had transferred significant sums from revenue to capital. This was the result of the underlying works included within the revised budget being scrutinised in detail within the regular collaborative financial management framework which had been established. This had been presented and where necessary approval given through HRA financial monitoring reports to committees. The 2024/25 budget figures presented for comparison in the report were those which were currently being reported, and monitored against in 2024/25.

Areas explained to and discussed by the Board included:

- Revenue budget.
- Income – the primary sources of income for the HRA were rents on dwellings, garages and other income including service charges.
- Repairs and maintenance – this included all major expenditure which fell into the revenue category and was segregated into general and responsive repairs and maintenance, and planned repairs and maintenance. The vast majority was covered by the integrated asset management contract (IAMC) with Ian Williams Ltd. The budgeted spend had increased by £0.05m, which could be attributed to the inflationary increase on the price per property payment under the IAMC.
- Supervision and Management – this covered a wide variety of costs related to the management and administration of council-owned housing. Key types of expenditure included all HRA direct staffing costs, property management costs, and external services and overheads. The budget for supervision and management as a whole for 2025/26 had decreased by £0.29m from 2024/5 (this factored a full staffing establishment); the most notable was a £0.12m decrease in employment costs and a £0.2m decrease in overheads/recharges.
- Capital charges – changes to the bad debt provision and depreciation/major repairs reserves/revenue contribution to capital.
- HRA financing. This was split into three areas:
  - Debt financing – the 2025/25 financing charges had increased by £0.47m
  - Interest income – the 2025/26 budget included an income amount of £0.24m.
  - Movement in reserves – this wouldn't continue in 2025/26 as all revenue and capital spend had been correctly allocated. There was an agreed annual contribution to be made to the HRA balance each year of £0.25m to reinstate the HRA balance to the adopted level of £3.1m.

The 2025/26 budget now bought a balanced budget. However, the HRA continued to face significant financial pressure in the immediate and longer term. This was from a range of factors including historic underinvestment, increased consumer and regulatory standards, general inflation, restrictions in rent increases, net zero expectations, disrepair claims, complaint resolution, high void and decant costs and other issues. Similar cost pressures were being seen in other stock holding local authorities. The

housing teams were thanked for their hard work in achieving efficiencies and savings in year.

It was noted that the proposed capital programme amounted to a significant investment in the Council's housing stock. This investment would result in a substantial level of additional borrowing and an increase in the overall HRA debt burden. The servicing of this debt would be met from within the HRA revenue budget and therefore create further pressure on revenue in future years. This additional interest expense burden would need to be offset by efficiencies, savings and income generation through strategic asset disposals. The longer-term revenue implications of capital investment would be modelled as part of the Business Plan review to ensure the HRA remained a going concern.

In response to a question about which properties were being sold under the Right to Buy scheme, the Director of Finance explained that the Council could not control which properties were sold, but would provide data on numbers sold in the next HRB finance report. Information was also requested on planned kitchen and bathroom works, as well as other planned capital expenditure that did and did not go ahead.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Cabinet approve the draft revenue and capital estimates and the financial modelling element presented is noted, subject to suitable key performance indicators being introduced for the Housing Review Board to be able to monitor major capital repair expenditure.

### 37 **Electrical compliance audit**

The Director of Finance presented the electrical compliance SWAP audit report to the Housing Review Board. SWAP (internal audit) undertook an audit of housing electrical safety, their audit report reflected the conditions seen during fieldwork which took place in early 2024. The report stated that prior to and during the review, there had been significant officer turnover in housing. The officers interviewed had now either left the council or changed role, and a new management team had been appointed. A specific Electrical Compliance Surveyor had been appointed and was working with the Assets Management Team to address concerns around the previous issues with electrical compliance records and data recording in addition to addressing issues with contractors who were not delivering against contract agreements.

The Director of Finance's report had previously been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 27th November 2024, and this committee would receive a further update from SWAP on the progress on the implementation of the recommendations. It was considered appropriate that the Housing Review Board were made aware of this report and satisfied itself that appropriate progress against the recommendations were made.

Housing had agreed to complete nine actions by 1 April 2025. Officers have completed one action, and work had already started on four other actions. The Housing Review Board requested that they see a list of the nine actions being referred to and that a progress report be added to the July meeting on the forward plan.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Cabinet approve that the Housing Review Board receive a progress report on the nine actions referred to in the SWAP housing electrical safety report at the July meeting Housing Review Board.

### 38 **Housing performance report - quarter 3**

The Housing Review Board were presented with key performance indicators (KPIs) for quarter three of 2024/25. The Assistant Director Housing (Regulatory Services) gave a presentation which summarised the performance and actions being taken to improve performance where targets were not being achieved. He remarked that it was an evolving report and welcomed feedback from members.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Income collection – performance in this area had been excellent.
- Income lost through void properties was reducing.
- The number of re-let days had reduced by 48 days compared to quarter 2 performance, and had reduced by over 115 days from the average relet time at the end of the 2023/24 financial year.
- Compliance performance was high.
- Ian Williams were completing their repairs within target. However, there was a large discrepancy between the Council's data and that of the contractors. Works were ongoing to address this issue within One Housing, but this was a manual process that needed to be carried out by officers in partnership with the contractors. During the meeting the Assistant Director Housing (Regulatory Services) answered a number of questions relating to signing off major works and voids, the number of jobs recalled and clarification on how jobs were classified.
- Complaints handling still required some improvement. Although response times for stage one complaints had reduced (from 31 days at the beginning of the year to 13 days in quarter three), officers recognised the improvements that needed to be made in relation to improving the stage 2 complaint response times. This increase was largely due to the reduction in senior level officers to review the cases, sign-off on judgements and provide full responses.
- Tenant satisfaction measures – there had been an increase in seven of the twelve measures since quarter two, including some statistically significant changes. The tenant satisfaction surveys were carried out independently by an external company.

The performance report demonstrated the incredible hard work across the housing teams and the scale and pace of improvement.

During his presentation the Assistant Director Housing (Regulatory Services) gave the Board some examples of good news stories from the rental team, from the allocations team and void manager, and from the planned works and adaptations team. He also showed the Housing Review Board images of sewerage treatment plant upgrades, an overgrown void property garden, void clearance and a kitchen makeover.

It was noted that although community work was not included in the KPIs there were eight community hubs across the district that were a lifeline to some. They were accessible to all members of the public, not just EDDC housing tenants and provided hot meals and cold weather supplies such as blankets, hats and thick socks.

Those present thanked the Assistant Director Housing (Regulated Services) for his excellent report and congratulated the teams involved for the tremendous continuous improvement. Tenants generally felt that things were improving, but there was still a lack of communication. There was a danger in the housing service moving at pace, but forgetting to inform tenants of what was being done.

**RESOLVED:** that the Housing Review Board note performance at the end of quarter three, 2024/25.

**Attendance List**

**Board members present:**

Councillor Christopher Burhop  
Councillor Sarah Chamberlain (Chair)  
Councillor Melanie Martin  
Councillor Simon Smith (Vice-Chair)  
Sara Clarke, Independent Community Representative  
Rob Robinson, Tenants  
Councillor Jenny Brown  
Councillor Tim Dumper  
Rosemary Dale, Tenant

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

I Barlow  
C Brown  
R Collins  
P Faithfull  
S Gazzard  
D Ledger  
S Westerman

**Officers in attendance:**

Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer  
Emma Congerton, Assistant Director Statutory Housing  
Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Darren Hicks, Interim Tenancy Services Manager (Regulated Services)  
Les Joint, Property and Asset Delivery Manager  
Andrew King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulated Services)  
Liam Reading, Assistant Director - Housing Programmes, Investment and Development  
Giles Salter, Solicitor  
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health  
Rob Ward, Accountant  
John Taylor, Property and Asset Manager  
Gareth Wallace, Home Safeguard Project Lead  
Lynsey Williams, Housing Sustainment and Resettlement Service Manager

**Councillor apologies:**

Councillor Aurora Bailey  
Rachel Browne, Tenant

Chair .....

Date: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 30 January 2025**

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.34 pm

#### **45 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 November 2024**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 November 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record.

#### **46 Declarations of interest**

Minute 51. Scoping document: Agricultural property relief and business property relief. Councillor Roy Collins, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Councillor is a farmer and landowner.

#### **47 Public speaking**

No members of the public had registered to speak.

Members of the farming community were present as members of the public and were invited to speak on the item at minute 51, Scoping document: agricultural property relief and business property relief.

#### **48 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential / exempt items.

#### **50 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.

#### **51 Scoping document: Agricultural property relief and business property relief**

The Director of Place introduced the scoping document which set out the motion from the Council meeting held on 4 December 2024 regarding the Government's reforms to agricultural property relief and business property relief for inheritance tax, announced in the Autumn Budget 2024.



There was a need to understand the issues fully and the impact of the reforms on inter-generational inheritance of farms in East Devon. External expertise would be required with proposed consultees set out in the scoping document.

Members of the farming community present addressed the Committee and highlighted the following concerns regarding the Government reforms:

- Farmers may have to sell a proportion of their farm in order to pay their inheritance tax bill.
- Farms mostly make a modest living using the farm's assets.
- A farmhouse and paddock by themselves could amount to the £1million threshold for inheritance tax.
- Labour was often the biggest cost, and it was difficult to find labour.
- The supermarkets dictated the level of payment for produce which often does not reflect the cost of producing the food.
- Reforms were being introduced too quickly and there had been no consultation with farmers.
- East Devon mainly comprised small family farms which would become smaller still if land and assets had to be sold to pay inheritance tax.
- There was no guarantee that agricultural land, if sold, would ever come back into agricultural production which threatened the country's food security.
- Many farmers' children worked on family farms with little or no remuneration in the expectation that they would inherit the farm.

Discussion of the scoping document and responses to Members' questions included the following points:

- Support from Democratic Services would be provided for whichever route the Committee agreed to take following scoping.
- The Committee needed to agree key questions to be included in the scoping document.
- It was crucial to have input from the farming community who would be directly affected by the inheritance tax reforms.
- Concern was expressed regarding the potential loss of land for food production and the resulting food insecurity and impact on climate change.
- The view was expressed that the Council was not in a position to change Government legislation. Therefore, the impact the Council could have on this issue was limited.
- There was concern that the review could take a lot of officer time and resources.
- It was noted that the motion to Council had been referred to the Committee to consider and it was important to understand the true effect of the reforms on East Devon farmers.
- Land agents should also be included in evidence gathering.
- There was concern that a Task and Finish Forum may not provide sufficient transparency if it did not meet in public session.
- Planning issues related to the reforms were outside the remit of the Committee.
- There was a need to complete the review, based on the information provided by the farming community, before the legislation was brought in, rather than conduct a lengthy, in-depth review.

The Director of Place advised that clarification from the Government was expected imminently regarding local government reorganisation, and that this would have an impact on Officer capacity going forward.

External information and analysis by farm size was already available nationally regarding the likely impact of the inheritance tax reforms on farms. This data would need to be contextualised to East Devon, with the support of the National Farmers Union, the farming community and other relevant partners, to fully understand the impact on local farms. Due to the phased introduction of the reforms, there was a need to complete the review in a timely manner.

A report using information already available and setting out the impact of the reforms on East Devon could be brought back to the Committee sooner than the timescale set out in the scoping document.

It was noted that a letter from the Chief Executive to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs had already been drafted following the Council meeting. As a result of the Scrutiny review, a further letter could be sent setting out the detailed impact of the reforms in the context of East Devon.

**AGREED:**

That a report would be brought back to the Committee using the nationally available analysis relating to the size of farms and the effect the reforms will have in the context of East Devon, with support and engagement from partners.

The Chair thanked the members of the farming community for attending.

## 52 **UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Year 2 (2023/24) Evaluation**

The Economic Development Manager presented the report which provided an overview of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund funded activity for 2023/24 and the key findings of the evaluation work undertaken in Year 2 (of 3) of the programme. The purpose of the report was to review progress made on the actions proposed in the January 2024 report, and to provide an overview of the UKSPF evaluation undertaken for 2023/24 activity, including the challenges identified and the proposed additional recommendations.

The Economic Development Manager advised that projects are now up and running and are monitored and evaluated on an on-going basis. A 4<sup>th</sup> year of the fund would now be available, with funds awarded to and flowing from the new combined authority for Devon and Torbay.

The Economy Projects Assistant advised that consistent on-going monitoring and evaluation ensured that data was available to support and evidence the outcomes of the various projects.

The Chair noted that undertaking the evaluation of the projects on an on-going basis provided valuable information to enable improvement going forward. The Chair also encouraged Members to read the full report available through the links in the document.

Discussion and responses to questions from Members included the following points:

- Initially it was a requirement to include 50% match funding for business grant schemes, however, there was evidence to show that demand decreased compared with other funds with no match funding requirement, so the match funding requirement had now been reduced to 30%.
- One of the biggest challenges to running projects was staff changes and capacity among project leads.
- The Culture, Leisure and Tourism Fund was a decarbonisation grant scheme which has since been renamed to the Carbon Action Fund to avoid confusion.
- The Chair asked that the report for Year 3 be subject to an equalities impact assessment.
- For community organisations seeking non-grant support, they can receive this from the VCSE support service delivered by Devon Communities Together on behalf of EDDC.
- A change of Government policy had resulted in the Council having to find alternative ways of spending funds to ensure that other projects could continue.

- Funds available for year 4 would be reduced and discussions were on-going as to which projects would be taken forward with Cabinet making the final decisions at its meeting in March.

**IT WAS AGREED:**

1. That the Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made on the actions identified in the December 2023 UKSPF Evaluation Report.
2. That the Scrutiny Committee noted the UKSPF evaluation undertaken for the 2023/24 financial year, along with the challenges identified and proposed actions.
3. That a follow up report be brought back to the Scrutiny Committee in a year's time.

The Chair thanked the Economic Development Manager and the Economy Projects Assistant for attending and for their work.

**53 Work Programme**

The Committee discussed the work programme.

It was noted that Members had attended Scrutiny work programming training in November 2024 provided by the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny. A work programming workshop would be held following the Committee meeting, however, it was noted that local government reorganisation could have a significant impact on the work programme going forward.

It was agreed that the review of the impact on farms in East Devon of reforms to inheritance tax should be a priority item on the work programme.

The Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management would provide an informal "spotlight" session on planning enforcement at a time to be agreed.

It was agreed not to proceed with scoping work on the Exmouth Sea Wall project as this was now considered unnecessary as work was on-going.

Regarding the report on a South West Water Sewage Task and Finish Forum, it was noted that work was now on-going through the Devon wide water summit. The summit had brought together local authorities across Devon, experts from the University and the Environment Agency. Work was on-going through the Devon Districts Forum. The presentations from the water summit would be circulated following the meeting.

Concern was raised regarding continuing sewage overflow issues in Exmouth which was worsening due to development. It was noted that the Portfolio Holder for Coast Country and Environment had met on site with the managing director of South West Water's waste management to understand the vital programme of improvement works at Exmouth.

It was agreed to request an update from South West Water on improvement works at Exmouth at a future date.

With regard to the referral from Cabinet of Minute 120, Serious Violence Duty, it was agreed not to proceed in light of upcoming changes due to local government reorganisation.

Subject to the above changes, the work programme was agreed.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

J Brown  
M Goodman (Chair)  
J Heath  
V Johns  
Y Levine  
D Mackinder (Vice-Chair)  
J Whibley

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

A Bailey  
B Bailey  
C Brown  
R Collins  
P Faithfull  
N Hookway

**Officers in attendance:**

Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer  
Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager  
Zoe Smith, Economy Projects Assistant  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
Tom Winters, Economic Development Officer  
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

**Councillor apologies:**

I Barlow  
K Bloxham  
M Chapman  
O Davey  
A Hall  
M Hall  
M Hartnell  
A Toye

Chair .....

Date: .....

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

**Overview Committee held on 20 February 2025**

**Minute 21 Revisions to Street Naming and Numbering Policy**

To approve the proposed revisions to the Council's Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

**Minute 22 Wildlife Improvement Policy**

To adopt the Wildlife Improvement Policy as an official EDDC policy.

**Minute 23 Coach Tourism in East Devon**

That EDDC fund 50% of the costs of signage required for East Devon towns to satisfy the criteria for Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) Coach Friendly accreditation as identified through the formal CPT audit process, up to £1,500 per town and an overall maximum for the district of £12,000, subject to individual towns and parish councils meeting the remaining 50% of the costs.

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 20 February 2025**

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.31 pm

#### **16 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 October 2024**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 October 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record.

#### **17 Declarations of interest**

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Aurora Bailey, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Brian Bailey, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Ian Barlow, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Sidmouth Town Council.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Jenny Brown, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Honiton Town Council.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Olly Davey, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Tim Dumper, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council and member of the Coach Working Party.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Del Haggerty, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Seaton Town Council.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr John Heath, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Beer Parish Council.

Minute 23, Coach Tourism in East Devon

Cllr Vicky Johns, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Ottery St Mary Town Council.

#### **18 Public Speaking**

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

#### **19 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential/exempt items.

21 **Revisions to Street Naming and Numbering Policy**

The Economy Practice Manager presented this report which set out proposed revisions to the Street Naming and Numbering Policy, to clarify the Council's position on street naming and numbering and to ensure effective implementation.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- It was permissible for houses to be numbered '13' although historically there was a reluctance to use this number due to superstitions of it being unlucky.
- Each individual property in the UK had a Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) which was provided to emergency services when an address was created. This ensured that emergency services did not have problems locating addresses.

**RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

To approve the proposed revisions to the Council's Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

22 **Wildlife Improvement Policy**

The Director for Place introduced this item and asked Members to consider the Wildlife Improvement Policy and make recommendations, before it was presented to Cabinet for approval.

The proposed Policy would ensure that the StreetScene department's current and future Wildlife Improvement areas were managed, maintained and improved to a high standard whilst also supporting the Countryside department's role in meeting new legislative targets for Nature Recovery. It would also help to increase residents' understanding of the gravity and consequences of both climate change and biodiversity loss, and the urgency of putting in place mitigations to these crises.

The Horticultural Technical Officer invited comments and questions.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The Council banned the use of glyphosate in 2022, and selective herbicides only killed broad leaf plants but left grasses. It was difficult to kill grasses naturally.
- The Equalities Impact Assessment appended to the report aligned with the authority's statutory duty to have regard to protected characteristics, and was key to informing decisions made during the life of the project.
- If the proposed policy was adopted, the Countryside team would look to introduce key performance indicators with regards to key species which were more likely to be in wildlife improvement areas.
- Sites identified for wildlife improvement potential were carefully assessed against the needs of the community to access green spaces, and a lot of the Streetscene managed land that was not designated for wildlife improvement had been deemed necessary for public use and enjoyment.
- Neat and tidy spaces could be death to wildlife, and some wildness was necessary. The Council could be bolder in its approach given that it had declared a wildlife emergency, and it was argued that residents needed to revise their ideas of what public spaces needed to look like.

- Communications were important, to inform people of the reasons for the wildlife improvement and rewilding work and to help to identify the challenges and how to solve them. The Horticultural Technical Officer outlined intentions to make signage more accessible and less wordy and summarised a 3-stage consultation process involving StreetScene staff, councillors, town and parish clerks and residents, results from which would inform the second and third year communications plan.
- It was suggested to involve local wildlife groups in stages of consultation, given that they often worked closely with towns and parishes.

### **RECOMMENDED to Cabinet**

To adopt the Wildlife Improvement Policy as an official EDDC policy.

## 23 **Coach Tourism in East Devon**

The Economic Development Manager introduced this report which outlined the work of the Coach Tourism Task and Finish Forum (TAFF) set up in April 2024, which aimed to explore opportunities around coach tourism development in East Devon and help increase coach passenger visitors to the district. The report detailed the achievements of the TAFF to date, and its recommendation for the Overview Committee to consider.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Of the Coach Friendly audits carried out to date by the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) in Honiton, Sidmouth and Exmouth, coach parking facilities had been deemed to be sufficient.
- Coach tourism involved a lot of stakeholders and was quite a complex operation but coaches were a traditional form of travel, itineraries were in place, and individual players would not engage if the whole machine did not operate well.
- There was an aspiration to encourage coach tourists to visit other parts of East Devon and not just the seaside towns, and the Coach Friendly initiative would support this objective.
- There was a climate emergency and the Coach Friendly initiative would facilitate tourism to the district in the most climate friendly way.
- Towns and parishes should liaise with their named Highways Officer for advice and guidance around signage, which would in turn facilitate engagement with Devon County Council.
- The Economic Development Manager confirmed that the Senior Economic Development Officer could support the ongoing Coach Friendly initiative as part of their time spent on delivery of the Tourism Strategy.
- Members were supportive of the TAFF's recommendation that the Council funded 50% of the cost of signage required for towns and parishes to meet the criteria for CPT Coach Friendly accreditation. It would be necessary to ensure the agreement of the towns and parishes.
- It was suggested to consider revising the proposed recommendation so that funds could be used to address any issues identified in the CPT audit to meet the criteria for Coach Friendly accreditation, and not just for signage.

### **RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:**

That EDDC fund 50% of the costs of signage required for East Devon towns to satisfy the criteria for Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) Coach Friendly accreditation as identified through the formal CPT audit process, up to £1,500 per town and an overall maximum for the district of £12,000, subject to individual towns and parish councils meeting the remaining 50% of the costs.

## 24 **E-Petitions report**



This item was deferred to the next meeting.

25 **Work Programme 2024 - 2025**

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

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

A Bailey  
B Bailey  
K Blakey  
O Davey  
T Dumper (Vice-Chair)  
P Fernley  
D Haggerty  
A Hall (Chair)  
J Heath  
Y Levine  
M Martin  
H Riddell

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

I Barlow  
C Brown  
J Brown  
R Collins  
V Johns  
G Jung  
M Rixson

**Officers in attendance:**

Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Paul Fealey, Horticultural Technical Officer  
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer  
Geri Panteva, Senior Economic Development Officer  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
Tom Winters, Economic Development Officer (interim)  
Andrew Wood, Director of Place  
Nick Wright, Economy Practice Manager

Chair: .....

Date: .....

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document



## 2025/26 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Plan

### Report summary:

An additional year of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has been announced by the government, with management of the fund in Devon transferring from district and unitary councils to the new Combined County Authority (CCA).

East Devon has been allocated £465,588 from the CCA to continue funding UKSPF projects linked to communities, business and skills. An indicative Project Plan for 2025/26 was endorsed by the UKSPF Panel and submitted to the CCA.

The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet endorsement of the 2025/26 UKSPF Programme Plan for East Devon, including specific projects and activities, along with corresponding budgets and output and outcome targets.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves and adopts the 2025/26 UKSPF Programme Plan, including the indicative budgets and target outputs and outcomes as shown in Appendix 1, and grants delegated authority to the Director of Place to agree any necessary changes to the Programme.
2. Approves the updated terms of reference for the UKSPF Programme Management Panel as shown in Appendix 2 and delegates authority to the Director of Place in agreement with the Panel to:
  - a. Authorise and approve the grant awards for all competitive grant schemes funded through the UKSPF and any top-up funds in accordance with the provisions of the Programme.
  - b. Approve any adjustments to or the cancellation of any projects, programmes and activities identified in the 2025/26 UKSPF Programme Plan (Appendix 1), including grant schemes and discretionary grant payments, and any internal UKSPF budget transfers above £10,000.
  - c. Approve any new projects, programmes and activities, including new grant schemes and discretionary grant payments, funded through the UKSPF and any top-up funds.

- d. Approve any changes necessary to the terms of reference during the life of the Programme which may be necessary
- 3. Delegates authority to the Director of Place in consultation with Director of Finance and Director of Governance to agree terms and conditions for any grant funding agreements with the CCA, or any body acting on its behalf, to unlock UKSPF funding, including any top-up funds.
- 4. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Planning Strategy and Development Management to:
  - a. Sign off all grant funding agreements related to any activity funded through the UKSPF and any top-up funds in consultation with the Director of Governance, up to £200,000.
  - b. Authorise procurement activity and approve any new or amended contracts and terms and conditions for procured goods and services funded through the UKSPF and any top-up funds in consultation with EDDC's Legal team, up to £200,000.
  - c. Authorise amendments to any policy documents for grant schemes funded through the UKSPF and any top-up funds in consultation with the UKSPF Panel.
  - d. Authorise any internal UKSPF budget transfers at or below £10,000.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

The reason for recommendations 1 and 3 is to ensure EDDC has a clear and achievable plan to draw down further funding through the UKSPF in a timely and transparent manner. Recommendations 2 and 4 are designed to ensure flexibility is maintained in the delivery of the fund and clear roles and responsibilities are set out in the drafting and signing of contracts and grant funding agreements.

Officer: Tom Winters, Economic Development Manager, [twinters@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:twinters@eastdevon.gov.uk)  
01395 571528

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

**Equalities impact** Medium Impact

We do not anticipate any adverse impact on individuals with protected characteristics. Projects proposed within the UKSPF Programme Plan will include funding to increase uptake in cultural and leisure activities for those in marginalised groups, thereby having a (medium) positive impact in regard to equalities.

#### **Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; There are no immediate risks associated with the proposed UKSPF activity or the process of drawing down fundings from the CCA.

**Links to background information** [UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025-26: Technical note](#), [East Devon UKSPF Evaluation](#).

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

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
  - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
  - ☒ Resilient economy that supports local business
  - ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services
- 

## **Background**

1.1 EDDC has been managing delivery of the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the three-year period 2022/23 to 2024/25, for which we were allocated £1,796,368. This was topped-up in 2023/24 and 2024/25 with a £854,298 allocation from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

1.2 In the 2024 Autumn Budget, the government announced the continuation of the UKSPF for a single transition year, with the total UK budget reduced to £900m. On 13 December 2024, the government published the 2025/26 allocations, confirming that responsibility for Devon's allocation would now be passed to the newly established Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA).

1.3 The CCA area was allocated a total of £4,166,670, with an 83% to 17% revenue to capital split respectively.

1.4 No further information has been given on the future of the REPF or any other top-up funds.

## **Allocations**

1.5 In early January, Devon County Council (DCC), who are acting on the behalf of the CCA, confirmed their intention to pass on the majority of Devon and Torbay's allocation to the district/unitary councils. For East Devon, the allocation was set at £465,588. This includes a minimum capital budget of £108,503 and maximum revenue budget of £357,085.

1.6 Prior to the district allocations, a £100,000 topslice was allocated for DCC for the monitoring and administration of the fund. DCC also included a 20% allocation (£811k) for the continuation of Multiply, a DCC programme focusing on adult numeracy skills which previously received a ringfenced UKSPF allocation.

## Timetable

1.7 DCC produced a timetable for district councils to submit their UKSPF Project Proposals for 2025/26. The table below includes all of the main deadlines and processes, both for the CCA and for EDDC internal sign-off:

**Table 1:**

Milestones	Timeline
Present 2025/26 UKSPF Project Proposal to UKSPF Panel of EDDC members, with recommendations for Cabinet.	Tuesday 4 February
Deadline for district councils and Torbay Council to submit 2025/26 UKSPF Project Proposals to DCC.	Wednesday 5 February
Submission of a combined Devon and Torbay UKSPF Forecast Plan for the CCA Board.	Tuesday 18 February
EDDC Cabinet decision on 2025/26 East Devon UKSPF Programme Plan.	Wednesday 5 March
Confirmation of approval from the fully commissioned CCA Board.	Wednesday 19 March
Submission of a finalised UKSPF Forecast Plan by the CCA to MHCLG.	Early April 2025

1.8 Each district was required to submit their 2025/26 UKSPF Plan by 5 February 2025. To ensure members were engaged with the process of submitting the indicative 2025/26 UKSPF Project Proposal, the Proposal was presented to the UKSPF Panel who subsequently endorsed the Proposal for Cabinet approval on 4 February 2025.

1.9 This Project Proposal was subsequently developed into a Programme Plan, with minor changes to the budget and output and outcome targets.

## Programme Plan for 2025/26

1.10 The purpose of the 2025/26 allocation is to enable a smooth transition from UKSPF to a new local growth funding framework from 2026/27 onwards. As a result, EDDC are not proposing to include any new projects within its UKSPF Programme Plan, with a focus instead on supporting existing projects where funding is at risk.

1.11 DCC presented proposals for the continuation of two UKSPF projects they have delivered on the behalf of district councils. These include the Prosper business support service and the Employment Hubs programme (including the Honiton Employment Hub). An additional request was made to provide a replacement support service for the Future Farm Resilience programme, a non-UKSPF project for which funding ends on the 31 March 2025.

1.12 The Economic Development team, in partnership with officers across the Place Directorate, have produced a list of proposed projects for EDDC to include in the 2025/26 UKSPF Programme Plan. The following considerations were taken into account when bringing forward this proposal:

- a) Is this an existing UKSPF project?
- b) Is there a good strategic and practical case to continue funding this project?
- c) Does the project have sufficient staff resource to be continued into 2025/26?
- d) Has the project been allocated funding from another internal or external funding source for 2025/26?
- e) Has the project previously demonstrated an ability to deliver against its target outputs and outcomes, within the budget and within the required timescales?
- f) Has the project previously demonstrated good alignment with the five principles of the [UKSPF Evaluation Strategy](#) (effective delivery, good value for money, etc)?

1.13 The table below shows the list of considered projects for East Devon's 2025/26 UKSPF Programme Plan.

**Table 2:**

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Proposed Budget</b>	<b>Lead Local Authority</b>
Business Support Programme	Delivery of the Prosper generalist business support provision, including ringfenced support for start-ups.	£75,000	DCC
Culture Programme	Delivery of the Creative East Devon Fund grant scheme and financial contribution for Screen Devon and Villages in Action.	£37,985	EDDC
Employment Hubs Programme	Continued delivery of employment support and guidance through the Honiton Employment Hub.	£89,578	DCC
Innovation and Resilience Fund	Capital business grant scheme to increase productivity and stimulate job creation.	£190,000	EDDC
Leisure Programme	Delivery of the Leisure Outreach Programme led by LED	£34,000	EDDC
Sustainable Tourism Programme	Delivery of projects linked to the EDDC Tourism Strategy.	£29,000	EDDC
Admin	To provide support for the delivery, monitoring and reporting of the programme (fixed budget).	£10,025	EDDC
<b>Total:</b>		<b>£465,588</b>	

1.14 When determining the proposed budgets, the following considerations were given:

- a) Running a grant scheme is the most straightforward way to spend our £108,503 capital allocation. From our experience, at least around £200,000 needs to be allocated for a grant scheme to ensure a sufficient number of grant awards can be given.
- b) Continuing the culture, leisure and sustainable tourism programmes are a strategic priority for the administration, each requiring a meaningful budget for small scale projects.
- c) The Economic Development Strategy gives a strategic commitment to ensure businesses and entrepreneurs continue to have access to a free business support provision. The budget proposed should accommodate expected demand for this period.
- d) We have invested a significant amount of UKSPF funding to pump-prime the Honiton Employment Hub. A further financial commitment will enable the Hub to continue its work and to further embed itself in the local community.

1.15 Due to DCC earmarking a significant portion of the overall UKSPF budget to the Multiply programme, East Devon's allocation is insufficient to fund the requested replacement to the Future Farm Resilience programme.

1.16 The UKSPF Panel has confirmed that if EDDC's allocation is topped up beyond £465,588, that any additional funds are prioritised to a new Farm Support Programme in the first instance. The Panel will be asked to consider how any additional funds should be utilised.

### Other Projects

1.17 The table below shows the projects previously funded by the UKSPF which are not included the 2025/26 UKSPF Plan, including the main justification.

**Table 3:**

Project Name	Primary Justification
Action on Poverty Fund	Funding for 2025/26 has already been allocated to continue funding this project. Further funding through the UKSPF is not required.
Active Travel Programme	There was insufficient time to identify and deliver a new suitable infrastructure project. Funding for 2025/26 has already been allocated to deliver part of the Cranbrook to Mosshayne cyclepath. Further funding through the UKSPF is not required.
Council for Voluntary Service	Funding for 2025/26 has already been allocated to continue funding this project. Further funding through the UKSPF is not required.
Carbon Action Fund	There is insufficient funding to deliver two capital grant schemes in this period. We anticipate that demand for the Innovation and Resilience Fund is likely to be higher as the previous round of CAF funding only concluded recently. DCC has also recently run a decarbonisation grant scheme across the CCA area in 2024/25, further tapering demand.
Towns Feasibility Work	The purpose of this work was to provide feasibility funding for towns not covered by the DCC Urban Renewal Fund. As all towns have now been covered, further funding through the UKSPF is not required.
Retrofit Programme	Funding for 2025/26 has already been allocated to continue funding this project. Further funding through the UKSPF is not required.



## **Next Steps**

1.18 We are expecting confirmation on the approval of the Devon and Torbay Forecast Plan to MHCLG by the CCA Board on 19 March 2025. Submission of the Forecast Plan by the CCA to MHCLG is likely to take place in early April 2025.

1.19 If MHCLG approve the CCA's Forecast Plan, we expect East Devon UKSPF activity to commence in May/June 2025. EDDC's allocation would be issued via a grant funding agreement with the CCA.

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### **Financial implications:**

The Council has been awarded £465,588 of UKSPF grant funding for the financial year 2025/26. Of which a minimum of £108,503 is to be spent on capital projects and a maximum of £357,085 on revenue projects. The proposed breakdown of project spend is contained within the body of the report, with more detail in appendix 1. (AB-12/02/2025)

### **Legal implications:**

It is essential that the Council has robust governance arrangements in place in relation the UKSPF grant funding.



# East Devon District Council UKSPF 2025-26 Programme Plan

## Contents

Programme Overview: .....	9
Business Support Programme:.....	10
Cultural Programme:.....	12
Employment Hubs Programme: .....	14
Innovation and Resilience Fund: .....	16
Leisure Programme: .....	18
Sustainable Tourism Fund:.....	20

## Programme Overview:

Project Name	Theme	Total Budget	Project Lead
Business Support Programme (Prosper)	Supporting Local Businesses	£75,000	Senior Economic Development Officer
Cultural Programme	Communities and Place	£37,985	Cultural Producer
Employment Hubs Programme	People and Skills	£89,578	Economic Development Officer
Innovation and Resilience Fund	Supporting Local Businesses	£190,000	Economic Development Officer
Leisure Programme	Communities and Place	£34,000	Senior Leisure Officer
Sustainable Tourism Fund	Supporting Local Businesses	£29,000	Senior Economic Development Officer



Funded by  
UK Government

## Business Support Programme:

<b>Project Lead:</b>	Senior Economic Development Officer
<b>Project Guarantor:</b>	Economic Development Manager
<b>Budget:</b>	£75,000
<b>Delivery Method:</b>	Contracted service (managed by Devon County Council)

### **Project Summary:**

The Business Support Programme, originally delivered from 2023-25 as 'Prosper', provides fully funded, generalist business support to all enterprises in East Devon. This includes 1-2-1 guidance from trained business advisers, workshop sessions, and specialist support for start-ups and entrepreneurs. Businesses can benefit from up to 12 hours of support, with the provision adaptable to business needs. This is a procured provision managed by Devon County Council on behalf of three district areas.

### **Strategic Case:**

The Business Support Programme delivers on the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) commitment to 'ensure that East Devon businesses and start-ups can access free and professional business support services.' This provision has long been available to East Devon businesses through the ERDF-funded 'Thrive' and the 'Prosper' programme supported in previous years of UKSPF.

East Devon is home to over 6,800 businesses, of which 99% are either micro or SMEs. To meet the Council Plan priority to develop a 'resilient economy that supports local businesses', it is key that there are a free and accessible support services to promote the development of our small business economy. East Devon also has more self-employed individuals than both the regional and national averages, necessitating that this support includes a ring-fenced provision for entrepreneurs and start-ups to ensure we foster innovation in the district.

Take-up of previous generalist support provisions has always been high in East Devon, with Prosper support being exhausted three months before the programme end. This demonstrates a clear need for this provision and a business base that is eager to engage with support offered.

### **Activities to be Delivered:**

Item/Activity	Description	Cost
Procured Contract	Delivery of two lots of support – generalist and start-up support	£51,000
Programme Support	Project Management from DCC and staff overheads	£20,000
Marketing	Promotion of offer including paid social media ads	£4,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£75,000</b>

### **Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts:**

Output	Target
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	50
Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	12
Outcome	Target
Number of enterprises with improved productivity	10
Number of new enterprises created as a result of support	5
Number of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	10

Impact of the support provision will be recorded via case studies and feedback received from beneficiaries. Delivery of previous support offers indicates that additional impacts on beneficiaries include improved business confidence and wellbeing, networking opportunities via the workshops delivered, and support with developing proposals for grant funding opportunities.

## Cultural Programme:

<b>Project Lead:</b>	Cultural Producer
<b>Project Guarantor:</b>	Senior Economic Development Officer
<b>Budget:</b>	£37,985
<b>Delivery Method:</b>	Internal delivery, including a grant scheme

### ***Project Summary:***

The Cultural Programme is the primary vehicle for delivery of the East Devon Cultural Strategy. It provides support to a number of initiatives including the Arts and Culture East Devon (ACED) network, a group of local creatives championing the sector and Villages in Action (ViA), who empower rural communities via artistic engagement. It also includes ongoing support for Screen Devon, a regional film agency working to strengthen Devon's film industry and improve its attractiveness as a filming location. Funding will also be used for a third round of the Creative East Devon Fund (CEDF) which provides small grants to local arts organisations and events.

### ***Strategic Case:***

Delivery of the Cultural Programme is critical to achieving the objectives set out in the 10-year Cultural Strategy. Under the Council Plan priority to create a 'supported and engaged community', delivery against the Strategy is listed as a key action for developing a vibrant district that is an attractive place to live and work. The Programme is also crucial to meeting the EDS Social Policy priority of funding targeted cultural projects to improve and promote the lifestyle offer for young adults.

Activity spans all eight themes of the Cultural Strategy, with a particular emphasis on Theme 1: "Strengthen and support the people-that-do". By funding leading organisations such as Villages in Action and the ACED network, the programme supports cultural practitioners to 'feel connected, resilient, and creatively ambitious'; the fifth goal outlined in the strategy.

There is huge economic potential associated with the development of Screen Devon. Research indicates that average regional spend lies between £17,000 to £32,000 per day when a high-end production arrives on location. In three years of operation, Screen Cornwall created 75 jobs in the film and TV industry, a growing sector in the UK. Development of a regional screen agency enables Devon to capitalise on this growing market and create more jobs in the cultural and creative industries, the fourth objective of the Cultural Strategy.

The CEDF has proved a successful and cost-effective method of meeting multiple themes and objectives of the strategy. Provision of small grants has a proven track record of promoting the district's cultural offer, increasing the number and diversity of events available, investing in our heritage organisations, and using culture to tackle the climate emergency.

### ***Activities to be Delivered:***

<b>Item/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Creative East Devon Fund	Grants between £500 and £3,000 to ACED members for activities aligning with the Cultural Strategy.	£20,985
ACED Network	Maintain the ACED website, ACED Volunteer of the Year Award and deliver ACED Network meeting x3 times a year (venue hire and refreshments)	£2,000
Screen Devon	Development of a regional screen agency to support the local film industry and emerging talent.	£10,000

Villages in Action	An uplift to EDDC's core contribution to enable the recruitment of a Culture Network Lead for the area.	£5,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£37,985</b>

***Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts:***

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target</b>
Number of local events or activities supported	8
Number of organisations receiving financial support through grants	8
Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	30
Number of volunteering opportunities supported	45
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	5
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target</b>
Improved engagement numbers	150
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support	6

Previous years of delivery indicate that additional benefits realised include increased happiness and wellbeing, the creation of new places for culture, and support for the natural environment. Participants in CEDF-funded projects reported feeling more connected, joyous, and confident after participating in cultural events and activities. Close working with the Sustainable Tourism Programme enhanced the cultural tourism offer, with both new and established festivals able to increase their reach, increase their accessibility, and provide activities outside of peak season to both visitors and residents. Several CEDF projects used the arts as a tool for encouraging engagement with the climate emergency and promoting appreciation for the natural environment of the district, with arts organisations partnering with climate groups.

These wider impacts are a crucial indicator of success as they link back to the themes and objectives outlined in the strategy. They will be recorded through the monitoring reports for CEDF beneficiaries, presentations at ACED network meetings, and reports from Screen Devon and Villages in Action. These methods were highly effective in previous years at capturing the depth and breadth of the programme's value.

## Employment Hubs Programme:

<b>Project Lead:</b>	Economic Development Officer
<b>Project Guarantor:</b>	Economic Development Manager
<b>Budget:</b>	£89,578
<b>Delivery Method:</b>	Contracted service (managed by Devon County Council)

### **Project Summary:**

The Employment Hubs Programme funds the operation of the Honiton Employment Hub, the East Devon branch of the wider programme. Managed by Devon County Council, the Employment Hubs provide a 'one-front door' approach to residents looking for education, employment, and training opportunities. Located in the Beehive, the Hub is staffed by experienced case workers who provide 1-2-1, personalised support to connect individuals to opportunities and move them closer to employment pathways. It also includes a supported employment provision for those with specialist needs and those furthest from the labour market.

### **Strategic Case:**

The Honiton Employment Hub meets the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) commitment to 'help coordinate employment support for economically inactive residents of all ages, including specialist support for those with disabilities.' East Devon has a smaller working age population than both national and regional averages and neighbouring authorities. Coupled with the 10<sup>th</sup> lowest unemployment rate of all lower tier authority areas, East Devon's labour market is becoming increasingly constrained.

Tackling economic inactivity amongst working age residents and providing support to the 21% of economically inactive individuals who do want a job is crucial to increasing the size of the labour pool. These individuals often have significant barriers to employment, such as skills gaps, poor mental health, or additional needs. Intensive and tailored support connecting different services (such as the Jobcentre or NHS programmes) is required to overcome these barriers and create pathways towards employment, education, and training.

Since the Hub opened in 2024, user numbers have steadily increased each quarter, with staff taking on additional hours to cope with rising demand. This shows an evidenced need for the continuation of this provision.

### **Activities to be Delivered:**

Item/Activity	Description	Cost
Hub Team Staff Costs	Hub Manager and Hub Co-ordinator staff costs for 5 and 4 days a week respectively	£55,500
Premises	Rent for the space in The Beehive, Honiton	£6,078
Supported Employment	Procured contract for specialist provision for supported employment	£28,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£89,578</b>

### **Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts:**

Output	Target
Number of people supported to participate in education	72
Number of volunteering opportunities supported	37
Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	37
Number of people receiving support to gain employment	29
Outcome	Target

Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF	105
Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support	29
Number of people in supported employment	8

The impact on users has been demonstrated through the production of case studies by the Hub Team. A lack of self-confidence and high levels of anxiety are often cited by the caseworkers as obstacles to becoming economically active, and the development of relationships with Hub staff and the structure provided by Hub visits have been crucial first steps to building resilience.

The Hub Team also liaise with a variety of stakeholders such as DWP, education providers, Learn Devon, job clubs, and supported employment providers to present a cohesive picture of the support offer. By providing a warm handover to other support providers, they help users navigate a fluctuating and patchwork provision and ensure they follow through with signposted offers. This helps avoid duplication of provisions and makes it easier and more likely that individuals take up the full range of support they require to enter education, employment, and training.

Through their frontline experience, the Hub Team have also been gathering important evidence about the barriers experienced by residents and their specific training and education needs to fill jobs available locally. This led to the development of specialised courses in digital skills after it was identified as a skills gap. Continued funding for the hub enables better knowledge and understanding of these gaps so future support offers can be shaped by on the ground experience.



## Innovation and Resilience Fund:

<b>Project Lead:</b>	Economic Development Officer
<b>Project Guarantor:</b>	Economic Development Manager
<b>Budget:</b>	£190,000
<b>Delivery Method:</b>	Grant scheme

### ***Project Summary:***

The Innovation and Resilience Fund is a capital grant scheme which provides funding to businesses looking to improve their productivity and expand their operations. Over three previous rounds, IRF has supported a diverse range of projects across the district, with sectors supported including food and drink, manufacturing, hospitality, and agriculture. Businesses will be able to apply for grants between £3,000 to £30,000, with a 30% match funding commitment required.

### ***Strategic Case:***

The Innovation and Resilience Fund is a key vehicle for delivery of East Devon's Economic Development Strategy. The Industrial Policy highlights grant funding schemes as a mechanism for supporting both traditional and aspirational sectors, with expecting outcomes including job creation and productivity gains. By assigning additional points to priority sectors, the IRF provides specific support to key projects such as clean growth, tech innovation, food and drink, tourism and farm diversification.

Access to capital is a huge barrier to growth for East Devon's business community. As the overwhelming majority are micro or small businesses, sourcing external investment is a challenge, with high interest rates and small profit margins making it difficult to borrow. These constraints contribute to the district's history of low productivity and low wages compared to national averages, with 2022 figures showing GVA per hour and per job below UK averages.

Previous rounds have demonstrated that investment via grants is able to boost productivity, enable a diversification in products and services offered, and create new job opportunities.

The EDS also contains a Workspace Policy, designed to address the deficit of appropriate and available employment spaces in the district. Previous grants have been used to upgrade premises for alternative uses and convert disused spaces into functioning industrial spaces. Intensification, specialisation, and repurposing of existing employment space is crucial to proving the workspace businesses need to thrive, but the high costs associated make it difficult to achieve without grant funding.

For IRF3, 91 businesses submitted Expressions of Interest, with a further 46 completing full applications. The total requested was 272% of the total grant funding pot. This shows a latent demand for grant funding which cannot be met through internal budgets.

### ***Activities to be Delivered:***

Item/Activity	Description	Cost
Grants Awarded	Grants between £3,000 and £30,000 for capital equipment. The average grant award in IRF3 was £16,000, so between 10-12 businesses are expected to receive grants.	£190,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£190,000</b>

### ***Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts:***

Output	Target
Number of enterprises receiving grants	10

Amount of commercial space completed or improved (m2)	100
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target</b>
Number of enterprises with improved productivity	8
Jobs created as a result of support	4
Number of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	7
Number of enterprises adopting new or improved products or services	7

Previous applicants have indicated that the application process has been beneficial in clarifying their business plans, forecasting productivity gains, and identifying the activities and equipment needed to achieve their goals. Unsuccessful applicants receive comprehensive feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their application, which helps inform future grant bids and helps them refine their business plans.

Where possible, grant recipients often opt to procure services and items locally, thus supporting other local businesses. Through the monitoring process, the amount of money spent at other East Devon businesses will be tracked to demonstrate the additional economic benefit. Additionally, past projects have brought services in house, reducing the need for products to travel long distances and cutting the business' emissions.

Project Completion Reports will capture the additional benefits realised, including the environmental impact, increased turnover, jobs created, and training or upskilling opportunities created.

## Leisure Programme:

<b>Project Lead:</b>	Senior Leisure Officer
<b>Project Guarantor:</b>	Economic Development Manager
<b>Budget:</b>	£34,000
<b>Delivery Method:</b>	Contracted service (managed by LED)

### **Project Summary:**

The Leisure Programme is an outreach project that works in the community to encourage participation in sports and wellbeing activities. Its primary aim is to support residents to improve their physical and mental wellbeing through a holistic provision that includes exercise, nutrition advice, mental health support, and help with managing chronic conditions. The programme seeks to improve the leisure offer in the district, especially for the young adult cohort.

### **Strategic Case:**

The Council Plan highlights promoting wellbeing as a key element of its vision to make a positive contribution to the lives of residents. This links to East Devon's Public Health Strategy, which looks to improve levels of physical activity, improve diet and nutrition, tackle mental health problems and social isolation, and support those with long-term health conditions and frailty.

The 10-year Leisure Strategy commits to the development of a coordinated health and wellbeing programme between EDDC, LED, and third sector partners to deliver the aims outlined in the Leisure and Public Health Strategy.

As an outreach programme, the Leisure Programme engages residents who are less physically active and provides them with opportunities to engage in comfortable and familiar spaces to increase the accessibility of their services. With 2023 figures indicating that 29,200 residents qualify as 'inactive', increasing participation in physical activity is crucial to improving health outcomes and reducing pressure on health services.

Additionally, the programme has a strong focus on wellbeing and integrating physical activity with other health promoting behaviours. The clear link between physical and mental health is bolstered by targeted activities, such as men's mindfulness yoga, to encourage participants to consider their mental wellbeing. Furthermore, by facilitating group activities and connecting people through sport, residents have opportunities to meet new people and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.

East Devon's demographic imbalance indicates a need to create and publicise an enticing lifestyle offer to working age residents considering relocating to the district. Provision of leisure activities targeting young adults, who are traditionally underrepresented in LED's membership, enhances the overall offering in tandem with other projects such as the Cultural Programme.

### **Activities to be Delivered:**

Item/Activity	Description	Cost
LED Outreach Team Staff Costs	Programme development and delivery for the LED Outreach Team, including travel expenses	£11,250
Digital Health Network	Development of a digital platform where LED will utilise social media to launch specific coaching groups to support 16-45 years with behaviour change, nutrition and exercise. This will link to virtual, in-centre classes to encourage further participation.	£7,000

Hyrox – Exmouth	Expansion of Hyrox to Exmouth – an innovative fitness programme aimed at young adults. Includes a Hyrox event.	£4,500
Wellbeing Open Days	4 open days that offer the EDDC community opportunities to access exercise and health checks at Exmouth, Honiton, Seaton and Axminster.	£5,000
Climbing and Swimming	Utilise the climbing wall at Exmouth to access a family session alongside a family swim to get families to be active together.	£2,000
Gymnastics	Gymnastics expansion to Saturday sessions and growing the volunteer program to include memberships for the volunteers and training.	£2,500
Men's Mindfulness	Linking with local groups to develop men's specific Pilates and Yoga sessions to help improve men's mental health.	£1,750
<b>Total</b>		<b>£34,000</b>

***Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts:***

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target</b>
Number of local events or activities supported	6
Number of volunteering opportunities supported	8
Number of people reached	1050
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target</b>
Improved engagement numbers	1350
Increased users of facilities/amenities	250

Case studies and feedback from previous years of the Leisure Programme show the positive impact on participants in outreach activities. This includes a better perception of the leisure offer and continued participation in leisure activities following initial engagement.

The positive impact on participants' wellbeing is also clear. This is particularly visible in programmes focusing on targeted cohorts, where having a dedicated provision has reduced loneliness and created a positive association with physical activity. Once individuals have been engaged in one element of the programme, it opens the door to further conversations on health promoting behaviour and how to improve overall wellbeing.

These additional impacts can be tracked through surveys of participants and the production and publicization of case studies. For Year 4, the LED team aim to produce two case studies for each activity outlines to assess and demonstrate their efficacy.

## Sustainable Tourism Fund:

<b>Project Lead:</b>	Senior Economic Development Officer
<b>Project Guarantor:</b>	Cultural Producer and Economic Development Manager
<b>Budget:</b>	£29,000
<b>Delivery Method:</b>	Internal delivery

### **Project Summary:**

The Sustainable Tourism Programme is the primary mechanism for the delivery of East Devon's 5-year Tourism Strategy. The strategy is built around core values of sustainability, accessibility, inclusivity, collaboration, and nature connection, with East Devon positioned as an enabler to support the implementation of the strategic vision. The programme builds on previous years' activity to support new promotional themes, improve sustainable travel options for tourists, and connect and market new and emerging tourism offerings.

### **Strategic Case:**

Action 31 of the Council Plan includes the implementation of the Tourism Strategy to ensure the development of high quality, inclusive, and sustainable culture and tourism offers. This is echoed in the Industrial Policy of the EDS which commits to investing in and supporting projects linked to the Tourism Strategy to promote improvements in these values across the sector.

The Tourism Strategy outlines how these values and priorities can be actioned. In an overview of the sector, the strategy states that East Devon has a strong tourism offer, but there are gaps and key opportunities to improve the provision and support businesses in the sector. Visitor-related spend in 2022 contributed £312m to the local economy, with 9% of jobs in East Devon associated with the sector. Continued growth of this sector, along with initiatives to encourage increased spending amongst visitors, is crucial for the local economy and job security.

Areas of opportunity highlighted in the strategy include opportunities to develop a product offer that leverages the strength of East Devon's natural environment, created themed propositions that align with macro trends for visitor experiences, facilitate more sustainable travel options, and attract more visitors outside of the peak season. The activities proposed for Year 4 are developed around the analysis and recommendations outlined in the strategy.

### **Activities to be Delivered:**

Item/Activity	Description	Cost
Taste East Devon	Support the promotion of the district-wide food & drink festival to attract visitors in the shoulder tourism season, engaging with local producers and venues.	£5,000
Sustainable Travel Campaign	Promote sustainable modes of travel for visitors to and around the district: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinating and producing information and itineraries for exploring the district via train with joined promotion with SWR</li> <li>▪ Pilot with Sidmouth Jazz fest to promote train/bus journeys to attend the festival</li> </ul>	£10,000
South West Visitor Economy Hub	Support for a new tool designed for tourism businesses to access an array of data from multiple sources to make informed and evidence decisions on marketing and planning. EDDC can also access this data to	£6,000

	report back on core KPIs for UKSPF and TS delivery.	
Active Nature theme product development	Coordination and production of information and itineraries for walking and cycling trails and their promotion. Delivered via a software tool, it will encourage greater exploration and highlight local gems, dispersing expenditure across the district.	£8,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£29,000</b>

### ***Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts:***

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target</b>
Number of local events or activities supported	30
Number of people reached	5,000
Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	30
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target</b>
Improved visitor numbers	200
Number of organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support	25

The focus on sustainable travel and promotion of active exploration of site of natural beauty via walking and cycling is linked to East Devon's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and reaching Net Zero. It also promotes appreciation of the natural environment and encourages visitors to reduce their environmental impact.

The programme also seeks to attract visitors outside of peak season, thus supporting the sector year-round and dispersing the financial benefits of the visitor economy. Producing visitor itineraries and providing support to off-season festivals showcases the strength of the offer beyond the summer, attracting a wider visitor base and improving the industry's resilience.

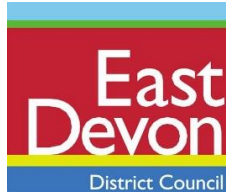
The links to cultural tourism, such as working with Sidmouth Jazz Festival, also contribute to delivery of the Culture Strategy, increasing visitor spend and supporting arts and heritage venues in the district.

Support for the SW Visitor Economy Hub also improves the accuracy and scope of how impacts are measured, enabling decision making and future scheme development to be driven by robust evidence.



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## **Appendix 2: Updated Terms of Reference for the UKSPF Panel**



# **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

## **Programme Management Panel - Terms of Reference**

### **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of the Programme Management Panel (hereafter referred to as the 'Panel') is to provide oversight and approval of all activities funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and any top-up funds directly linked to the UKSPF (such as the Rural England Prosperity Fund). Hereafter, any reference to UKSPF is taken to also apply to these top-up funds.

### **2.0 Authorities**

2.1 The Panel is responsible for overseeing the deployment of UKSPF funds, including the review and determination of grants funded through UKSPF funded grant schemes.

2.2 Cabinet has given delegated authority to the Director of Place in agreement with the Panel to:

- a) Authorise and approve the grant awards for all competitive grant schemes funded through the UKSPF and any top-up funds in accordance with the provisions of the Programme.
- b) Approve any adjustments to or the cancellation of any projects, programmes and activities identified in the 2025/26 UKSPF Programme Plan, including grant schemes and discretionary grant payments, and any internal UKSPF budget transfers above £10,000.
- c) Approve any new projects, programmes and activities, including new grant schemes and discretionary grant payments, funded through the UKSPF and any top-up funds.

### **3.0 Membership**

3.1 The Panel is to be comprised of a cross-party group of members, comprising the Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Sport, Leisure and Culture, Portfolio Holder for Climate Action & Emergency Response, two Conservative members, one of the Independent members and one Cranbrook Placemaking Group member, to be nominated by the respective Groups.

3.2 Cabinet may wish to revise the composition of the Panel due to changes in political representation resulting from local government elections to EDDC. Any membership changes will be agreed at Annual Council.

### **4.0 Meetings**

4.1 Meetings will be held on an ad hoc basis to decide upon matters relating to the authorities delegated to the Panel, such as amendments to the Programme and to determine and award grant funding.

4.2 Additional meetings may be called for officers to provide a general update on the fund.

4.3 All panel meetings where the Panel exercises its decision-making function must be attended by a minimum of two Panel members which must include at least one Cabinet member.

## **5.0 Decision making**

5.1 Decisions will be made either during Panel meetings or through written responses provided via email within a given timeframe.

5.2. Decisions will be regarded as determined where recommendations have a proposer, seconder and where the majority of voting members are in favour.

5.3 Decision making will, as far as it possible, be by consensus. In the event that this is not possible areas of disagreement and the position of individual Panel members will be recorded and recognised in the subsequent advice/recommendations.

## **6.0 Administrative Support**

6.1 The Panel will be supported by EDDC officers who will prepare a report and agenda for each meeting and keep Panel members regularly updated on the progress of the UKSPF Programme Plan and delivery of the UKSPF funded interventions.

## **7.0 Declarations of Interest**

7.1 Agendas will include a standard item requiring declarations of interests to be made. Members with a disclosable financial or personal interest in respect of a particular matter being considered by the Board should act in accordance with the Councillor's Code of Conduct of the relevant organisation that they represent.



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Appendix 3: UKSPF Project Plan for the CCA

Priority	Project Name	Spend					Capital or Revenue	Outputs/ Outcomes	Outputs	Outcomes
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL			TARGET	TARGET
Communities and Place	Leisure Programme (E10)	£0	£0	£34,000.00	£0	£34,000.00	Revenue	Number of local events or activities supported	6	-
								Number of volunteering opportunities supported	10	-
								Number of people reached	1050	-
								Improved engagement numbers	-	1350
								Increased users of facilities/amenities	-	42
	Culture Programme (E6)	£0.00	£12,521	£12,521	£12,521	£37,563.00	Revenue	Number of local events or activities supported	11	-
								Number of organisations receiving financial support through grants	9	-
								Number of organisations receiving non-financial support	30	-
								Number of volunteering opportunities supported	45	-
								Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	5	-
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support	-	7								
Improved engagement numbers	-	150								
Supporting Local Business	Prosper (E23)	Amount based on Option 1 in the proposal and three Districts taking up the support, but with a £3k reduction in marketing given the underspend in 24/25. This can be revised if higher numbers choose to participate. We propose this funding is excluded from the amount included in EDDC's grant agreement and is retained by DCC for delivery.				£75,000	Revenue	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	50	-
		Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	12	-						
		Number of enterprises with improved productivity	-	10						
		Number of new enterprises created as a result of support	-	5						
		Number of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	-	10						
	Sustainable Tourism Programme (E17)	£0	£9,000	£10,000	£10,000	£29,000.00	Revenue	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	30	-
								Number of people reached	5,000	-
								Number of local events or activities supported	30	-
								Increased visitor numbers	-	200
								Number of organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support	-	25
	Innovation & Resilience Fund (REPF 1.1)	£0	£190,000	£0	£0	£190,000	Capital	Number of enterprises receiving grants	9	-
								Amount of commercial space completed or improved	100	-
								Jobs created as a result of support	-	4
								Number of enterprises with improved productivity	-	8
								Number of enterprises adopting new or improved products or services	-	7
								Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	-	7
People and Skills	Employment Hubs Programme (E33)	We propose this funding is excluded from the amount included in EDDC's grant agreement and is retained by DCC for delivery.				£90,000.00	Revenue	Number of people supported to engage in job-searching	40	-
								Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services	25	-
								Number of people receiving support to gain employment	10	-
								Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF	-	10
								Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support	-	8
								People gaining a qualification or completing a course following support	-	20
Monitoring and Administration	N/A	Based on 15% of the remainder of the 4% admin budget				£10,025.00	Revenue	N/A		

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



## **Rive Axe Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund governance and commitment to spend**

### **Report summary:**

The water quality of the River Axe Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) has been a concern for a long time. The River Axe SAC is in unfavourable and declining status owing to nutrient enrichment and sediment pollution. East Devon District Council (EDDC), as the Competent Authority under the Habitat Regulations 2017, is required to consider the implications of these matters on the River Axe SAC before permitting any further development which has the potential to result in additional phosphate loads entering the catchment. This applies to all development of any scale and for any purpose if it potentially increases phosphate loading.

The allocation of £4.3 million by Government to EDDC to address these issues requires the creation of an agreed governance framework that can provide advice, monitoring, and support to enable the delivery of the programme scheme. This should include all key local authority partners and stakeholders involved in the delivery of the scheme.

MHCLG have specified that any recipient of funding to deliver the Nutrient Neutrality scheme requires such arrangements to be put in place by the Lead Authority as part of their terms and conditions for receiving their funding. They have also stipulated there is a requirement to commit to spend the fund by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

This report therefore proposes that Cabinet endorses the proposed governance structure and the commitment to spend the fund on nutrient mitigation in the River Axe SAC catchment.

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

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### **Recommendation:**

That Cabinet agrees:

1. To approve the proposed governance arrangement to provide the formal reporting framework and oversight for the administration of the River Axe Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund and grants delegated authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to agree terms and to enter into such agreements as are necessary for the good governance of the project.
2. To commit to the spend the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund on the delivery of nutrient mitigation with the indicative programme of spend as detailed in Appendix 2 to this Cabinet report and grants delegated authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to agree terms and vary the indicative programme of spend and arrangement as is needed to ensure the delivery of the project.

3. That authority be delegated to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, to agree terms to secure and deliver strategic mitigations including the purchase of land for the purposes of creating a nature-based solution where such purchase falls within the funding obtained from Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund. Where this involves asset acquisition, endorsement from the Assistant Director for Place, Assets and Commercialisation shall also be obtained.
4. That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Place in consultation with S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to make any variations or alterations to the project, to make any decisions and carry out any actions to ensure that the aims of the project are delivered within the required timescales.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

To enable the setting up of the appropriate governance and oversight arrangements by EDDC to facilitate the delivery of the River Axe SAC Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund programme.

To formally commit to spend the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund on nutrient mitigation measures in the River Axe SAC catchment.

Officer: Will Dommett, District Ecologist; [Will.Dommett@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:Will.Dommett@eastdevon.gov.uk) Charlie Plowden, Assistant Director – Countryside & Leisure, [cplowden@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:cplowden@eastdevon.gov.uk)

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Medium Impact. The scheme has the potential to provide nature based solutions such as new wetlands and reedbeds as well as provision of new infrastructure such as septic tanks and water treatment packages that will help to reduce the levels of phosphates entering the River Axe which in turn will positively impacts the Council's Climate Change Strategy Action Plan on adaptations and mitigations.

**Risk:** Low Risk;

### **Links to background information**

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
- ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business

## Report in full

### 1. Nutrient Neutrality

1.1 In March 2022, East Devon District Council (EDDC), Dorset Council, Somerset West & Taunton and South Somerset District Councils (now Somerset Council – a Unitary Authority) received an advice note from Natural England regarding development proposals and the unacceptable levels of nutrients (phosphorus) affecting the qualifying features of the River Axe Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

1.2 In summary, this applies to the following work development types in the catchment:

- New residential units including holiday and tourist accommodation, gypsy sites/pitches, agricultural workers dwelling;
- Commercial development – where overnight accommodation is provided;
- Agricultural development – additional barns, slurry stores etc, where it is likely to lead to an increase in herd size;
- Anaerobic Digesters;
- Reserved matters applications for residential development

1.3 An updated condition assessment of the River Axe in 2024 has confirmed the site is still within an 'Unfavourable Declining' status and Nutrient Neutrality still applies.

1.4 Residential housing budget projections within the Phosphates Mitigation Solution include 1,324 dwellings affected by Nutrient Neutrality to be delivered within the next local plan period until 2039. This figure was calculated based on what was known at the time the bid was made.

1.5 Strategic Planning Committee has subsequently agreed allocations amounting to just over 1,000 homes in Axminster itself, but mitigation will also be needed for homes coming forward in the wider catchment area as well as windfall sites not allocated in the Local Plan itself. The River Axe SAC catchment also encompassed Somerset and Dorset which require some level of mitigation provision. It should also be noted that the Local Plan will now run to 2042. There is therefore a risk that the projected number at the time of the bid may be exceeded and further mitigation required in future.

### 2. River Axe SAC Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund

2.1 The successful bid includes £4.09 million allocated to EDDC and the River Axe SAC catchment. EDDC were also awarded an addition £192,494 in capacity support funding, and a further £100,000 through the Nutrient Support Fund.

2.2 A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) sets out the terms, principles and practices that will apply to the working relationship between the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and EDDC regarding the administration and delivery of the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund (LNMF). Key points include:

- **Assurance and risk management:** The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is expected to have the necessary governance and assurance arrangements in place and to comply with all legal and other statutory obligations and consents, which may include, but not solely, state aid/subsidy control, equalities duties, procurement, health and safety and fraud.

- **Cooperation:** EDDC is acting as the lead for the group of LPAs (including Somerset and Dorset) affected and must make best endeavours to work collaboratively and ensure their local nutrient mitigation scheme can meet each area's needs.
  - The LPA may work in partnership, where appropriate, with Natural England and other stakeholders to deliver mitigation programmes.
- **Quality and cost recovery:** The LPA is responsible for due diligence and to ensure that schemes deliver effective and value-for-money mitigation; nutrient mitigation credits should be sold at a price which reflects the full cost recovery and not offer public subsidy to developments.
- **Policy approach:** The LPA should follow published Government advice and guidance where relevant. The LPA must support the implementation of any forthcoming Government policy approaches or legislative provisions, where relevant.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Grant funding is subject to full transparency open book working on all matters relating to the use of the LNMF. Monitoring and evaluation requirements, including progress reporting towards outcomes, milestones or any problems are also a requirement.

2.3 It is important that appropriate governance arrangements are put in place to manage and oversee the spend of the LNMF. Although EDDC is accountable for the fund, the intended purpose is to deliver nutrient mitigation across the whole catchment which includes parts of Somerset and Dorset. As such, it is important that representatives from these Councils are involved in decisions around the spend of the funds.

2.4 The funds have been awarded to EDDC and have the potential for multiple and some potential high value transactions to deliver mitigation projects. EDDC is responsible for the financial transactions associated with the fund and there is therefore a need for both political oversight and professional advice to ensure that spending decisions are in accordance with grant conditions.

### 3. Governance arrangements

3.1 To provide governance, it was agreed by Cabinet that Officers should explore options that already exist in Somerset and Dorset and that our decision to be guided by their experiences.

3.2 The governance arrangements will require our partners Somerset and Dorset Councils to be able to be invited to meetings even though development in their areas being impacted by the River Axe is minimal. However, these areas may provide important locations for mitigation measures for development in East Devon should be part of the programme's decision-making framework.

3.3 Based on existing governance arrangements the following is proposed to provide the right framework for overseeing, monitoring, and steering the delivery of the River Axe LNMF programme. It includes two groups and a delivery team. The detailed remit of these groups will need to be refined but a suggested role for each group in meeting the requirements of the various MoU associated with the fund is provided.

- **Oversight Group:** responsible for the management of the fund ensuring that the aims of the fund are met, that the requirements within the corresponding MoU are met, and that the mitigation provided offers good value for money. The portfolio holder and relevant town councillors would provide political oversight for the group. The Oversight Group will not be decision making and that decisions will be made by Cabinet.
- **Steering Group:** includes delivery partners and officers from EDDC, Somerset, and Dorset Council. The purpose of this group would be to offer guidance to the Delivery Group bringing in their expertise and to examine the detail of the proposed mitigation projects.

- **Delivery Team:** officers responsible for identifying, evaluating, and delivering mitigation projects. This team would work with contractors and partner organisations (e.g. Westcountry Rivers Trust) to identify and deliver projects. The team would report to and feed into the Steering Group.

3.4 Details regarding the membership, purpose, structure, and how the governance arrangement would comply with the MoU terms are provided in Appendix 1.

3.5 To be able to progress the oversight and delivery of the programme dedicated resource in the form of a full-time Nutrient Mitigation Officer and a Nutrient Support Officer is envisioned to action meaningful change, in combination with delivery partners. These officers will form the core of the Delivery Team.

#### 4. Indicative spend

4.1 EDDC has been awarded £4.3m to deliver nutrient mitigation within the River Axe catchment. Nutrient mitigation will offset the nutrient impact of new development within EDDC, and within Somerset and Dorset Council parts of the catchment by offsetting the additional nutrient loading.

4.2 The terms of the LNMF award include the requirement to commit to spend the funds on a programme of interventions within the catchment to deliver nutrient mitigation by the end of the 2024/25 financial year. It is for Section 151 officers to determine how spend is committed. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet agree to commit to spend the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund award on a programme of mitigation measures similar to that set out in Appendix 2.

4.3 When the Expression of Interest was made to the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund in April 2024, a number of programmes were included as the basis of the funding bid. Some of these may no longer be suitable as different proposals have subsequently been identified. This evolution of projects over time is to be expected.

4.4 A programme of projects and associated indicative costs has been put together and is included at Appendix 2 to this report. Mitigation projects can be grouped into two main types, those that relate to greywater systems and those that are more nature-based.

- **Greywater:** Upgrading of package treatment plants and septic tanks to deliver reductions in nutrient. Water saving measures on council house stock connected to mains sewage, to further reduce nutrient outflows from wastewater treatment works.
- **Nature-based solutions:** Riparian buffers, cover crops, and restoration/construction of wetlands.

4.5 The information in Appendix 2 is intended to identify programme types that will result in nutrient reductions. It should however be noted that this is a snapshot of the projects that are thought to be deliverable over the coming years but that some of these projects may well fall by the wayside. Other projects will appear to replace these, meaning that there will be opportunities to refocus spend on the most cost effective and deliverable projects at that point in time.

4.6 The proposed Governance Structure, outlined above and in Appendix 1, will help to ensure the funds are spent appropriately to deliver nutrient mitigation.

4.7 The Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund award has been made on a full cost recovery basis and therefore the ongoing costs associated with mitigation projects, such as administration costs

and project evaluation costs, will be recouped through the sale of credits therefore will not have an impact on existing budgets.

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**Financial implications:**

No further direct financial implication resulting from the report, commitment of the awarded sum is requested

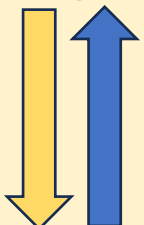
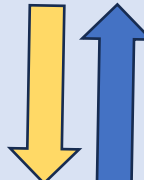
**Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report. Legal Services will assist with any relevant delivery and with ensuring the good governance of the programme.

## Appendix 1 - Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund (LNMF) Governance structure

Clear criteria are needed to be established to support mitigation project selection to ensure decisions are transparent and consider all available options to select best value projects. The criteria would need to consider the potential for additional public benefits that can be realised because of project delivery however the focus needs to remain on the delivery of nutrient mitigation.

The proposed governance arrangements would involve two groups. The detailed remit of these groups will need to be refined but a suggested role for each group in meeting the requirements of the MoU associated with the fund, is included in **Table 1**.

Group	Membership	Frequency of meetings
<b>Oversight Group</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portfolio holder for Coast, Country &amp; Environment</li> <li>Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning</li> <li>Axminster Town Council</li> <li>Ward Members</li> <li>EDDC Finance officer</li> <li>EDDC Senior officer</li> </ul>	Initially, meetings set up on a quarterly basis with special meetings where needed to agree to larger projects or consider items deferred to the group. There would be the option to cancel a meeting if there was nothing to consider.
<b>Steering Group</b>	EDDC Officers (including Ecology, Assets, Finance & Legal) Somerset Council Dorset Council Natural England Delivery partners (WRT, etc.)	Monthly
<b>Delivery Team</b> 	Nutrient Mitigation Officer Nutrient Support Officer District Ecologist	Day to day discussions / team working. Day to day liaison with advisors.



## **Oversight Group**

- To provide a reference group of District and Town Councillors with officer support to inform the ongoing delivery and development of the River Axe SAC LNMF programme so as to achieve the aims and objectives of the Nutrient Neutrality Round 2 programme;
- To make recommendations to East Devon District Council's Cabinet on the development and management of the programme;
- To receive briefings and reports from the River Axe LNMF Steering Group and EDDC officers and to act as a point of reference for the successful delivery of the programme;
- To monitor progress on achieving the delivery of the River Axe LNMF delivery plan and its agreed outputs/outcomes (in partnership with Somerset and Dorset Councils);
- To advise on and input to external expert and professional consultancy;
- To support further engagement of public and stakeholders;
- To promote best practice, help overcome barriers and promote optimal outcomes for the benefit of reducing the levels of phosphates within the River Axe SAC and to ensure it returns to a 'Favourable Condition';
- To liaise with and share information between the two tiers of local government (including Somerset Council and Dorset Council) as well as relevant Stakeholder groups as appropriate.

The Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund awards are only to be used to deliver nutrient mitigation within the River Axe catchment. As such, the funds should be ring-fenced for this purpose and specific arrangements put in place to enable the fund to be spent efficiently.

Feasibility work often costs between £20,000 and £50,000. Many of the smaller projects are likely to have a cost of between £100,000 and £500,000. These types of projects include the creation of wetlands, smaller land acquisitions, tree planting and some greywater solutions.

For land purchases, there is often a need to respond to market opportunities relatively quickly to secure the opportunity. Granting delegated authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Council's statutory officers allows for flexibility whilst ensuring good governance and due process. All due diligence will be carried out in any such situation. Granting this authority specifically within the funds provided by the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund, will enable opportunities for land purchase and other capital projects to be secured swiftly and the management of the fund to be more agile. This level of delegation would enable significant areas of land to be secured to deliver mitigation.

The Oversight Group would meet on a quarterly basis with the opportunity to call special meetings should there be a need, giving the group an opportunity to consider these significant projects if appropriate.

### Membership:

Chair: EDDC Portfolio Holder

Axminster Town Council (to invite representation)

East Devon District Council;

Ward Members

Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning

Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country & Environment

Somerset Council

Dorset Council

### **Steering Group**

The Steering Group would involve delivery partners and officers from EDDC, Somerset, and Dorset Councils, as well as non-departmental government organisations, including Natural England and Environment Agency..

- The purpose of this group would be to offer guidance to the Delivery Team bringing in their expertise and to examine the detail of the proposed mitigation projects.

### Membership:

River Axe LNMF Programme Officer

River Axe LNMF Admin Support Officer

District Ecologist, EDDC

Assistant Director – Countryside & Leisure, EDDC

Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, EDDC

Senior Planning Officer (East Team), EDDC

**Chair:** The Chair will be a member from East Devon District Council

Attendance will normally be limited to members of the Steering Group from the authorities. Other parties may be invited to join the meeting as appropriate where the Steering Group agrees that their involvement is beneficial. Agendas will be timetabled to facilitate this process.

### Administrative Support

The secretariat for the Overview and Steering Group will be provided by East Devon District Council. The secretariat will minute all meetings and record any actions arising there from.

Agendas will include a standard item requiring declarations of interests to be made. Members with a disclosable financial or personal interest in respect of a particular matter being considered by the Steering Group should act in accordance with the Councillor's Code of Conduct of the relevant organisation that they represent.

Meetings of the Group will be open to the public (Part A) but may have a private part to the meeting (Part B) to discuss confidential and sensitive matters.

To ensure that there is public awareness of the Group's activities, discussions and project progress, notes of meetings will be publicly available and published as part of the District Council's Cabinet agendas.

**Decision making:** Decision making will, as far as it possible, be by consensus. In the event that this is not possible areas of disagreement and the position of individual organisations will be recorded and recognised in the subsequent advice/recommendations.

**Review:** The group's terms of reference will be reviewed every two years.

Item (summarised from MoU associated with LNMF grant awards)	Oversight Group	Steering Group	Delivery Team
<b>Aims:</b>			
i. Deliver nutrient mitigation interventions in the catchment within 2024/25 and 2025/26.	Ensure nutrient mitigation is delivered.	Consider and advise on mitigation opportunities that arise within the catchment.	Identify diverse range of mitigation opportunities within catchment.
ii. Unblock (by making nutrient mitigation capacity available for developers) 1,000 homes in the long term.	Ensure mitigation is delivered at the required rate.	Drive the delivery of mitigation at the required rate.	Deliver mitigation at the rate needed to keep pace with development.
iii. Reinvest returns to deliver nutrient mitigation for the long term until no longer required – i.e., when there are no adverse effects from residential development.	Ensure returns received cover costs and are reinvested. Consider evidence of 'favourable condition' and when there will be no further need for mitigation.	Ensure mitigation credit value set to cover full cost of mitigation.	Identify cost effective mitigation that offers value for money, acting in an efficient way to deliver mitigation.
<b>Requirements:</b>			
i. Ensure schemes deliver effective value for money.	Receive reports on cost of mitigation and credits released – ensure credit costs are kept competitive	Ensure value for money and report to Oversight Group on costs.	Ensure efficient and cost-effective delivery of mitigation.
ii. Full cost recovery – including admin costs.	Ensure efficient use of resource and reinvestment of funds.	Ensure costs of credits cover all costs associated with their delivery.	Ensure full record of costs for each mitigation project is maintained and used to calculate credit value.

iii.	Cooperation between Councils.	Joint working between partner councils	Engage proactively across councils, providing timely information and managing processes.	Facilitate full engagement and participation with partner councils
iv.	Deliver mitigation at the catchment level.	Ensure mitigation is delivered for development across the whole catchment.	Monitor the distribution of credit sales to ensure even split across the catchment.	Ensure mitigation is delivered at the most appropriate locations across the catchment.
v.	Follow Government advice and guidance.	Consider reports on changes to government advice and guidance.	Identify and interpret government advice and guidance.	Keep track of and respond to latest advice and guidance from Government.
vi.	Consider secondary public benefits – public access to nature, natural flood risk, etc.	Champion the delivery of wider public benefits as a result of mitigation.	Actively consider opportunities for delivering wider public benefits associated with mitigation delivery.	Actively consider mitigation projects that will also deliver secondary public benefits, work to maximise these secondary public benefits.
<b>Monitoring and reporting:</b>				
i.	Keep a record of expenditure, mitigation provided, and homes unblocked.	Receive reports on the effectiveness of mitigation.	Keep a complete record of mitigation provision and reconcile against residential development delivered across the whole catchment.	Ensure detailed records of spend, mitigation provided, and homes unblocked are maintained for each mitigation project.
ii.	Report to MHCLG on a quarterly basis (subject to MHCLG requirements which are still to be defined).	Agree content of reports to be sent to MHCLG.	Report on mitigation delivery to meet MHCLG requirements.	Prepare material for reporting to MHCLG as required.
iii.	Maintain transparency on use of fund.	Review information for publishing on mitigation fund spend.	Ensure appropriate information is published on website and reported to Oversight Group.	Ensure appropriate information is published on website.

iv.	Participate in workshops and round table discussions with PAS.	Engage with PAS workshops where relevant.	Nominate attendance at PAS workshops to gather and disseminate best practice.	Participate in PAS workshops.
v.	Complete end of grant evaluation (in 2025/26).	Agree content of 'end of grant' evaluation to be submitted to MHCLG.	Put together response to 'end of grant' evaluation.	Prepare information for 'end of grant' evaluation
vi.	Respond to MHCLG information requests.	Consider content of any responses to MHCLG information requests as necessary.	Consider content of any responses to MHCLG information requests as necessary.	Respond to requests for information from MHCLG in a timely manner, reporting to Steering Group as necessary.
<b>Governance:</b>				
i.	Ensure compliance with all legal and statutory obligations – state aid, subsidy control, equalities, procurement, health and safety, fraud.	Take overall responsibility for ensuring legal and statutory obligations are met.	Take responsibility for ensuring correct processes and assessments are followed to meet legal and statutory obligations. Agree project selection criteria and keep under review.	Obtain legal advice and undertake the necessary assessments of the spend of the fund and ensure the strategy for delivering mitigation meets all statutory obligations. Establish clear criteria for mitigation project selection.
ii.	Undertake due diligence on other organisations that are involved in the fund.	Take overall responsibility for due diligence on third parties involved in the fund.	Undertake due diligence of partner organisations in mitigation delivery.	Prepare information to enable due diligence on partner organisations and ensure correct process is followed.

## **Appendix 2 - Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund (LNMF) outline**

EDDC has been awarded £4.09m from the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund to deliver nutrient mitigation within the River Axe SAC catchment.

This award was made with notification made via a letter received in October 2024 after an Expression of Interest was made to the fund in April 2024. This Expression of Interest included several programs and indicative mitigation opportunities to deliver nutrient mitigation within the catchment. This programme of interventions would support development with different projects being deliverable at different timescales.

The Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund was awarded to EDDC as the lead authority for the River Axe catchment. Mitigation provided through the planned programme of interventions will deliver nutrient mitigation for qualifying development within EDDC, Somerset, and Dorset.

The council will develop and deliver a range of different mitigation projects which can be broadly categorised into two themes: greywater solutions and nature-based solutions. For some projects 'measurable nutrient reduction' will be relatively-straight forward to achieve whilst for others, there will be some initial uncertainty on credit delivery requiring further feasibility work. Having a variety of delivery options ensures that the programme remains flexible, which will help to reduce the risks connected with delivering projects.

With some mitigation solution types, general understanding, policy, and guidance is still evolving. For example, guidance regarding the efficiencies of nutrient reduction that can be achieved from the various nature-based mitigation options which will help to inform future mitigation spend.

In addition to the award from the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund, EDDC has also awarded an addition £192,494 in capacity support funding, and a further £100,000 through the Nutrient Support Fund revenue funding to support the delivery of nutrient mitigation. This revenue funding will help to ensure the necessary staff resources are in place to deliver nutrient mitigation and administer the supply of nutrient credits. In the long term, the costs associated with nutrient mitigation will form part of the costs associated with each project.

### **Program overview**

It is proposed to provide short term mitigation solutions and options, whilst assessing and carrying out feasibility on longer term options. The initial bid includes the following solutions to deliver phosphate mitigation which include both temporary and permanent solutions.

- Upgrading of package treatment plants (PTPs) and septic tanks (ST)
- Nature Based solutions (NbS):

- Riparian buffers, cover crops, and restoration of wetlands until the legal upgrades of sewage treatment works
- Constructed wetlands linked to unpermitted WWTW.
- Water Saving Measures on council house stock connected to permitted WWTW.

### **Upgrading of package treatment plants and septic tanks**

The upgrading of septic tanks/package treatment plants (PTPs) can reduce phosphates (P) and would be used to generate phosphorus credits.

There are currently two main models for delivery which include the Wiltshire model whereby the grants are paid directly to approved third party contractors to facilitate the installation, planning and consenting process. Details regarding nutrient budgets, legal agreements, and landowner interaction are undertaken by the Council and delivery partners, e.g., Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT).

An alternative approach or 'Norfolk' model whereby all works to secure and deliver PTPs are undertaken by registered providers. This process relies on a strategic and mitigation framework, including how nutrient calculations are worked out. The Fund would procure the credits generated from the registered providers and sell the credits to developers.

EDDC also own its own council house stock within the affected catchment, and these will be considered for upgrade in the first instant.

There is also scope to identify and approach Caravan and camping sites and schools that can be upgraded with PTP replacements as P outputs and loadings tend to be high for these.

### **Water saving measures and council house stock**

The use of water saving measures can reduce P when dwellings are serviced by permitted WwTWs. NE has approved the use of water saving measures for HRAs in Somerset when retrofitted by a social housing provider.

EDDC have 470 council houses and bungalows within the Axe catchment serviced by permitted WwTW that offer a potential 10 kg/yr mitigation, when considering varying permit levels.

### **Nature-based solutions**

Nature Based Solutions (NbS) such as riparian buffers, cover crops and restoration of wetland areas offer multiple benefits far beyond nutrient mitigation and provide multiple ecosystem services.

The creation of larger scale wetlands could also offer potential high levels of phosphate removal.



These interventions also help to improve the River Axe SAC by protecting and adding to habitat features, and in areas are seen as key climate change adaption solutions.

**Feasibility, consultants etc.**

The delivery of nutrient mitigation measures and subsequent trading will also involve a number of new processes to be setup, such as sales contracts, legal agreements, landowner negotiations, software, and feasibility studies, e.g., water quality monitoring, slope analysis etc.

These processes will require the procurement of expert advice and consulting to ensure measures are legally compliant and robust.

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

## Trees, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy for East Devon 2024-2034

### Report summary:

The Tree, Hedgerow & Woodland Strategy (THaWS) for East Devon was approved for development by Overview Committee in March 2024 and following the Devon Procurement process. Treeconomics Ltd were appointed in July 2024 to start the process of leading the consultation and shaping of an East Devon THaWS.

Since the work began there has been a public consultation on the draft Strategy, a public survey/questionnaire and workshops involving East Devon Cllrs, Parish & Town Councils, key stakeholders including Forestry England, Natural England, Devon Clinton Estates, National Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust and Devon County Council. There have been internal workshops held with Council teams such as Streetscene, Housing, Planning, Planning Enforcement, Countryside and Estates. The work has been overseen and guided by a Client Group of Officers to ensure that at every step of the development of the Strategy that detailed comments, checks and amendments have been made to ensure it is a Strategy that is both relevant and deliverable for the Council.

There is an associated Delivery Plan that identifies which are the priority levels of action required to drive the Strategy's ambitions forward and the necessary organisations to help enable and facilitate this work that will require wider partnership working. It is also recognised that there are actions identified within the Strategy that go beyond 'business as usual' for our existing resources and capacity and these will need to be carefully considered before any additional resources can be identified to help their delivery.

It must not be forgotten that is a ten-year Strategy to enable the targets that may be set for tree planting to be achieved and also to link in with our Climate Change and Nature Recovery work. We will need to report on the progress of delivering the East Devon THaWS and it is likely that some of the targets will only be visible within that ten-year timeline.

Currently the Council's internal tree related resources are deployed on tree protection and liaison with planning through the Arboricultural team and the management of the Council's owned trees and woodlands by Streetscene and Countryside teams in our parks, gardens and Nature Reserves.

The Strategy has ensured it is also closely aligned with the recently published Devon Tree & Woodland Strategy 2024 as well as other core Council Strategies on climate change, health and wellbeing and our existing Local Plan to ensure there is synergy

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

That Cabinet approves:

- The adoption of the Tree, Hedgerow & Woodland Strategy for East Devon 2024 -2034 which reflects the ambitions and opportunities to protect East Devon's trees, hedges and woodland and create new opportunities for tree planting working in partnership with key stakeholders;

### **Reason for recommendation:**

To enable the draft Strategy to be presented to Cabinet for approval as its formal Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy for East Devon DC.

Officer: Charlie Plowden, Assistant Director – Countryside & Leisure; [cplowden@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:cplowden@eastdevon.gov.uk)  
Alistair Jeans – Arboricultural Team Manager, [AJeans@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:AJeans@eastdevon.gov.uk)

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

**Equalities impact** Low Impact. The Strategy underwent an extensive process of carrying out a public consultation as well as carrying out a public survey with the results within the Strategy. The Strategy also consulted with a wide range of partner organisations, Town and Parish Councils and also internal officers. The EIA had a residual risk finding of low, which is reflected in this section

### **Climate change** High Impact

The Strategy seeks to increase the District's tree canopy cover to a target of 30% from 22% (compared to the national average of 15%) and if achieved will help the Council meet its net zero target for 2040.

**Risk:** Low Risk;

### **Links to background information**

[Tree, Hedge & Woodland Strategy for East Devon 2024 - 2034 KPIs and Targets](#)

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

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
- ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

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## Report in full

### **1. The ambitions of the Tree, Hedgerow & Woodland Strategy (THaWS) for East Devon**

- 1.1 The agreed purpose of the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy (THaWS) for East Devon was to ensure there is both alignment and active delivery partner with the Devon Tree & Woodland Strategy 2024. The Devon Strategy provides the county-wide framework for how we can look to increase our tree and woodland cover as well as linking with Local Nature Recovery work, Climate Change adaptation and mitigation targets and also how we engage all our partners, communities and organisations in helping to ensure we manage our treescapes and woodlands.
- 1.2 The East Devon THaWS has set an achievable target for its tree canopy cover by 2034 which will be achieved through a programme of planting trees facilitated through a wide range of partner organisations such as the Woodland Trust, National Trust and the Saving Devon's Treescape project (supported by East Devon DC) as well as the Council's own programme for tree planting programme and its commitment to enabling natural regeneration with its Local Nature Reserves over the ten year period of the plan which links directly to our Climate Change Strategy and also with the planned Local Nature Recovery Plan for East Devon.
- 1.3 In doing so we will aim to increase the number of trees unavoidably lost with the caveat of the unknown quantity of trees which may be lost to ash dieback. The THaWS has set our target tree cover target of achieving 30% from our existing 22% within the lifetime of the document and also identify where the opportunities lie and who are likely to be our key partners. The trees that are planted will see the district's tree canopy cover significantly increase by the time they are fully grown.
- 1.4 Fundamental to this approach in the Strategy is to adopt the principle of "the right tree for the right place" in order to ensure the most resilient tree population possible.
- 1.5 Also the Strategy has clearly identified that we cannot work in isolation and that any meaningful progress in delivering the actions will require having a constructive relationship with Town & Parish Councils, communities and environmental groups to deliver the ambitions within the Strategy.

### **2. The Importance of a Tree, Hedge, and Woodland Strategy (THaWS) for East Devon District Council**

- 2.1 The development of a comprehensive Tree, Hedge, and Woodland Strategy for East Devon District Council is vital for promoting sustainability, enhancing biodiversity, and improving the quality of life for its residents.
- 2.2 However, whilst there already exists a plethora of good guidance, policy, research and expertise on the benefits of trees and the need for greater tree cover in the UK, it worth noting that across East Devon District one of the wards in terms of the lowest tree cover is Cranbrook with just 10.8% tree canopy cover (average of 22% across EDDC).
- 2.3 One of the key purposes of this strategy, with clear, measurable targets and goals, is to close the gap between the well intentioned ideals with action. Implementing a Tree, Hedge, and Woodland Strategy is not just an environmental imperative but a holistic approach to enhancing community life in East Devon. By committing to this strategy, East Devon District

Council can foster a vibrant, resilient ecosystem that benefits both people and nature, helping to ensure a sustainable future for all.

2.4 The Strategy has through its development helped to inform and strengthen the Council's Local Plan tree policies within the current Local Plan review. The planned review of the existing Supplementary Planning Document for Trees and Development will also again help to provide developers, local residents and communities greater clarity on the Council's expectations for how trees are to be looked after and protected.

2.5 The Strategy will bring together all the Council's duties and responsibilities for its own trees and also its statutory responsibilities for tree and hedge protection into one coherent document. The Council is committed to ensuring it continues to protect its trees through the work of the Arboricultural Team but it also recognises that more needs to be done with increasing our tree canopy cover with tree planting. There should be equal weight given to both which will mean working more closely with our local communities to achieve increased tree planting opportunities.

### **3. Key Reasons for the THaW Strategy for East Devon:**

#### **Setting a Vision**

A clear and comprehensive vision for the Tree, Hedge, and Woodland Strategy is crucial as it sets long-term goals and guides decision-making, resource allocation, and policy development towards cohesive and sustainable outcomes.

#### **Enhancing Biodiversity:**

Urban trees and hedgerows serve as critical habitats for wildlife, contributing to the conservation of local flora and fauna. The strategy will support efforts to increase the ecological connectivity of habitats, allowing species to thrive amidst urban development.

#### **Climate Resilience:**

Trees play a pivotal role in sequestering carbon dioxide, thereby mitigating climate change effects. Increased tree cover can significantly contribute to local carbon reduction goals.

Strategic planting can help manage urban heat, reduce flooding through improved water retention, and enhance air quality.

#### **Public Health and Wellbeing:**

Access to green spaces and urban forests has been linked to improved mental health and physical wellbeing. The strategy will aim to increase public access to these natural resources, fostering a sense of community. Incorporating green infrastructure into urban planning can enhance recreational spaces and encourage outdoor activities.

#### **Community Engagement and Education:**

The strategy will actively involve local communities in tree planting and maintenance efforts, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards local green spaces.

Educational programs about the benefits of trees and hedgerows can empower residents and encourage environmentally responsible behaviour.

#### **Alignment with Regional and National Goals:**

The strategy will align with the Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy and national objectives outlined in the England Trees Action Plan.

By participating in broader initiatives, East Devon can secure funding opportunities for tree planting and woodland management.

## **Sustainable Urban Development:**

Integrating trees and hedgerows into planning processes will enhance the aesthetic value of developments and contribute to biodiversity net gain requirements.

The strategy will advocate for the preservation of existing green spaces and the incorporation of trees in new developments, ensuring a balanced approach to urban expansion.

## **Economic Benefits:**

Investing in urban forestry can boost local economies by increasing property values and attracting tourism. A healthy urban forest can reduce energy costs through natural shading, lowering air conditioning needs in warmer months.

## **Developing Community Partnerships:**

Collaborate with local organisations, schools, and volunteers for tree planting events and educational initiatives.

## **Integrating with Local Planning:**

Ensure that tree planting and preservation are incorporated into local development plans, following the mitigation hierarchy to protect existing biodiversity.

## **Establishing Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms:**

Set clear targets for tree planting and woodland management, with regular reporting on progress to ensure accountability and transparency.

## **4. Engagement process**

4.1 There has been a considerable amount of engagement in developing the Strategy with both the public, Councillors, partner organisations, Parish and Town Councils as well as internal Officers. This has been essential to ensure there is “buy in” from all the relevant organisations and internal teams to ensure there is both ownership of the Strategy but also agreement to its delivery.

4.2 The Strategy has benefited from the following activities over the last six months:

- Undertaken a public consultation on the draft Strategy;
- Undertaken a public survey;
- Consulted with all the key stakeholders in 2 workshops;
- Consulted with EDDC Councillors and all local Parish and Town Councils in 3 workshops;
- Consulted with Overview Committee in 2 meetings;
- Consulted with internal EDDC teams in 2 workshops;
- Consulted with Planning Enforcement in 1 meeting;
- Developed a comprehensive set of Actions and linked Key Performance Indicators that will help track future evaluation and review on low to optimal performance in delivering on the actions.
- Developed a comprehensive portfolio of datasets showing tree cover across the district and linked opportunity zones for tree planting.

## **5. EDDC delivery priority areas**

5.1 Throughout the process of developing the Strategy it has become clear that the successful delivery of the ambitions and actions within it cannot rely solely on East Devon DC. This has to be a wider partnership based approach especially in areas such as tree planting, community engagement and some of the nature recovery related outcomes e.g. natural regeneration of

woodlands. This will help enable the district as an area to achieve its target of 30% tree canopy cover by 2034.

5.2 The workshops carried out that have involved bodies such as the Woodland Trust, National Trust and Forestry England have started to embed this partnership approach and also commitment to helping the Council meets its targets. It has become evident also throughout the Strategy development process that these organisations have very ambitious tree planting targets for the region, Devon and therefore East Devon and crucially they have significant landholdings to be able to achieve their targets.

5.3 However, there are clear areas identified within the Strategy that will be led by East Devon DC and internal teams will take forward the actions identified within the day to day delivery of their work programmes. This means by embedding this approach there is a long term sustainable way of ensuring targets can be met without drawing on the Council's stretched budget.

5.4 The internal workshops held in developing the Strategy has helped foster and create a much more collaborative approach to managing our trees. The focus will be on how we can create opportunities for planting more trees on our own land, engaging with our local communities to help care for our trees and strengthening the way we protect our existing treescape as well as identifying opportunities to create new woodland through the planning process. The Strategy has identified the **high priority areas for the Council's existing resources to focus on within the next three years are:**

KEY ACTIONS (from THaWS)	Priority	Commence	Who leads	Resources
T5: Complete a tree inventory of EDDC owned trees that includes detailed tree condition	High	2025/26	EDDC Streetscene  EDDC Arb team	Internal
T8: Carry out mapping and surveying of EDDC owned woodland and nature reserves that enable both tree planting opportunities and natural regeneration to occur. Work to establish ecologically robust locally relevant habitat banks.	High	2025/26	EDDC Countryside  EDDC Ecology	Internal
C1 & C2: Work with internal officers and local communities to support Tree Champion scheme, community planting initiatives and provide training to help with mapping of community trees and hedges	High	2026/27	EDDC Countryside  EDDC Streetscene  The Woodland Trust	Internal  Saving Devon Treescape funds
R3: Work towards the 3-30-300 target for new developments . Also set to achieve the 30% tree canopy cover for the District by 2034 working with key partners and local communities to identify suitable tree planting projects.	High	2025/26	EDDC Streetscene  EDDC Countryside  EDDC Development Management  Woodland Trust Devon Wildlife Trust etc	Internal  Woodland Trust  Saving Devon's Treescape Fund
R4: Working with the Woodland Trust set up pilot tree equity projects in East Devon's urban areas where there is the greatest	High	2025/26	EDDC Countryside	Internal  Woodland Trust funds

social needs to focus on tree planting and community engagement			The Woodland Trust	
R5 & R6: Update existing SPD – Trees & Development for Local Plan review; achieve 90% success for new tree establishment in development after 5 years; improve tree enforcement policies, processes and actions; better protection with TPOs on existing & consented landscape schemes to increase tree retention	High	2025/26	EDDC Arboriculture  EDDC Ecology EDDC Development Management  EDDC Enforcement	Internal
R11: Improve the maintenance regime of publicly owned trees to ensure the Council has an up to date inventory and inspection programme; work to include better monitoring of pests & diseases, risk management etc	High	2025/26	EDDC Streetscene  EDDC Housing	Internal

## 6. Summary

- 6.1 The development and adoption of the East Devon THaWS is a key milestone for the Council and will now provide the agreed approach going forward for how we manage our own responsibilities for our trees, hedges and woodlands as well as strengthening and improving how we protect and secure our future treescape. There are significant challenges with managing such an ambitious Strategy within existing resources however with a carefully planned and co-ordinated approach amongst key internal teams we can be confident we can make good progress against those high priority areas allocated to internal teams.
- 6.2 The most significant area for achieving greater tree canopy cover and ensuring on going management of newly planted trees will be working with all our local communities. The success of much that is within the Strategy will rely on how our local communities can help support the Council to achieve its aims in the Strategy. There has been excellent work within some of our towns such as Sidmouth and Exmouth for many years to increase urban tree cover which can help to inspire our other towns to follow a similar path. This will mean looking to scale up our Tree Champion scheme, working more proactively with our existing volunteers in Countryside as well as supporting Streetscene's developing community tree planting programme to help support our towns and rural communities.
- 6.3 Through the Strategy development work and workshops there is an emerging opportunity to collaborate much more effectively with East Devon's larger landowners such as the National Trust, Forestry England and Clinton Devon Estates to achieve our tree canopy target by 2034. Also collaborating with the Woodland Trust's target on tree planting which focuses on its tree equity programme and increasing tree canopy cover in our most socially deprived areas where there is often very low tree canopy cover. There is now universally accepted research that links improving our health and wellbeing with our natural environment including trees and the tree equity programme can help to facilitate this outcome.
- 6.4 The challenge all along has been to ensure that the Strategy is helping to support and align with other key documents such as the Devon Tree & Woodland Strategy 2024, East Devon DC's Climate Change Strategy and the emerging East Devon Local Nature Recovery Plan being led by East Devon DC. The East Devon THaWS has therefore sought to align and help support all these other important Strategies so that as a Council we can have greater cohesion to the work on our addressing our Climate and Nature Emergencies. This will ensure all our internal teams and resources can be better co-ordinated to achieve maximum/optimal results



that will help the Council to tackle areas such as climate change adaptation, improving our nature recovery outcomes such as joining up fragmented wildlife corridors with new hedges and woodland that supports our priority species.

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**Financial implications:**

No Direct financial implication arise from the report

**Legal implications:**

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

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



## **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – Habitat banks, monitoring, and fees**

### **Report summary:**

All relevant developments must achieve at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) mandated by the Environment Act 2021. New habitats created or enhanced through BNG must be maintained for at least 30 years.

If BNG cannot be delivered on-site, off-site measures on land controlled by the developer or a Habitat Bank can be used. As a last resort, Statutory Credits can also be purchased from Natural England. A habitat bank is a site where habitats are created, restored, or enhanced to generate biodiversity units that can be sold to developers to offset the environmental impact of their projects.

Monitoring reports on the delivery of BNG must be provided to the Council over the 30-years which must be reported to central government with no additional funding.

Off-site BNG habitats must be registered on the Natural England off-site (biodiversity gain site) register. To register, providers must have a legal agreement (Section 106) with the Council or via a Conservation Covenant (CC) with a responsible body.

Currently, there are no Habitat Banks in East Devon, but there is interest, meaning that currently development impacts can lawfully be offset outside of East Devon. Registration of habitat banks, within East Devon, will ensure development impacts are offset locally and help facilitate the delivery of the local plan.

Establishing and monitoring legal agreements, including potential enforcement issues, requires significant resources and potential risks, so it is important to focus on suitable sites. The Council can secure fees to cover these costs, but it is a significant commitment and up to the Council to decide whether to enter into these legal agreements. Therefore, it is proposed to recover costs where BNG monitoring is required.

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

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### **Recommendation:**

That Cabinet:

- 1.1. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management to enter into S106 legal agreements with landowners, habitat bank providers, and other persons with an interest in the land to secure a habitat bank based on the outlined framework.
- 1.2. Approves the principle and proposed fee structure for BNG monitoring and reporting based on full cost recovery.
- 1.3. Notes that the fees will be reviewed at least annually in relation to inflation, pay awards, and considering emerging data and/or policy or guidance.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

Facilitating habitat banks will contribute to the Council's statutory duty regarding biodiversity and demonstrate its commitments in the Nature Recovery Declaration, facilitate the delivery of the Local Plan, and the Council Plan.

The Council must establish a transparent process and consistent approach to determine the appropriateness of third-party proposals, prioritise them, and decide why it is willing to enter into legal agreements. It also requires a transparent framework to recover reasonable fees with the Council's costs associated with BNG.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** High Risk; To not secure habitat banks could result in development impacts being offset outside of East Devon and impede the delivery of the Local Plan. Without charging fees the Council is legally obliged to monitor and report on BNG delivery at its own cost.

### **Links to background information**

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
- ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

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## Report in full

### 2. Background

- 2.1. The [Environment Act 2021](#) mandates that all relevant developments from 2024 must deliver a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to ensure that developments deliver measurable improvements in biodiversity. BNG is measured using the Defra [Statutory Biodiversity Metric \(SBM\)](#).
- 2.2. Biodiversity value (including area, linear, and watercourses) is quantified in Biodiversity Units (BUs). All habitat types present on site must deliver 10% gain if present, regardless of whether there is a predicted impact.
- 2.3. BNG can be achieved through creation or enhancement of habitats on-site (within the redline boundary); a combination of on-site and off-site (off-site can be within the ownership boundary or from the off-site market (including from a habitat bank); or as a last resort developers must [buy statutory biodiversity credits](#).
- 2.4. Developers can use a combination of these measures but they must ensure they follow the [biodiversity gain hierarchy](#), a sequential approach to BNG delivery, a separate consideration to the [mitigation hierarchy](#).

### 3. Biodiversity Gain Plan

- 3.1. All relevant BNG planning applications are subject to a [deemed pre-commencement condition](#) (the biodiversity gain condition) which ensures that development may not commence unless a [Biodiversity Gain Plan \(BGP\)](#) has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The BGP sets out how the biodiversity gain objective of at least a 10% gain will be met. Special arrangements are in place for phased developments.

### 4. Off-site BNG delivery (including Habitat Banks)

- 4.1. Where appropriately justified, development proposals may rely in part or in whole upon an off-site BNG solution. The appropriate solution will differ from site to site but should be governed by the biodiversity gain hierarchy.
- 4.2. All off-site gains must be legally secured, either by a Section 106 (S106) planning obligation or through a conservation covenant secured with a Responsible Body. Off-site gains may be secured on other adjacent land in the same ownership (i.e. land within the 'blue line'); other land under option by the applicant/developer; or land in a third-party ownership.
- 4.3. Off-site providers effectively enhance or create habitat on a specific piece of land which is entirely separate to any specific development proposal. This habitat generates 'biodiversity units' as measured through the SBM. These biodiversity units can be sold to developers for reliance upon in meeting their off-site BNG obligations.
- 4.4. There are two key delivery mechanisms for bringing forward off-site BNG solutions:
- 4.5. Habitat banks – habitat enhancement/creation in advance of securing sales of resulting biodiversity units.

- Habitat to order – off-site provider enhances/creates habitat only in response to a specific requirement from a development.

4.6. Any off-site gains contributing towards the delivery of BNG must be listed on the Natural England (NE) [biodiversity gain sites register](#). Developers (or their agents) are responsible for registering sites which require a secured legal agreement in place.

4.7. The purpose of the register is to list sites that are providing biodiversity units to allocated developments and prevent 'double counting', which would happen if the same units were assigned to multiple developments.

4.8. Off-site land must be allocated to the development on the register before the Council can discharge the BGP.

## 5. Habitat banks

5.1. [Habitat Banks](#) are new habitats which are created on the basis that costs can be met through selling biodiversity units to developers. They are set up at the owner's risk and in an open marketplace for purchasing biodiversity units. There are no Habitat Banks in East Devon.

5.2. Currently there are four main models for habitat banks:

- A private landowner or leaseholder sets up the bank themselves;
- A broker working on behalf of a landowner or leaseholder sets up the bank;
- A specialist habitat bank provider enters into an agreement with a landowner, and they set up and manage the site under a 30-year lease;
- A Council creates a habitat bank.

5.3. Sites must be subject to controls and habitat banks must:

1. Have the creation/enhancement and maintenance of habitats secured with a legal agreement (planning obligation or conservation covenant) for a minimum period of 30 years; and

2. Ensure biodiversity units are formally recorded in the statutory biodiversity gain site register operated by Natural England.

5.4. The Council is not a [responsible body](#) for the purposes of agreeing and monitoring conservation covenants. As such, any proposed habitat bank in East Devon will need to be secured via a [S106 planning obligation](#). This is a different use of S106 and will create standalone S106 agreements that are not associated with a particular planning permission.

5.5. Entering these arrangements will place obligations on the Council to monitor and enforce the correct delivery of these sites over a 30-year period. The Council can secure a fee to cover the costs of assessing and monitoring off-site habitats and habitat banks. It is however potentially a significant commitment, and it is ultimately up to individual Councils whether they decide to enter into these legal agreements with providers.

5.6. Legal fees will also need to be charged and it is envisaged fees will be paid by the developer or habitat bank provider at the point of signing the relevant legal agreement.

5.7. The creation of a Council owned habitat bank is outside the scope of this report.

## **6. Council criteria for Habitat Banks**

6.1. Entering into legal agreements for habitat banks with landowners is discretionary. For anyone interested in setting up a habitat bank (private landowner, leaseholder, broker, developer, or specialist habitat bank provider), a framework has been developed based on other Council approaches.

- Stage 1 – Initial assessment/screening
- Stage 2 - Prioritisation and stakeholder review
- Stage 3 – Detailed review and legal agreement

6.2. Stage 1 - Initial feasibility assessment of a habitat bank site against a set criteria Appendix A). Sites providing insufficient or incorrect information will not be considered further.

6.3. It is proposed that a call for sites will be launched so applicants can submit their proposal for consideration. All applications will be subject to a non-refundable £460.00 fee to cover officer time to check the submission based on the officer day rate (refer to section 8.2). Should sites be taken to signing a S106, the application fee will be deducted from the monitoring contribution.

6.4. Stage 2 - Each site is ranked, e.g., whether Priority Habitat will be created/enhanced. The top priority site will progress to Stage 3 following stakeholder consultations with relevant offices and interested bodies, e.g., ward member (Appendix B).

6.5. If applicable and relevant, other specialisms consulting on habitat banks may also propose to charge a fee to cover their time, e.g., as defined in proposed planning fees.

6.6. Stage 3 - Submission of additional information to assess the risk of failure, such as a sound business plan (Appendix C).

6.7. Once the Council has confirmed that the additional information provided at Stage 3 demonstrates a low risk of failure, the site will proceed to negotiation of a S106 agreement. If a site progressing to Stage 3 later fails to enter a S106 legal agreement, the next priority site will progress. This is to ensure Council resources are prioritised to get the preferred sites onto the market more quickly.

6.8. Only when the S106 is signed can the habitat bank provider register the site on the biodiversity gain site register.

## **7. BNG Monitoring and Reporting**

7.1. The implementation of BNG includes collecting and scrutinising large amounts of data at the planning application stage and over the following 30 years. Monitoring BNG delivery is a statutory duty for LPAs, and the results are a central input into [Biodiversity Duty reporting](#).

7.2. There are two types of monitoring:

- **Direct Monitoring** involves site surveys to track individual habitat development (habitat type and condition). This is normally undertaken by the land manager, i.e. the landowner or their agents, such as a management company or a consultancy.
- **Indirect Monitoring** is undertaken by the LPA and comprises the tracking of BNG schemes through the compilation of data in Direct Monitoring reports, and possibly other evidence such as review of aerial imagery and site visits to verify that BNG habitats remain in place.

- 7.3. Guidance makes it clear that [LPAs are responsible for BNG monitoring](#). Reports and data from Direct Monitoring must be sent to the LPA at the pre-determined intervals; the LPA will then assess if habitat development is on track. The developer or third parties (such as a habitat bank provider) acting on their behalf are responsible for providing the LPA with the monitoring reports at specified intervals.
- 7.4. At some monitoring intervals, an LPA ecologist may also need to conduct a site visit to verify the ecology report. They may need to discuss remedial management actions with the biodiversity gain site manager, for example if the habitats are not on track to meet standards committed to in the agreement.
- 7.5. These activities by the LPA carry a significant cost, given that the burden of ongoing agreements will grow over time as new developments, tied to 30-year commitments are granted planning permission. The costs of staff time can be expected to grow year on year, so inflation effects should be considered. As an illustration, an assumed inflation rate of 3.5%, compounded yearly would make a cost approximately 2.8 times greater by year 30 compared to year one.
- 7.6. The [Local Government Act 2003 \(section 93\)](#) permits the authority to seek to recover the costs of administration / monitoring by levying a fee. This can include recouping the cost of monitoring BNG schemes by charging monitoring fees through S106 agreements.
- 7.7. The Planning Advice Service (PAS) has created a suite of [sample templates](#) that cover the various ways of securing biodiversity gains via S106 agreements (including for standalone monitoring contributions) and via planning condition. The use of an obligation or condition is dependent on the onsite habitats being delivered. All off-site habitats (including habitat banks) must be secured via a planning obligation.
- 7.8. The Council are required to monitor all off-site habitats and '[significant on-site enhancements](#)'. The maintenance of significant enhancements must be secured with a legal agreement (planning obligation or conservation covenant) or planning condition for 30 years in the same way as off-site gains.

## 8. Benchmarking

- 8.1. For benchmarking (Appendix D), the charging structures for BNG monitoring for other English authorities was reviewed. In summary, most of the case study LPAs charge a one-off fee payable at the signing of a S106 legal agreement to cover the costs over the 30 years and most include an index-linked element to account for inflation.
- 8.2. Most also have charges tiered by size of the BNG site, and some also by technical difficulty of creating or enhancing the habitats. Of the benchmarked councils, the lower end examples start their scale of charges at around £3k- £5k. The upper end ranges are more variable, some open-ended for large complex sites.



- 8.3. The below is a breakdown of how costs have been derived by Devon Authorities to be used as a base from which Devon LPAs can derive their monitoring fees.
- 8.4. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) day rate for a principal ecologist to review monitoring reports and undertake site visits has been calculated at £333 (£44.44 /hr). A yearly inflation of 3% per annum has been included.
- 8.5. Monitoring reports will be expected to be submitted on Years 2, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 of the agreement. Site visits will be undertaken by an ecology officer on years 1, 5, 15, 25 and 30. Costings for a sixth site visit at an unspecified time (with required access notice period included in the S106) have also been included.
- 8.6. Based on [Devon Authorities fees](#), monitoring costs for significant on-site and registered off-site provision will be associated with the size of land parcel. The following fees have been proposed.
- Small site (0-10ha) - £4,131.08
  - Medium site (11-20ha) - £5,076.97
  - Large site (21ha+) - £6,022.86
- 8.7. The costs are based on estimated officer time at each monitoring event, related to both size (total habitat area to be monitored, in hectares) and complexity of the site (based on the highest technical difficulty category of the habitats included, using the Difficulty scores in the Statutory Metric). It also includes allowances for corporate overheads and inflation.

## 9. East Devon Fee Structure

- 9.1. For habitat banks and off-site BNG delivery it is proposed that East Devon bases their fee structure on the Devon model, with some adjustments. This is using the same cost calculator but based on East Devon specific data/rates (including corporate overheads and oncosts). The cost calculator is a modified version of one used by other Councils, including Buckinghamshire and North Yorkshire.
- 9.2. The day rate for the District Ecologist to review monitoring reports and undertake site visits has been calculated at £460.00 (£62.10 /hr). A yearly inflation of 5% per annum has been included, given the uncertainty of inflation over a 30-year period.
- 9.3. The following fees have been proposed (Appendix E).
- Small site (0-10ha) - £8,030.02
  - Medium site (11-20ha) - £9,925.60
  - Large site (21ha+) - £11,821.19
- 9.4. Payment of fees will be required prior to signing a S106 agreement, to ensure that reasonable fees are recovered to ensure the long-term monitoring of the sites do not cause an undue burden on the Council.
- 9.5. The same fees will apply to monitor significant on-site enhancements secured on [major developments](#), secured either by planning obligation or by condition. Two fees may be required, if a combination of on and off-site BNG is proposed.



- 9.6. For [minor developments](#), significant on-site enhancements could include the planting of a few individual trees or small area of relatively (in an ecological sense) low value habitats, such as grassland and scrub. In these situations, the monitoring framework and costs could also be overly burdensome for the Council to monitor and a disproportionate cost to developers.
- 9.7. While it is required to secure these small-scale on-site significant enhancements for 30-years, a balance is proposed in the level of monitoring required.
- 9.8. Monitoring reports will be expected to be submitted on Years 2, 5, 10, 20, and 30 of the agreement. Site visits will be undertaken by an ecology officer on year 5, and one other unspecified time within the 30-years.
- 9.9. The day rate for the Ecologist Officer to review monitoring reports and undertake site visits has been calculated at £383.00 (£51.80 /hr). A yearly inflation of 5% per annum has been included.
- 9.10. The monitoring fee would be £3,369.60 secured via a standalone obligation unless other obligations are also required (Appendix F).
- 9.11. For minor development sites with low or moderate distinctiveness habitats proposed in moderate condition (or lower) providing significant on-site BNG, such as individual trees, small areas of scrub, or other neutral grassland then monitoring contribution will not be required, unless these extend in area above 0.5ha or a combined biodiversity unit outcome more than 2 biodiversity units.

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**Financial implications:**

Subject to EDDC check on correct costings for fee charges

**Legal implications:**

The legal issues are dealt with in the body of the report.

Appendix A – Stage 1- Habitat Bank Feasibility Criteria

	Criteria	Suggested documents required	Relevant Guidance
<b>Stage 1</b>			
1	<p><b>The applicant must have legal control over the land.</b></p> <p><u>Ownership</u> Information on form of legal control over the land. Including conditional contract. <i>If the latter what are the conditions, are you in control and able to satisfy them?</i></p> <p><u>Tenant / Leasehold Considerations</u> Details of any leasehold agreement or tenancy agreement or any other contract that enables the habitat bank broker to deliver BNG on this land for a minimum of 30 years <u>following the completion of enhancement works.</u></p> <p><i>-The habitat bank broker or landowner needs to be able to place a charge on the land.</i></p>	<p><b>Land Registry Title deed and plan of the land boundary from owner</b></p> <p><b>Charges register of title and plan Copy of Leasehold Agreement</b></p>	<p>The Biodiversity Gain Register (Financial Penalties and Fees) Regulations 2024</p> <p>The Biodiversity Gain Site Register Regulations 2024</p>
2	<p><b>No conflicting consents, licences or permissions for the site including extant restoration plans.</b></p> <p>Are there any other legal barriers or consents / licences or permissions that are required to enter the site and undertake habitat management works over the specified 30-year period?</p> <p>Please provide details of any licences. E.g. (not an exhaustive list): shooting or mineral working rights, planning permissions, extant restoration plans, felling licences, aerodrome safeguarding considerations, rights of way issues, permit from Natural England on works to</p>	<p><b>Statement of no conflicting consents are known, and reasonable checks have been undertaken.</b></p> <p><b>Documents submitted if required</b></p>	<p>The Biodiversity Gain Register (Financial Penalties and Fees) Regulations 2024</p> <p>The Biodiversity Gain Site Register Regulations 2024</p>

	SSSIs (the latter only if government guidance confirms this is possible – BNG consultation response signposts to further guidance on this is forthcoming).		
3	<p><b>Contaminated land</b></p> <p>Is the site considered to be ‘contaminated land’ and if it is, what costed remediation measures are provided to ensure habitats proposed are feasible?</p> <p>If contaminated land exists, a costed remediation plan will need to be provided in stage 2.</p>	<b>Costed remediation plan if required or, Statement confirming not required</b>	
4	<p><b>Is the landowner prepared to enter into a s.106 agreement with EDDC?</b></p> <p>(Based on Devon County Council/EDDC/PAS/ Habitat Bank S106 template) to agree the number/ type of biodiversity units available for developers and the management and maintenance schedule of the land for at least 30 years from the date of transfer/lease of each unit?</p> <p>Specify who needs to be a party to the s.106.</p>	<p><b>Statement of intent</b></p> <p><b>Written consent from owner to broker to apply for the site to be registered as a habitat bank</b></p> <p><b>Owner to be party to s. 106</b></p>	<p>The Biodiversity Gain Register (Financial Penalties and Fees) Regulations 2024</p> <p>The Biodiversity Gain Site Register Regulations 2024</p>
5	<p><b>Additionality</b></p> <p>Can you prove <b>Legal, Financial &amp; Ecological Additionality</b> for the BNG proposed at the site?</p> <p><b>Financial additionally</b> includes: other funds for land management e.g. environmental stewardship, nutrient mitigation etc.</p>	<b>Written confirmation of proof of additionality principles and compliance with stacking and bundling rules in line with guidance</b>	Nature markets: A framework for scaling up private investment in nature recovery and sustainable farming - March 2023.

	<p><b>Do you intend to sell other ecosystem services units from the land?</b></p> <p>Outline how you intend to stack and bundle any Nature market credits including Biodiversity units in line with Best Practice Guidance</p>		
6	<p><b>Location Plan</b></p> <p>Location of the site provided.</p> <p>Note: if GIS layer/shape file is available then helpful but this is not essential</p>	<p>Map to be provided in accordance with <a href="#">East Devon validation checklist</a></p>	
7	<p><b>Devon's Local Nature Recovery Strategy</b></p> <p>An Assessment of how the proposals fit with Devon's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p> <p>Note: Provision of a brief assessment (e.g. a few short paragraphs at most) to ensure the conservation value in the landscape context of the site is being considered rather than unit delivery alone.</p>	<p>Justification text in a report and <a href="#">evidence of the Strategic Significance</a> of habitats proposed in the bank</p>	
8	<p><b>Adequate ecological baseline, habitat survey and condition assessments</b></p> <p>Provision of full baseline and condition assessment survey information (dates, personnel, methods) undertaken using UK Hab and the appropriate habitat condition assessment from the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM).</p> <p>This must be undertaken in the optimal survey season and by a competent ecologist. Limitations on survey</p>	<p><b>BNG report, baseline habitat survey report, with metric excel spreadsheet and completed condition assessment spreadsheets for each habitat parcel provided</b></p>	

	methods and other assumptions made regarding proposed habitat creation and enhancement and their implications must be clearly explained.		
9	<p><b>Provision of achievable uplift in biodiversity value</b></p> <p>A full Defra metric completed for the site / phase of a habitat bank for which units are to be released.</p> <p>Habitat creation and enhancement proposals within the Defra metric should be based on a realistic scenario (i.e. it is better to aim for habitats in worse condition that can later be upgraded, than an unachievable higher condition and face subsequent enforcement action).</p> <p>Have appropriate soil tests been undertaken.</p>	<p><b>Completed statutory biodiversity metric and justification text for why habitats of specific conditions are proposed in user comments.</b></p>	
10	<p><b>Irreplaceable Habitats</b></p> <p>Confirmation that proposals will not negatively impact irreplaceable habitats or other features or species of existing conservation interest, including: protected and notable species and/or habitat.</p>	<p><b>A statement in the text and provision of statutory metric which flags these as red</b></p>	
11	<p><b>Competence</b></p> <p>Can the ecological advisors and others involved in the scheme provide proof of their competence in BNG?</p> <p>This should include brief paragraph of experience and skills to undertake relevant BNG surveys and provide appropriate habitat management recommendations as well as membership of an appropriate professional membership body that signs up to a code of professional conduct (e.g. CIEEM).</p>	<p><b>We would expect a statement in the text to highlight the competence of all professional persons involved in the delivery of BNG as per Statutory Biodiversity Metric definition on competency. This could include professional memberships, training and experience.</b></p>	

	<p>Competence should be in line with definitions provided by CIEEM 2021, the British Standard on Biodiversity Net Gain (8683: 2021) and Natural England / Defra Guidance.</p> <p>River Condition Assessment assessors must be trained and accredited in the River Condition Assessment methodology.</p>		
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Appendix B – Stage 2 - Prioritisation and stakeholder engagement

Criteria	Pass Y/N
The location addresses our need for a spread of habitat banks as explained in Principle 8 of The <a href="#">Statutory Biodiversity Metric</a>	
The proposal demonstrates that it will deliver at least 10 biodiversity units	
The scheme delivers Priority Habitat(s) or high distinctiveness habitats, for example enhancing water courses, species-rich Devon hedge bank with trees etc.	
The scheme delivers a mosaic (three or more) habitat types of medium distinctiveness (and above)	
All biodiversity units delivered (Area, Hedges, Watercourses)	
Two biodiversity unit types delivered (e.g., Area and Hedges)	
Readiness – habitat works can be delivered within 12 months	
Provides public access	
Contributes towards specific local biodiversity, e.g., provision of suitable horseshoe bat foraging habitat within a sustenance zone	
Contributes towards <a href="#">Lawton Principles</a> , published and/or emerging strategies and policies, e.g., Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), Clyst Valley Regional Park, Tree, Hedge, and Woodland Strategy for East Devon, and East Devon Nature Recovery Plan	
The project team is experienced in the design and delivery of habitat management for wildlife, e.g., eNGO	
Scheme proposes to sell fraction of units for SME developments	
<b>Total</b>	

Table 1 - BNG Habitat Bank Stage Prioritisation

Initial applications will be screened against Table 1 criteria to prioritise which applications should be taken forward in a sequential approach. Where applications score the same, additional weighting criteria will be applied to Items 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8. For example, two schemes that deliver some Priority Habitat will also consider the types of habitat(s) being provided, the area of habitat, and whether this provides synergies with other criteria such as contributing towards East Devon specific biodiversity, e.g., woodland foraging habitat for lesser horseshoe bats within a sustenance zone associated with Beer Quarry and Caves Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Sites prioritised will be notified to other specialists and relevant local parties for commentary before considering entering Phase 3 assessment.

<b>All applications</b>
District Ecologist and Ecology Officer
Development management (DM) area team manager or nominated officer
Landscape Officer
Tree Officer
Conservation Officer
Parish Council
Local Ward Councillor
Devon County Council

Table 2 - Habitat bank notification panel (all applications)

<b>Dependent on location/specific criteria</b>
GI/SANG Officer – where projects are within the Clyst Valley Regional Park and/or propose to contribute towards GI or SANG provision.
Environment Agency - Project involving the carrying out of works or operations within the bed of, or within 20m of the top of a bank of a main river.
Historic England - Projects likely to affect the site of a Scheduled Monument or recommended via the Conservation Officer.
Natural England - Projects in or likely to impact SSSI or other statutory protected sites. Loss of 20ha or more of grade 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land which is or was last used for agriculture.
Forestry Commission/ Secretary of State - Projects including land meeting the definition of ancient woodland or likely to impact land meeting that definition.
Civil Aviation Authority - Projects within CAA aerodrome buffer zones.

*Table 3 - Habitat bank notification panel (criteria depended)*



Appendix C – Stage 3 - Habitat Bank Criteria

Criteria	Criteria	Suggested documents required	Relevant Guidance
<b>Stage 3</b>			
1	<p><b>Sufficient cash flow / funding for 30 years</b></p> <p>Who is going to be responsible for the habitat management if different from the owner? What are the contingency plans should this / your firm fold or go into liquidation within the 30 years to ensure the habitat proposed will continue to be enhanced and maintained as proposed?</p> <p>Provision of proof of funds: including: third party bond, guarantee, Ring fenced fund etc.</p> <p>These must be sufficient to cover 'up-front capital' creation / enhancement works and the subsequent 30 years of management.</p> <p>Funds must be in held for duration of the agreement and held independently for large schemes. An appropriate payment schedule should be in place. All required prior to s.106 sign-off.</p> <p>Options to consider on case-by-case basis for proof of funds include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submission of 30-year cash flow model for running and management of site for council assurance only to sense check creation/management costs but also from finance perspective in terms of underlying assumptions.</li> </ul>	<p>Discuss on a site by site basis</p> <p>Check <b>Proof of funds</b> which could include <b>30 year cash flow model, assurance of finance codes</b>, and <b>commitment to financial reporting</b></p> <p>Agree a payment schedule throughout the 30 year period</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assurance that separate code had been set up in your accounts i.e. ring fencing of funding in relation to habitat bank.</li> <li>Potential to require the need to report on high level progress in line with cash flow model into the monitoring/reporting requirements in S106.</li> <li>Remediation clause</li> </ul>		
2	<p><b>Method of unit sale from habitat bank</b></p> <p>If the habitat bank is going to be selling units in the future but starting the habitat management work now or prior to sale and (thereby increasing the units available for sale) the 'habitat creation in advance' function in the metric should be used and a procedure for calculating and auditing this must be agreed between the LPA and Habitat Bank provider.</p> <p>If the habitat bank is to be split into 'phases' for selling at different dates into the future, the LPA and Habitat Bank provider need to agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When the baseline is calculated from for each phase and;</li> <li>2. When the 30 years for habitat creation / enhancement starts for any one 'phase'</li> </ol> <p>The above should be provided on a spatial plan as recommended by Defra.</p> <p>Will the broker / owner provide a certificate and Unique Transaction Number for each sale?</p>	<p>Case by case basis</p> <p>Statement on method of sale of units and how these will be calculated and sold in the future.</p> <p>Plans provided</p>	
3	<p><b>Sale of units outside of Devon LPA remit</b></p> <p>Are you proposing to sell units outside of Devon?</p>	Statement of intent	

4	<p><b>Pay the council a monitoring fee for the habitat creation / enhancement for the duration of the Habitat Bank (at least 30 years)</b></p> <p>Agree to the provision of a Monitoring fee to be paid to the Council to monitor the establishment phase and on-going habitat maintenance agreement over a 30 year period.</p>	<p>Statement of intent to pay EDDC's monitoring fee</p> <p>Suitable Monitoring Plan for 30 years</p>	
5	<p><b>Provision of a detailed and costed Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and consider other legal and environmental constraints</b></p> <p>This must set out the detailed prescriptions required that will be undertaken in both the 'establishment' phase as well as the monitoring phase to achieve the desired habitats.</p> <p>Dates of commencement of BOTH the establishment phase and the monitoring for 30-year phase to be agreed between parties before s.106 is signed.</p> <p>This shall take into account practical environmental constraints and be supported by evidence. Best Practice should be followed.</p> <p>Do the costs in the management plan look sufficient for the suggested quality and quantity of habitat using the Buckinghamshire Council calculator as a benchmark? – <i>N.B. This is a benchmarking process only – we are not looking to interfere with any unit sale costs but only need to be sure that proposals for habitats and predicted condition are adequately funded.</i></p>	<p>Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, Costed management plan</p> <p>Plans showing all habitats proposed for enhancement and creation</p> <p>Dates for commencement of 'establishment' and 'monitoring' phases agreed between parties</p>	

	<p>Adequate plans showing all habitats proposed for enhancement and creation.</p> <p>Ensure all maps are spatially accurate if using the GIS the same software should be used throughout the scheme. GPS should be used where possible to allow appropriate monitoring.</p>		
6	<p><b>Consideration of other environmental constraints</b></p> <p>Provider to have undertaken appropriate due diligence, surveys and assessments and considered all other environmental constraints to achieving suggested habitat enhancement / creation prior to approaching the Council with a proposal. e.g. (but not an exhaustive list).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Soil analysis data for specific habitat types</b> (to be defined in separate guidance – to follow). This may include details of any specific nutrient/ soil stripping and remediation techniques that may be required and evidence that these methods have been adequately costed into the management plan to ensure feasibility.</li> <li>• <b>Are the hydrological conditions</b> suitable for habitats proposed for creation or enhancement (e.g. risk of flooding)?</li> <li>• <b>Are there historic / archaeological / landscape constraints / arboricultural to proposed habitat works?</b> These must have been adequately considered. Please provide evidence that these considerations have been considered appropriately and any mitigation required is</li> </ul>	<p>A check of information is provided, we expect the applicant to submit all information required and to undertake due diligence,</p> <p>EDDC will not be liable for any missing information that prevents the habitat proposals being delivered as specified</p>	

	<p>proposed employing professional advice where required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Access available for required on-site machinery, movement of and infrastructure for cattle and sufficient storage on-site for machinery or other habitat management aspects</b> (e.g. storage of logs from coppicing or provision of corals for cattle – provide evidence that machinery and cattle can access the site as required.</li> </ul>		
7	<p><b>A monitoring plan</b></p> <p>Sets out when habitat surveys will take place as part of the 30 year monitoring plan for the Council for review over the 30 year period . Agree date for commencement.</p>	<b>Monitoring Report for review and how frequently LPA will receive reports</b>	Habitat management and Monitoring Plan Template
8	<p><b>Are any other legal/planning permissions required for the habitat bank to commence</b></p>	<b>Statement of compliance</b>	
9	<p><b>Permission for EDDC to enter the land for spot checks</b></p> <p>Permission for spot inspections by EDDC staff or a subcontractor to ensure habitat management is being undertaken as promised.</p>	<b>Statement of compliance</b>	
10	<p><b>Agreement on how to deal with a fundamental breach of management prescriptions</b></p> <p>The ability to enforce a breach if management prescriptions and targets promised are not delivered.</p>	<b>Statement of compliance</b>	

11	<p><b>How does the site meet BNG Best Practice Principles</b></p> <p>Outline of how the habitat bank meets the 10 key principles of BNG as per CIEEM 2016 <sup>1</sup> directly in relation to the habitat bank.</p> <p>Is the Habitat Bank compliant with best practice as outlined in the British BS 8683: 2021 and other subsequent guidance on habitat banks provided by Natural England / Defra that is available at the time of agreement / survey and report production?</p> <p>Providers should provide brief written justification text to demonstrate how the proposals fit with best practice on BNG. Extent and detail of information required should be linked to size and complexity of habitats provided by the habitat bank.</p> <p>Evidence will need to include but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All habitat parcels must be individually referenced and systematically measured with the same software throughout the lifetime of the project.</li> <li>• Management plans to have SMART targets.</li> <li>• Proportionate monitoring proposals for all Biodiversity Units, methods, frequency, timing and reporting procedures with procedures for remedial works if needed</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities and competencies of all those involved in implementing the BNG MMP (including contractors)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Justification text in a report / statement of compliance</b></p>	<p>CIEEM / CIRIA / IEMA 2016 BNG Good Practice Principles for development.</p> <p>BS 8683: 2021</p> <p>Devon Planning Guidance for Biodiversity Compensation and Net Gain (April 2024)</p>
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<sup>1</sup> CIEEM – CIRIA – IEMA (2016). Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for Development, also listed in the CIEEM (2021). Biodiversity Net Gain – Report & Audit Templates Version 1.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal, financial, and other resource requirements for delivery of the detailed management plan including the need for any public or statutory or non-statutory consultation if required.</li> </ul>		
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## *Appendix D – Benchmarking*

### *Leeds City Council*

[Leeds City Council](#) have a three-tiered scale based on the number of Biodiversity Units (BUs) being delivered. They charge £3k up to 10 BUs, £5k for 10-20 BUs, and require a bespoke fee for sites delivering over 20 BUs. It is not clear how they have arrived at those figures.

Unless otherwise agreed with the LPA, [Significant On-site Biodiversity Net Gain](#) will apply to a total (Habitats, Hedgerows and Watercourse Biodiversity Units added together) of 5 or more Biodiversity Units being delivered on-site in areas to be covered by a Landscape and BNG Management Plan. These Biodiversity Units can consist of features being retained, created and/or enhanced.

In Leeds, Biodiversity Units cannot form part of the private curtilage (such as private gardens, or hedgerows forming part of private boundaries) as delivery in those parts of the site will not be appropriate to secure as part of a management plan through planning conditions.

Leeds City Council also require a Landscape Verification Report to provide evidence the initial soft landscaping/biodiversity works have been implemented before completion of development, so it is known when the 30-year monitoring period starts.

The above charges apply equally whether the Biodiversity Net Gain is delivered by a habitat bank, the developer, or other landowner with a legal interest in the land.

The LPA use the S106 mechanism for this charge. Where Significant On-site Biodiversity Net Gain and some Off-site Biodiversity Net Gain is also being proposed there will need to be two charges for the Monitoring and Reporting Body sum to reflect the need to monitor different parcels of land and carry out site visits to different locations (if more than one geographically located piece of land is being used for Off-site Biodiversity Net Gain there may need to be additional separate charges accordingly).

### *Buckinghamshire*

[Buckinghamshire](#) developed the most comprehensive staff-time calculator spreadsheet: the smallest and simplest sites are charged at £8,618.24 ranging to the largest and most complex sites charged at £50,315.53, for greater than 20ha. Buckinghamshire specified the most monitoring intervals (10) and used a much higher staff day rate of £700.

### *New Forest*

The [New Forest](#) has proposed flat charge for BNG monitoring for up to 10 Biodiversity Units at £7,506.00. Monitoring is to take place in years 2, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30. The fee is based on the [Mycelia Verna cost calculator](#), an alternative tool used to calculate BNG fees. Sites delivering above 10 BUs would be subject to a bespoke fee calculation.

Monitoring visits would be led by the Authority's Ecologist, and this has been calculated at one day (7.5 hours) per BNG monitoring year. An allowance has also been included for 3.5 hours per monitoring year for a planning support officer resource. This reflects the similar approach adopted by New Forest District



### *North Yorkshire Council*

The [North Yorkshire](#) Calculator has one-off fees ranging from £2,522 (small site up to 5ha, low technical difficulty) through a mid-range of £3,982 (Medium site up to 20ha, moderate difficulty) to a top end of £9,289 (Large site up to 40ha, high difficulty). Larger sites and higher difficulty are reflected in increased time allowance for site visits and for reviewing the reports.

For biodiversity gain sites larger than 40ha a bespoke fee will be agreed. In special circumstances such as damage or loss to irreplaceable habitats, bespoke BNG compensation is required so these are also likely to need bespoke monitoring fees being agreed between developer and the authority.

### *Lincolnshire*

[Lincolnshire](#) has a range of fees, depending on size of site (0-10 ha, 10-20 ha, 20-40h ha) and difficulty in creating habitats (based on the biodiversity metric). Fees range from £3,416 - £15,493. Anything above 40 ha requires a bespoke calculation.

## Appendix E – Monitoring fees for habitat banks, off-site habitats, and on-site significance enhancements on major developments

### Biodiversity Net Gain Monitoring Fee Calculator

East Devon will monitor progress towards achieving the stated outcomes for all off-site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) schemes that we regulate (this means those which we enter a S106 with for the purpose of securing the habitat management on a site for 30+ years). We do not charge a monitoring payment when a different responsible body (e.g. Natural England & others tbc) regulate the scheme.

We will review monitoring reports sent in by the manager of the site at times set out within the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (which should form part of the S106 for the site). It is for the Ecology Officer to ensure that these are appropriate. The tabs in this calculator can be used as a guide as to what we may consider to be appropriate.

The Monitoring Fee is charged so that we can cover our costs of reviewing the monitoring reports, visit the site where necessary and work with the site owner to agree remedial measures if required.

This calculator is to help determine a monitoring fee that will cover our costs for undertaking the above over 30+ years. It is based upon the site's size only. These fees will be subject to regular review.

For biodiversity gain sites more than 40ha, a bespoke fee will be needed.

Monitoring Fee	
Size:	
Small (0-10ha)	£8,030.02
Medium (11-20ha)	£9,925.60
Large (21-40ha)	£11,821.19

## Appendix F – Monitoring fees on-site significance enhancements on minor developments

### Biodiversity Net Gain Monitoring Fee Calculator

East Devon will monitor progress towards achieving the stated outcomes for all significant onsite Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) schemes for 30+ years. We do not charge a monitoring payment when a different responsible body (e.g. Natural England & others tbc) regulate the scheme or where defined local exemptions exist.

The Monitoring Fee is charged so that we can cover our costs of reviewing the monitoring reports, visit the site where necessary and work with the site owner to agree remedial measures if required.

This calculator is to help determine a monitoring fee that will cover our costs for undertaking the above over 30+ years. It is based upon the site's size only. These fees will be subject to regular review.

Monitoring Fee	
Size:	
Small (0-10 ha)	£3,369.60

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release: N/A

## Discretionary Planning Fees Review

### Report summary:

#### *Introduction*

The report explains the reasons for reviewing and increasing discretionary planning fees, focusing on enhancing service delivery, covering rising operational costs, and ensuring the sustainability of the Planning Service.

#### *Background*

- **Legal Framework:** The Local Government Act 2003 allows councils to charge for discretionary services, including pre-application planning advice, based on cost recovery principles.
- **Current Practice:** East Devon District Council (EDDC) has been charging for pre-application services for years, but fees have not increased since 2017.
- **Need for Review:** Statutory planning application fee income dropped significantly in 2024, necessitating a review to maximise cost recovery and service alignment with customer needs.

#### *Actions Taken*

- **Benchmarking:** Compared fees and services with neighbouring authorities.
- **Cost Calculation:** Used officer pay rates and historical data to calculate average costs.
- **Service Expansion:** Introduced new pre-application services, including for householder applications, and proposed a fee for returned applications to cover administrative costs.

#### *Conclusion*

The fee review aims to enhance the Planning Service's capacity, efficiency, and sustainability. Aligning fees with operational costs and regional benchmarks ensures competitiveness and meets community needs.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendations:

That Cabinet;

Recommends to Council that the revised schedule of fees for discretionary planning fees be adopted

Endorses the schedule of discretionary planning fees being reviewed on an annual basis as part of the wider review of fees and charges

## Reason for recommendation:

The recommendation to revise discretionary planning fees and the level of service we offer is driven by several key factors, including the need to enhance service delivery, cover rising operational costs, and ensure the sustainability of the Planning Service.

Officer: Wendy Ormsby, Development Manager. Tel: 01395 517465

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

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

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services

## Introduction

This report outlines the reasons for the recent review and increase in discretionary planning fees by the Planning Service. The decision to adjust these fees is driven by several key factors, including the need to enhance service delivery, cover rising operational costs, and ensure the sustainability of the Planning Service.

## Background

The **Local Government Act 2003** allows local authorities to charge for discretionary services. Specifically, councils may charge for pre-application planning advice and other advisory services, as long as these services are not statutory or part of the core functions that the council is obligated to provide.

The charges for discretionary planning advice are also governed by principles of cost recovery, meaning that the fees should reflect the actual costs incurred by the council in providing the

service. The council must ensure that any fees charged are transparent, reasonable, and aligned with the service provided.

Additionally, under the **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004**, the government encourages transparency in planning services, and as such Councils are encouraged to publish their fees for discretionary services, including planning advice, on their websites.

A recent survey by the **Planning Advisory Service (PAS)** found that of 87 local planning Authorities (LPAs) investigated only 4 offer a completely free service. EDDC has been offering a paid for pre-application service and charging for some planning related enquiries for some years and the current schedule of charges is attached as Appendix 1. Whilst the current fee schedule is indicated on the website as having been last updated in January and September 2024, they have not been increased since 2017.

Statutory planning application fees are set by national government. The associated income from this source dropped significantly in 2024 and there is a requirement for all services within the Council to minimise costs and maximise income to secure a balanced budget for the Council. A full review of our discretionary planning fees is therefore needed to ensure we are securing full cost recovery. In addition, we have reviewed the level of service that is available to ensure we are meeting the needs of our customers.

## **What we have done**

To inform this process we have considered advice from the Planning Advisory Service [Pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements \(PPAs\) | Local Government Association](#) and have done some benchmarking with neighbouring authorities. A table comparing charges and service at Cornwall, Exeter, South Hams, Teignbridge and Mid Devon Councils is attached as Appendix 2. The outcome of the PAS national benchmarking survey is included as Appendix 3.

To understand how to calculate our fees we have obtained details of hourly rates of pay by officer grade, with on-costs and 35% non-productive time applied; this follows PAS guidance. These figures were used to calculate average costs for the proposed services to be offered.

Officers were consulted to obtain information about average time taken to undertake certain tasks and reference was given to historic process monitoring data. This has enabled us to prepare a robust schedule of fees.

We have also reviewed the type of service we offer and have expanded the options available. In particular, we are introducing a pre-application service for householder applications. As the free resubmission of a refused planning application has been withdrawn and the cost of householder applications is set to double in April 2025, this offers customers an opportunity to get advice on their proposals before formally applying.

It is also proposed that we introduce a fee for returned applications. When an invalid planning application is received a letter is sent explaining why the application is invalid and what documents are required to make it valid. After 21 days, if no further information has been received a reminder is sent. After a further 21 days with no further information submitted the application is returned to the applicant together with a refund of the full fee paid.

Over 60% of applications received are invalid and last year 191 applications were returned. The cost of registering and assessing the validity of the applications, plus monitoring, chase up letters and processing the fee refund is a drain on Council resources. As such it is proposed to retain a

proportion of the planning fee to cover these costs. This practice is followed at Cornwall, Teignbridge and Mid-Devon Councils.

We are consulting with our main planning agents on the proposed services and fees, as recommended by PAS. A verbal update of the consultation responses will be provided to Members at Cabinet and made available to Full Council.

## Fee Structure Overview

The new fee structure includes various levels of pre-application services, each designed to meet different needs:

- **Desktop Service:** Research and written response.
- **Desktop Extra:** Includes a Teams meeting or telephone call.
- **Full Service:** Includes a site visit, meeting, and internal consultations.
- **Heritage Service:** Additional fees for Listed Buildings.

The full proposed fee schedule is attached as Appendix 4 but in summary includes the following, (please note that all figures include VAT at the standard rate):

### Householder Developments:

- Desktop: £170
- Desktop Extra: £240
- Full: £380
- Follow-up query: £90
- Additional fee for Listed Buildings: £110

### Minor Developments:

- Single dwelling and other minor development:
  - Desktop: £280
  - Desktop Extra: £360
  - Full: £500
  - Follow-up: £150
  - Additional fee for Listed Buildings: £150
- 2 - 9 dwellings or site area below 0.5ha
  - Desktop: £500
  - Desktop Extra: £670
  - Full: £850

### Major Developments (only the full service offered):

- 10-49 dwellings: £2400
- 50-199 dwellings: £5500
- 200+ dwellings: £8900
- Follow-up meetings and discharge of conditions have additional fees.
- Planning Performance Agreements are offered.

### Other Services:

- Biodiversity Net Gain advice: £500
- High hedge complaints: £350
- Viability appraisals: Quotation-based

### **Returned applications:**

- 10% of the fee with a minimum of £80 and maximum of £500

### **Conclusion**

The decision to review and increase discretionary planning fees is a strategic move to enhance the capacity, efficiency, and sustainability of the Planning Service. By aligning fees with operational costs and regional benchmarks, we ensure that the service remains competitive and capable of meeting the needs of our community.

We recommend that Cabinet recommend to Full Council to approve the proposed fee increases to support the continued improvement and sustainability of the Planning Service. These can then be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the wider review of the Council's fees and charges.

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### **Financial implications:**

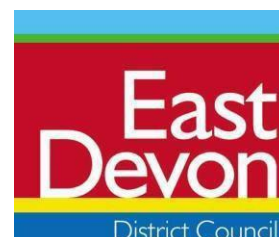
The report recommends that discretionary planning fees are increased from 1 April 2025 to support rising operational costs. (AB)

### **Legal implications:**

The legal implications are set out within the report (002545/2 February 2025/DH).

## **APPENDIX 1: Current Discretionary Fee Schedule**

### **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANNING SERVICE - PRE APPLICATION ADVICE**



### **PRE-APPLICATION CHARGING**

### **SCHEDULE AND CUSTOMER CHARTER -**

**Valid from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017**

The Council's Planning Service introduced a scale of charges for pre application advice in December 2009 that was reviewed in January 2017. This Charter sets out the scale of charges and what customers can expect of us.

### **Scale of Charges**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Scale of application</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Charge per meeting/request for pre application advice(excluding VAT)</b>
1	Large scale Majors	Large scale major schemes including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Residential development of more than 200 houses.</li><li>➤ Non residential floor space of more than 10,000 square metres.</li><li>➤ Site area of more than 4 ha.</li></ul>	£750  (£900 including VAT)
2	Medium major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Residential development of between 31 – 199 houses.</li><li>➤ Non residential floor space of 1000 – 9,999 square metres.</li><li>➤ Site area of between 2 – 4 ha.</li></ul>	£625  (£750 including VAT)
3	Small major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Residential development between 10 – 30 houses.</li><li>➤ Non residential floor space of 500 – 1000 square metres.</li><li>➤ Site area up to 2 ha.</li></ul>	£500  (£600 including VAT)
4	Minor	Residential proposals (including holiday units) involving the erection of between 2 – 9 residential units. All minor non-residential schemes for new buildings.	£250  (£300 including VAT)
5	Minor and changes of use	All residential schemes for the replacement or erection of a single dwelling or conversion of a building to one residential unit. All changes of use without any associated external works.	£150  (£180 including VAT)



6	Listed Building works	Works to listed buildings that do not require planning permission.	£125 (£150 including VAT)
7	Comments on the principle of development only.	Desk-based assessment of all planning applications where an opinion on the principle of the development only is required.	Half of the relevant above fee.

## Other Enquiry Fees

Requests for a check as to whether planning permission and/or listed building consent is required	£40
Confirmation of closure of enforcement case	£50
Confirmation of compliance with any formal enforcement action	£50
Confirmation of compliance with listed building consent	£90
Confirmation of discharge of planning conditions.	£90 for 1 <sup>st</sup> and then £30 for each additional
Confirmation of compliance with planning and listed building conditions	£90 for 1 <sup>st</sup> and then £30 for each additional
Confirmation of compliance with section 106 planning obligations	£90 for 1 <sup>st</sup> and then £30 for each additional
Other Enquires (seeking confirmation of information)	£50

subject of separate payment previously negotiated.

- (i) A Members Advisory Panel (see guidance on website) constitutes a separate pre-app and is subject to the relevant pre-application fee.

With regard to householder applications it is anticipated that all agents will have the necessary experience to deal with these schemes without needing specific pre-application advice from the planning service. The Council will publish householder design guidance on its website in due course as an additional aid for applicants. The Council will no longer respond to householder requests for pre-application advice whether or not they are represented by an agent.

Further advice on the information to submit with your pre-application enquiry (minimum of a 1:1250 site location plan, indicative layout and covering letter) and on the Members Advisory Panel is available on the planning page of East Devon District Councils website.

**C Rose**  
**Development Manager**  
**February 2017**

## Appendix 2

### Regional Benchmarking Data

(see Appendix 4 for EDDC proposed charges)

#### Applications returned prior to validation.

Cornwall - Service charge for “returned applications”: 10% of the expected planning application fee if processing has commenced ..

Teignbridge – 10% of fee . min £65, max £500

Mid Devon - 25% of fee (when information incorrect second time around

#### Services

Additional Service	Cornwall Fee	EDDC Current	South Hams/West Devon	Teignbridge	Mid Devon
Confirmation of closure of enforcement case (available for a 6 month period following closure of the case)	Householder development £94.00 inc VAT  All other development £212 inc VAT	£50	£250 – where found not expedient to take action + £200 for each additional breach (no planning unit created)	£160	N/A

			£500 where new planning unit created. Avail for 12 months after closure		
Confirmation of compliance with Enforcement Notice (including site visit)	£557 inc VAT	£50	£350 inc sv	£160	£652
Confirmation of compliance with listed building consent (available for a 12 month period following completion of the development)	£557 inc VAT	£50	£350 inc sv	£160	N/A
Confirmation of compliance with planning conditions	£491 inc vat for the first condition, £53 inc vat for each condition thereafter	£90 for first then £30	N/A	N/A	N/A
Informal confirmation of permitted use class	£208 inc vat	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(formal confirmation can only be obtained by a certificate of lawfulness)					
Confirmation that Permitted Development rights have not been removed	Householder development £186 inc vat all other development £297 inc VAT	£40	N/A	N/A	N/A
Confirmation of planning restrictions	£297 inc vat	£40	N/A	N/A	N/A
Help resolving conveyancing issues	£928 inc vat	N/A – land charges	£530 – help to resolve planning history question	N/A	N/A
Confirmation of compliance with section 106 planning obligations (desktop assessment) or enquiry relating to a specific site	£295 inc vat per agreement  If a site visit is required, an additional charge of £509 inc vat is payable	£90 for first then £30	£200 + £150 if sv needed	N/A	£242 for first then £67

section 106 agreement					
Section 106. Deed of modification/Deed of revocation and new Planning Obligation by Agreement/Deed of discharge - .	£148	Only legal fees charged	N/A	£1000 plus legal fees (within first 5 years)	N/A
Modification of planning obligations in the first FIVE years (VS106)	£773 Majors inc vat £387 Minors inc vat				

### Fees for monitoring of planning obligations.

Monitoring of planning obligations	Cornwall	EDDC current	South Hams	Mid Devon
Obligations				
Tying land to a building	No fee	All minor development £476	N/A	N/A
Single affordable homes	£393		N/A	N/A
Modification/Variation of a 106	£393 plus legal fee	Legal fees only	£1000 plus legal fees	N/A

Modification/Variation of a 106 relating to an application for a single affordable home	No fee	Legal fees only	N/A	N/A
Modification/Variation of a S106 relating to a change of Mortgagee in Possession clause only	£106	Legal fees only	N/A	N/A
Minors – non-residential (less than 1,000sqm or less than 1ha)	£2,238	£476	N/A	N/A
Small scale Major - non-residential (1,000sqm - 9,999sqm or between 1ha and 2ha)	£4,476	N/A	N/A	N/A
Large scale Major – non-residential (more than 10,000sqm or more than 2ha)	£6,262	N/A	N/A	N/A
Below 5 dwellings/holiday units	£1,393	N/A	N/A	N/A
5-10 dwellings with no on-site affordable housing	£1,908	N/A	N/A	£1590
5-50 dwellings/holiday units	£2,884	10 + units £476 (financial) and £1058 (non-financial)	N/A	£8474
51-99 dwellings/holiday units	£4,476	N/A	N/A	N/A
100+ dwellings/ holiday units	£6,262	N/A	N/A	£11,294
Monitoring of planning obligations fees • European Sites Mitigation	£53	N/A	£60	N/A
Monitoring S.106 with trigger points	N/A	N/A	Number of obligations x No trigger points x £900	N/A
Monitoring S 106 without trigger points	N/A	N/A	No obligations x £900	N/A

## Pre-application Advice

Householder – desktop only	Cornwall	EDDC	South Hams	Teignbridge	Exeter	Mid-Devon
Alterations and extension to a dwelling and incidental outbuildings such as garages	£186	N/A	£210 or £290 with sv. 1 meeting, one response	£200 desktop + £100 meeting + £200 sv +£100 if listed	Free	£304 – desktop. £530 – desktop extra HH & LB with site visit £862
Follow up query (can include up to 30 mins teams call and email with bullet point response)	£100	N/A	As above N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Discharge of condition (per condition)	£100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Minor Developments	Fees inc 20% VAT							
	Cornwall			EDDC current	South Hams	Teignbridge	Exter	Mid Devon
	Desktop	Desktop Plus	Full					
Single dwelling and other minor development*	£300	£400	£500	£180	£450 or £530 with sv	£350 or £420 if LB	Free	£304 desktop



						+ meeting £150		£471 desktop extra Site visit extra £142
Follow up meeting (via teams with bullet email response)	£250	£250	£250	N/A	£210 pr £290 with sv	N/A	Free	N/A
Discharge of condition	£150	£150	£150	N/A	N/A	N/A	Free	N/A
2-9 Dwellings or site area below 0.5 ha	£700	£800	£1000	£300	£649 + £210 per dwelling over 5 units. £720 with sv	Desktop £1599 or £1800 if LB. Plus £400 for meeting	Free	£1232 (upt o 5 units) £2359 5 to 9 units. Desktop extra.
Follow up meeting (via teams with bullet point response	£500	£500	£500	N/A	£520 + £80 for sv	£300 or £360 if LB	N/A	N/A N/A
Discharge of condition (per condition) (desktop plus)	£250	£250	£250	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Comments on principle of	N/A	N/A	N/A	Half relevant fee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

development only								
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\*other minor development can include : telecommunications development, Advertisement Consent, Certificate of Lawfulness for existing development, Demolition in a conservation area, lifting or varying conditions associated with other development, single agricultural buildings

Major Development	Cornwall Full service only	EDDC	South Hams	Teignbridge	Exeter -	Mid Devon
10 – 49 dwellings or up to 1.49 ha	£2600	£600	£2500 (2 meetings plus response)	Desktop £2500 or bespoke. Meeting + £750	£3550	£3922 Desktop extra
Follow up meeting (via teams with bullet point email response)	£1300	N/A	£1250	£750 or bespoke	N/A	N/A
Discharge of condition (per condition)	£350	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
50 – 199 dwellings or 1.5 – 4.99 ha	£4400	£750	£720 – PPA set up fee. Extra £1780 at commencement for advice on principle	Desktop £5500 or bespoke + £1250 meeting	PPA only	£7818 Desktop extra, 2 meetings,
Follow up	£2200	N/A	N/A	£1250	N/A	N/A
Discharge of condition (per condition)	£350	N/A	£150 per condition + £80 for sv		N/A	N/A
200 plus dwellings or over 5 ha	£6700	£900	N/A	Desktop - £9000 or bespoke	PPA only	£14,114

						Desktop extra, 3 meetings
Follow up (via teams with bullet point email response)	£3350	N/A	N/A	£1750	N/A	N/A
Discharge of condition (per condition) (desktop plus)	£500	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Scoping	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£300 plus £150 sv	N/A

Biodiversity Net Gain Advice Pre-app This advice can be requested as part of the planning pre-application advice service, for an additional fee and also as stand-alone advice without requesting pre-application advice	Cornwall: Fee (inc 20% VAT)
Fixed charge to include a meeting up to 1 hour* and 1 letter giving advice.	£356
Further advice, hourly rate	£111

\*Site meeting at the discretion of the case officer

Service	Cornwall	EDDC	South Hams	
Historic Environment Officer – Building and Conservation				

This advice can only be sought when requesting planning pre-application advice. There is a fee in addition to the pre-application advice fee.				
Pre-app advice (desktop)	£194	£125	£210 or £290 with sv (Minor)	N/A
Additional site meeting (up to 1 hour)	£111	N/A	As above	N/A
Substantial works to LB , barn conversions	N/A	N/A	£450 up to 2 dwelling or 500 sq m commercial. £530 with sv. Larger scheme - pre-app fee also charged	N/A

Environment Services		Fees (inc 20% VAT)			
	Cornwall - Desktop study and written response	Cornwall - Additional advice including online meeting or site meeting (per hour)*	South Hams	Teignbridge	Mid Devon
Landscape Architect – recommendations for landscape and visual impact assessment and/or green infrastructure design	£296	£99	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tree Officer – to promote early consideration of trees	£296	£99	£210 £290 with sv	N/A	N/A

within the design process and understand potential tree constraints, impacts and mitigation requirements					
Ecology Officer – recommendations for surveys and assessments, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), nature recovery networks	£296	£99	N/A	N/A	N/A
High Hedge Complaints	N/A	N/A	N/A	£750.00	N/A

\* Additional charge of 50p per mile for site visits at some authorities

## Reduced rates

	Cornwall	South Hams	Teignbridge	Mid Devon	EDDC current
100% Affordable Housing pre-app	N/A	No charge for 1 hr meeting and one written response – the subject to charges as above	Free	50% of the relevant fee.	N/A
Facilities for the disabled	N/A	No charge for 1 hr meeting and one written response – the subject to	Free	Free	N/A

		charges as above with 50% discount			
Parish/Town Council	N/A	No charge for 1 hr meeting and one written response – the subject to charges as above	50% reduction	N/A	N/A
B2, B8 or E (excluding retail) less than 100 sq m	N/A	N/A	50% reduction	N/A	N/A
Retail less than 280 sq m	N/A	N/A	50% reduction	N/A	N/A

### Appendix 3

#### Results of Planning Advisory Service's National Pre-Application Fee Survey.

(Based on a survey of 87 local planning authorities in England and Wales, 2023)

Development type	Range of fees charged (from smallest to largest)	Average (from smallest to largest)
Developments of less than 10 units	£0 to £7,200	£103 to £1,090
Developments of between 10 > 50 units	£116 to £17,059 (with the second highest £12,362)	£1,664 to £3,037
Developments of between 50 > 250 units	£118 to £35,000 (with the second highest £22,500)	£2,777 to £5,187
Developments of 250+ units	£116 to £35,000 (with the second highest £22,500)	£2,505 to £5,237
Developments of employment, industrial, commercial and retail	£35 to £22,500	£535 to £4,626
Other forms of developments (such as householder, listed buildings, adverts etc)	0 to £2,010	£222 to £750

## East Devon District Council Discretionary Planning Fees including Pre-application fees

Pre-application proposals should relate to one development proposal in respect of the site. We will not accept multiple options for development under a single pre-application enquiry.

The charges listed below are based on cost recovery only. Therefore, if a matter subsequently transpires to be particularly complex and time consuming, the Council reserves the right to request additional payment based on an hourly charge of £80.

These fees will be reviewed each year and will increase in line with inflation

Unless otherwise stated, the fees for this service are fixed, include 20% VAT and will include the following:

Level of pre-application service	
Desktop	Research the planning history, review information provided, assess against relevant policies and guidance and provide one written response.
Desktop Extra	As desktop, plus one Teams meeting or telephone call.
Full	As desktop, plus a site visit (accompanied site visits are at the discretion of the officer) and meeting, generally via Teams, to fully assess the site in its context. Includes internal consultees such as landscape and ecology.
Heritage	Pre-Applications involving Listed Buildings include an additional or separate fee

Pre-application service Fees include 20 %VAT		
Householder		
Pre-Application type	Level of service	Fee
Householder	Desktop	£170
	Desktop Extra	£240
	Full	£380
Householder follow up query	Up to 30 mins Teams call or email with bullet point response	£90
Householder involves Listed Building	Desktop	£110 (in addition to fee above)
Listed Building Consent only – works to a single dwelling house, flat or building.	Desktop	£170
	Desktop Extra	£240
	Full	£380



Minor applications		
Pre-application type	Level of service	Fee
Single dwelling and other minor development*	Desktop	£280
	Desktop Extra	£360
	Full	£500
Follow up Teams meeting or bullet response	Up to 45 mins Teams call or bullet point response to follow up query or information.	£150
Involves Listed Building(s)	Additional fee	£150
	Additional fee with conservation officer site visit	£300
*other minor development can include : telecommunications development, Advertisement Consent, Certificate of Lawfulness for existing development, Demolition in a conservation area, lifting or varying conditions associated with other development, single agricultural buildings		
2-9 dwellings or site area below 0.5 ha	Desktop	£500
	Desktop Extra	£670
	Full	£850
Follow up Teams meeting or bullet point response	Up to 60 mins Teams call or bullet point response to follow up query or information	£300
Involves Listed Building(s)	Desk top	£200 in addition to fee above
	Desk top with with conservation officer site visit	£400 in addition to fee above.
Major developments		
Pre-application type	Level of service Please note that desktop and desktop extra are not available for Major Pre-Apps. Includes internal consultees, Full major includes 2 meetings	Fee
10- 49 dwellings or up to 1.49ha	Full	£2400
Follow up meeting (via Teams with bullet point email response)	Includes review of additional information in advance of meeting by officer and internal consultees	£950
Discharge of conditions (per condition)	Desktop	£250
50- 199 dwellings or 1.5 – 4.99 ha*	Full	£5500
Follow up meeting (via Teams with bullet point email response)	Includes review of additional information in advance of meeting by officer and internal consultees	£1350

Discharge of conditions (per condition)	Desktop	£350
200 + dwellings or over 5 ha*	Full	£8900
Follow up meeting (via Teams with bullet point email response)	Includes review of additional information in advance of meeting by officer and internal consultees	£2000
Discharge of conditions (per condition)	Desktop	£450
400+ dwellings or over 10ha	PPA only	£870 set up fee plus bespoke fee.
Scoping for major development	Desktop review followed by single Teams meeting to discuss the principle of development with bullet point email response.	Half of relevant fee.
*Major pre-applications can be subject to bespoke PPA arrangements at the discretion of the case officer	Planning Performance Agreement	£870 set up fee plus bespoke fee.
<b>Biodiversity Net Gain</b>		
<b>Type</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Biodiversity Net Gain Pre-application advice	Desk top review with teams meeting up to one hour and one written response	£500
Follow up advice, hourly rate		£80
Site visit	In addition to the above and at the discretion of the case officer	£240
<b>Reduced rates</b>		
<b>Type</b>	<b>Comment</b>	
100% affordable housing (Enquiries from registered providers or	No charge for scoping meeting and 50% of fee thereafter	

Community Land Trusts only)		
Facilities for the disabled	No charge for 1 hr meeting and one written response – then subject to charges as above with 50% discount	
Parish/Town Council developments	No charge for 1 hr meeting and one written response – then subject to charges as above	
B2, B8 or E less than 100 sq m.	50% of the fees as set out above	
<b>Other Discretionary Fees</b>		
<b>Type</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Validation: Returned applications	Service charge for returned applications where a 21 day invalid letter has been sent. This is due to the high number of invalid applications handling by the LPA and returned.	10% of fee with £80 min fee and £500 max fee.
Do I need planning Permission/Listed Building Consent?	Desktop review based on information provided and review of planning history and regulations. Informal officer view provided. Only an application for a certificate of proposed lawful use or development can provide a definitive response.	£95
Written confirmation of closure of enforcement case (available for a 12 month period following closure of the case)	Where a breach has been identified.	£150
	Where no breach was identified	No charge
Written confirmation of compliance with Enforcement Notice	Including site visit if necessary	£450
Written confirmation of compliance with planning conditions	Use this service if you require confirmation that the planning conditions on a site have been complied with. Only available for 12 months following completion of development. (including site visit if necessary)	£350
High hedge complaints	Includes a site visit if needed (at officers discretion)	£350

Viability Appraisals	Where a viability appraisal is received as part of a planning application submission or at pre-application stage this will need to be independently reviewed	Quotation from Council's viability advisor provided and agreed prior to validation of application.
<b>Section 106 compliance and monitoring</b>		
<b>Service</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Written confirmation of compliance with Section 106 planning obligation(s).	Per obligation	£ 120  If site visit is required additional £150
Variation of Section 106 Obligation(s) (within first 5 years).	Per obligation	£650 Plus Council's legal fees
Monitoring of S.106 obligations, minor development (less than 10 dwellings)	Charge per financial obligation	£492
	Charge per non-financial obligation	£492
Monitoring of S.106 obligations, major development (10+ dwellings)	Charge per financial obligation	£492
	Charge per non-financial obligation	£1095

January 2025 (to take effect from April 2025)

## Appendix 5

### Comparison of existing and proposed EDDC Discretionary Planning Fees including Pre- application fees.

Pre-application proposals should relate to one development proposal in respect of the site. We will not accept multiple options for development under a single pre-application enquiry.

The charges listed below are based on cost recovery only. Therefore, if a matter subsequently transpires to be particularly complex and time consuming, the Council reserves the right to request additional payment based on an hourly charge of £80.

These fees will be reviewed each year and will increase in line with inflation

Unless otherwise stated, the fees for this service are fixed, include 20% VAT and will include the following:

Level of pre-application service	
Desktop	Research the planning history, review information provided, assess against relevant policies and guidance and provide one written response.
Desktop Extra	As desktop, plus one Teams meeting or telephone call.
Full	As desktop, plus a site visit (accompanied site visits are at the discretion of the officer) and meeting, generally via Teams, to fully assess the site in its context. Includes internal consultees such as landscape and ecology.
Heritage	Pre-Applications involving Listed Buildings include an additional or separate fee

Pre-application service Fees include 20 %VAT			
Householder			
Pre-Application type	Level of service	Proposed Fee	Current Fee
Householder	Desktop	£170	N/A
	Desktop Extra	£240	N/A
	Full	£380	N/A
Householder follow up query	Up to 30 mins Teams call or email with bullet point response	£90	N/A

Householder involves Listed Building	Desktop	£110 (in addition to fee above)	N/A
Listed Building Consent only – works to a single dwelling house, flat or building.	Desktop	£170	N/A
	Desktop Extra	£240	£150
	Full	£380	£150
Minor applications			
Pre-application type	Level of service	Proposed Fee	Current Fee
Single dwelling and other minor development*	Desktop	£280	£180
	Desktop Extra	£360	£180
	Full	£500	£180
Follow up Teams meeting or bullet response	Up to 45 mins Teams call or bullet point response to follow up query or information.	£150	N/A
Involves Listed Building(s)	Additional fee	£150	N/A
	Additional fee with conservation officer site visit	£300	N/A
*other minor development can include : telecommunications development, Advertisement Consent, Certificate of Lawfulness for existing development, Demolition in a conservation area, lifting or varying conditions associated with other development, single agricultural buildings			
2-9 dwellings or site area below 0.5 ha	Desktop	£500	£300
	Desktop Extra	£670	£300
	Full	£850	£300
Follow up Teams meeting or bullet point response	Up to 60 mins Teams call or bullet point response to follow up query or information	£300	N/A
Involves Listed Building(s)	Desk top	£200 in addition to fee above	N/A
	Desk top with with conservation officer site visit	£400 in addition to fee above.	N/A
Major developments			
Pre-application type	Level of service Please note that desktop and desktop extra are not available for Major Pre-Apps. Includes internal consultees, Full major includes 2 meetings	Proposed Fee	Current Fee
10- 49 dwellings or up to 1.49ha	Full	£2400	£600

Follow up meeting (via Teams with bullet point email response)	Includes review of additional information in advance of meeting by officer and internal consultees	£950	N/A
Discharge of conditions (per condition)	Desktop	£250	N/A
50- 199 dwellings or 1.5 – 4.99 ha*	Full	£5500	£750
Follow up meeting (via Teams with bullet point email response)	Includes review of additional information in advance of meeting by officer and internal consultees	£1350	N/A
Discharge of conditions (per condition)	Desktop	£350	N/A
200 + dwellings or over 5 ha*	Full	£8900	£900
Follow up meeting (via Teams with bullet point email response)	Includes review of additional information in advance of meeting by officer and internal consultees	£2000	N/A
Discharge of conditions (per condition)	Desktop	£450	N/A
400+ dwellings or over 10ha	PPA only	£870 set up fee plus bespoke fee.	£900
Scoping for major development	Desktop review followed by single Teams meeting to discuss the principle of development with bullet point email response.	Half of relevant fee.	Half of relevant fee
*Major pre-applications can be subject to bespoke PPA arrangements at the discretion of the case officer	Planning Performance Agreement	£870 set up fee plus bespoke fee.	Bespoke fee, no set up charge
<b>Biodiversity Net Gain</b>			
<b>Type</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Proposed Fee</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>
Biodiversity Net Gain Pre-application advice	Desk top review with teams meeting up to one hour and one written response	£500	N/A
Follow up advice, hourly rate		£80	N/A

Site visit	In addition to the above and at the discretion of the case officer	£240	N/A
Reduced rates			
Type	Comment	Current practice	
100% affordable housing (Enquiries from registered providers or Community Land Trusts only)	No charge for scoping meeting and 50% of fee thereafter	N/A	
Facilities for the disabled	No charge for 1 hr meeting and one written response – then subject to charges as above with 50% discount	N/A	
Parish/Town Council developments	No charge for 1 hr meeting and one written response – then subject to charges as above	N/A	
B2, B8 or E less than 100 sq m.	50% of the fees as set out above	N/A	
Other Discretionary Fees			
Type	Comment	Proposed Fee	Current Fee
Validation: Returned applications	Service charge for returned applications where a 21 day invalid letter has been sent. This is due to the high number of invalid applications handling by the LPA and returned.	10% of fee with £80 min fee and £500 max fee.	N/A
Do I need planning Permission/Listed Building Consent?	Desktop review based on information provided and review of planning history and regulations. Informal officer view provided. Only an application for a certificate of proposed lawful use or development can provide a definitive response.	£95	£40



Written confirmation of closure of enforcement case (available for a 12 month period following closure of the case)	Where a breach has been identified.	£150	£50
	Where no breach was identified	No charge	No charge
Written confirmation of compliance with Enforcement Notice	Including site visit if necessary	£450	£50
Written confirmation of compliance with planning conditions	Use this service if you require confirmation that the planning conditions on a site have been complied with. Only available for 12 months following completion of development. (including site visit if necessary)	£350	£90 for 1 <sup>st</sup> then £30 for each additional
High hedge complaints	Includes a site visit if needed (at officers discretion)	£350	N/A
Viability Appraisals	Where a viability appraisal is received as part of a planning application submission or at pre-application stage this will need to be independently reviewed	Quotation from Council's viability advisor provided and agreed prior to validation of application.	Quotation from Council's viability advisor provided and agreed prior to validation of application
Section 106 compliance and monitoring			
Service	Comment	Fee	
Written confirmation of compliance with Section 106 planning obligation(s).	Per obligation	£ 120  If site visit is required additional £150	£90 for 1 <sup>st</sup> then £30 for each additional
Variation of Section106 Obligation(s) (within first 5 years).	Per obligation	£650 Plus Council's legal fees	Legal fees only
Monitoring of S.106 obligations, minor development (less than 10 dwellings)	Charge per financial obligation	£492	£492
	Charge per non-financial obligation	£492	£492
	Charge per financial obligation	£492	£492

Monitoring of S.106 obligations, major development (10+ dwellings)	Charge per non-financial obligation	£1095	£1095
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February 2025 (to take effect from April 2025)

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



## Update on the Council Plan delivery plan

### Report summary:

This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the progress made on the Council Plan delivery plan up to the end of the third quarter of 2024/25.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

That Cabinet receive the progress report of the delivery plan and note the progress of the actions to date.

### Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the objectives from the Council Plan are being actioned and delivered appropriately.

Officer: Joanne Avery, Management Information Officer, [javery@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto: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 monitor the objectives and measures from the council plan.

**Links to background information** [Appendix a – Council Plan delivery plan update quarter 3 2024/25](#)

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

Priorities (check which apply)

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

## Report in full

This report provides an update on the council plan actions. The council plan sets out our strategic direction, including our priorities and actions, and is supported by service plans and individual performance reviews.

Responsible officers have been asked to update on progress so far up to the end of quarter three 2024/25 so gives us nine months of progress on the plan.

Many of the projects listed in the plan are now underway and are progressing as planned. Some work has been completed like the completion of consultation on key elements of the local plan and the adoption of the Fraud, Corruption and Compliance Strategy.

However, we do have some areas of variation where the projects are experiencing some changes to their original timescales but are still on going. These include projects around our stock condition survey and associated Housing Asset Management Strategy. The delivery of a master plan for the new community within the district and the delivery of the Exmouth Placemaking action plan. Work in these areas is progressing although not to the original timescale at present.

For projects listed as having variations in their timescales, we have consulted with responsible officers to determine realistic timeframes they are currently working towards. These updated timeframes are noted in the delivery plan. Where appropriate, we aim to agree on amending the timescales to better reflect achievable deadlines.

[Appendix A](#) provides the full delivery plan with the updates from quarter three by responsible officers.

Key to the delivery status listed for each action -

**In progress:** This status indicates that the action or measure is currently being worked on and is making progress. There are 48 actions across different themes and directorates that fall under this category.

**Variation:** This status is used for actions that have experienced some changes or adjustments in their timelines or implementation plans. There are 22 actions with this status.

**Completed:** Actions or measures that have been successfully completed. There are six actions that have reached this status.

**Concern:** Actions or measures with serious problems or significant delays. There are no actions currently marked as concern.

**Not yet due:** Actions or measures that have not yet commenced as they are not yet due and are waiting of other actions to be completed before they can start. There are 28 actions that are planned but have not started yet.

**Not available:** This status is used for actions where the current status information is not available. There is one measure with this status as this is not currently being recorded.

## Review of actions for 2025/26

ELT's view is that they currently feel comfortable with the progress and direction of the delivery plan. Moving forward though, the Directors and their management teams are currently working through the Council Plan Delivery plans and the Directorate plans for 2025/26 to review our priorities moving into the new financial year particularly in light of the LGR. They will be focusing

on reviewing timeframes for the deliverables and making an assessment on each and recommending if they should pause, accelerate or continue.

ELT are due to meet on the 11<sup>th</sup> March to review this work and comment on any recommended changes. The outcome of this will be brought to a joint workshop with Cabinet and ELT to review and agree the way forward for our delivery plans and actions. This workshop is to be scheduled in mid to end March.

#### **Forward reporting timetable for information**

	Quarter 3 report	Quarter 4 report	Quarter 1 report	Quarter 3 report
End of quarter update request to responsible officers	6 <sup>th</sup> Jan to 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan	1 <sup>st</sup> April to 15 <sup>th</sup> April	1 <sup>st</sup> July to 15 <sup>th</sup> July	1 <sup>st</sup> October to 15 <sup>th</sup> October
Report collation	20 <sup>th</sup> Jan	16 <sup>th</sup> April	15 <sup>th</sup> July	16 <sup>th</sup> October
Report to ELT	4 <sup>th</sup> Feb	29 <sup>th</sup> April	29 <sup>th</sup> July	30 <sup>th</sup> October
Report submission for Cabinet	11 <sup>th</sup> Feb	6 <sup>th</sup> May	TBC*	TBC*
Cabinet	5 <sup>th</sup> March	4 <sup>th</sup> June (TBC)*	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept (TBC)*	26 November (TBC)*

\*(To be confirmed once 2025/26 meeting calendar published)

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#### **Financial implications:**

No direct financial implication arising from the report.

#### **Legal implications:**

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

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



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## **Strata Business Plan 2025/2026**

### **Report summary:**

This report sets out the Strata Joint Executive recommendation to EDDC Council arising from their consideration of a report on the Strata Business Plan for 2025/2026 at their meeting on 28 January 2025.

Note: The relevant report considered by the Strata Joint Executive Committee are appended to this report including the Strata Business Plan for 2025/2026 and Cabinet are invited to recommend full Council to approve the Strata Business Plan for 2025/2026.

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

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### **Recommendation:**

That the Strata Business Plan for 2025/2026 is recommended to be approved by full Council.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

The business plan for 2025/26 is a vital framework, guiding both financial allocations and strategic initiatives essential to achieving our objectives which align with those set out by East Devon, Exeter City and Teignbridge Councils in their ambitious plans detailed in their digital strategies which formed the bedrock of the 2024/25 plan.

Officer: Andrew Melhuish, Corporate Lead Democratic Services & Scrutiny  
([andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk))

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## **STRATA JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE OF MEETING:** 28 JANUARY 2025  
17 FEBRUARY 2025

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 20 JANUARY 2024

**REPORT OF:** STRATA BUSINESS PLAN 25/26

**SUBJECT:** CONTEXT OF BUSINESS PLAN 25/26

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This report advises on the context to the Strata Business Plan for year 2025/26.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In light of the Local Government Re-organisation (LGR), the four partners recognise that priorities may change in the coming months. Therefore, flexibility is built into the 25/26 plan. Councils can adjust priorities through the governance model and boards. Critical items from the 24/25 business plan detailed below will form next year's Core Programme along with some operational and maintenance projects which will utilise most strata staff.

Additional projects listed will be reviewed by the relevant governance boards and councils for prioritisation and approval.

Detailed plans for delivery have or will be created for each item covered within the business plan in conjunction with the partners as part of the delivery governance model.

### 3. MAIN IMPLICATIONS

#### 3.1 Core Plan

The 2024/25 business plan set out the foundations for the partnership to consolidate the core ICT offering to the shareholders and are essential for completion in 25/26. This plan crossed multiple years of delivery and as such the completion of these elements form the “Core” of the 2025/26 plan. These headline items consist of the following:

<b>End User Computing</b>	Replacement of All Laptop infrastructure and Global desktop
<b>Telephony and Contact Centre</b>	Replacement of contact centre telephony and Skype for staff.
<b>Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Forms</b>	Provide technology to capture all customer interaction data in one place.
<b>Middleware</b>	Creation of integration layer to enable the above and provide access to council data across organisations.
<b>Sharepoint.</b>	Migration of unstructured documents into document management under the local government classification scheme.
<b>Financial Management System.</b>	Replacement of partners incumbent finance system.
<b>Copper lines and ECC Dark Fibre Migration</b>	Replacement of the network dark fibre and copper lines.
<b>Cloud Migration to Azure</b>	Migration of onsite hardware that reaches end of life in 25/26 to the cloud.



## Operational and maintenance Items covered in the report

A number of strata Key internal initiatives during 2025/26 are required to ensure The ICT service remains operational a summary is listed below:

<b>IT Health check remediation</b>	Implement ICT improvements following Audits an security assessments.
<b>Server 2012 Replacement</b>	Replace old “virtual” end of life 2012 servers.
<b>Windows 10 End of Life</b>	Perform essential maintenance on windows 10 ready to replace with windows 11.
<b>Windows Vsphere ( virtual infrastructure management)</b>	Upgrade and patch our virtual Machines infrastructure that all servers run on.
<b>Global Desktop</b>	Essential maintenance to the virtual desktop environment.
<b>DWP MOU Remediation</b>	Complete DWP security audit and work with councils on required policies.
<b>Starters , Movers and Leavers process</b>	Improving the processes for onboarding, transitioning, and offboarding staff
<b>MFD Replacement</b>	Re contract MFD estate, reducing numbers in light of council occupancy.
<b>Back up and disaster recovery</b>	Working with the councils to strengthen council and strata response to disaster.
<b>Storage</b>	Move all storage to Cloud storage (azure)
<b>Civic Centre Closure</b>	Support the council with options to close the Civic centre.
<b>GMS to Cloud</b>	Move the address database system from on premise to the cloud.
<b>Print and Post</b>	Review and implement options created in the business plan created in 24/25
<b>CAF</b>	Complete Cyber Essentials Framework assessment.

**Additional projects included in the plan that are either in progress or require requirements and business cases including resource assessment approval by governance boards.**

<b>HR system Migration</b>	Migration of Itrent HR solution to the provider
<b>Performance management system (EDDC Only)</b>	Implementation of corporate performance management system to monitor corporate Key performance indicators,
<b>Council Tax system – Options / procurement</b>	Consolidate contractual termination dates and options to ensure viable system renewal / consolidation.
<b>StreetScene – system and process replacement</b>	Gather requirements and create system design and options for street scene services.
<b>Homelessness system</b>	Replace the incumbent homelessness system.
<b>Lone Working system</b>	Review and either procure or modify Lone working solution.
<b>Car Parks – system</b>	Gather requirements and create system design and options to replace the carparking system.
<b>LalPAC (Licencing system)</b>	Gather requirements and create system design and options to replace the Licensing system.
<b>Health and Safety</b>	Gather requirements and create system design and options to replace the Health and safety system.
<b>EDDC Waste Project</b>	Support EDDC in service design and delivery for Waste services.
<b>ECC City Development Project</b>	Review of service process against technology e.g. review the planning process, Data utilisation, web and contact centres

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Joint Scrutiny Committee and Joint Executive Committee note the contents of the report.**

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# Business Plan 2025/2026

Author:

Strata Management Team

Version:

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## In our business plan

1. Introduction	4
2. Overview	6
2.1 24/25 Plan Continuation Projects	7
2.2 Connectivity/Cloud	9
2.3 Applications replacement and rationalisation	11
2.4 Embed Enablers	13
2.1. Operations and Maintenance	14
2.2. Finance Summary	15
3. Organisational Review	16
4. Carried Forward 2024-2025	21
4.1. Contact Centre and Telephony	21
4.2. Middleware	25
4.3. End User Computing (EUC)	27
4.4. SharePoint	30
4.5. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Forms	31
4.6. Bookings	33
4.7. Notifications	35
4.8. Data Platform	36
5. Cloud, SAAS and Connectivity	37
5.1. Migration to Azure	37
2.4. Copper lines and Dark Fibre	40
3. Embed Enablers	44
4. Operations and Maintenance	44
5. Disaster Recovery	47
6. Finances	48

7. Appendix 1 – Roadmap Applications and rationalisation.	59
7.4. HR System Strategy – iTrent	59
7.5. Revenues and Benefits	60
7.6. Finance Management System - FMS	60
7.7. Carparks	61
7.8. Performance Management	61
7.9. Street Scene	62
7.10. Lone Worker	63
7.11. Health and Safety	63
7.12. Mobile Worker App for Officers	64
7.13. Mobile App for Citizens linked to Notifications	64
7.14. LaIPAC to Uniform – EDDC	65
7.15. GMS system to Cloud	66

# 1. Introduction

The business plan for 2025/26 is a vital framework, guiding both financial allocations and strategic initiatives essential to achieving our objectives which align with those set out by East Devon, Exeter City and Teignbridge Councils' in their ambitious plans detailed in their digital strategies which formed the bedrock of the 2024/25 plan.

The plan for 25/26 builds on the foundations put in place during 24/25 through the delivery of key enablers—Contact Centre, End User Computing, SharePoint Migration, Middleware and Cyber Security enhancements as part of the adoption of Microsoft E5 licensing. Continuing to develop these foundational elements are integral to our efforts all aimed at sustaining a strong and resilient ICT service as well as providing the underpinning technology to enable the transformation of our partner councils.

For 25/26 there is a critical focus on delivering essential operations and maintenance practices, which are vital to sustaining compliance and meeting audit standards. These aspects of our work are critical to ensuring ongoing system reliability, risk management and continuity of service within an increasingly complex and fast moving digital and technological environment.

Within this year's business plan, we have included an outline of projects that are currently under consideration by the Architecture Board but not yet reached formal approvable stage. Whilst this does not exclude the possibility of additional projects being commissioned in year, it is important to ensure that there is enough capacity within the service to operate effectively. Any new projects will be evaluated alongside existing requirements and the councils will be required to work together to agree priorities and any potential additional resources needed.

In addition to ongoing enablers, this plan prioritises several key operational projects to improve the service delivery/customer experience in particular operational areas. These are listed and have been included within the budget, however there will only be progressed once approved by Architecture Board.

A key area of work for 25/26 includes a strategic shift to the Azure Data Centre which will enable the transfer of data from physical servers to virtual (cloud based) storage. This is a vital strategic outcome required by all three councils and will

include an in-depth review of copper lines and dark fibre infrastructure and an evaluation of council storage (data/data lake and files/folders) alongside critical work to review disaster recovery and contingency planning to fortify resilience across core services.

Our strategy-led approach integrates the vision of all three councils and Strata, dividing priorities into three core areas: transformational (advancing enablers for transformation and growth) organisational (enhancing internal efficiencies) and operational (focusing on foundational service needs and maintenance).

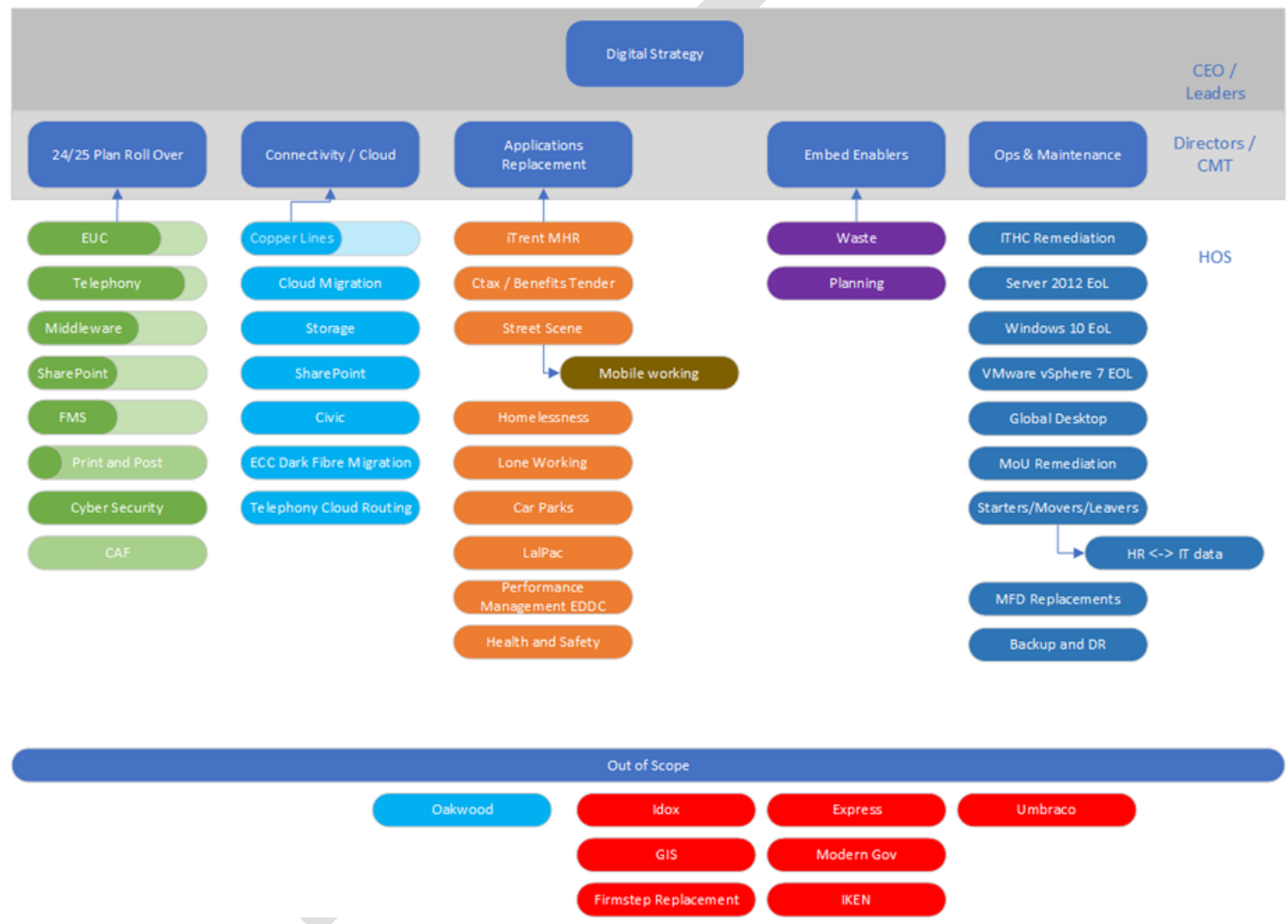
In light of LGR, the four partners recognise that priorities may change in the coming months. Therefore, flexibility is built into the 25/26 plan. Councils can adjust priorities through the governance model and boards. Critical items from 24/25 such as Azure migration, telephony replacement, CRM, financial management system upgrade, laptop replacement, and middleware, will form next year's core programme, engaging most staff. Other projects will be reviewed by the Architecture Board for prioritisation and approval.

The business plan, once approved by the Joint Executive Committee will underpin the work of the Architecture Board which will scrutinise individual proposals to ensure they align with Council strategic goals.

## 2. Overview

This section provides an overview of all the key projects, those that are continuing from the 24/25 business plan and new ones agreed for inception during 25/26.

The table below lists these graphically and the following narrative provides a brief description of each project. Further detail can be found in appendix 1.





## 2.1 24/25 Plan Continuation Projects

### End User Computing

The goal is to reduce reliance on Global Desktop and migrate user data to OneDrive for Business. A pilot rollout has been completed and full deployment is scheduled for 2025/2026. This transition will enhance user experience, improve data accessibility and support remote working for all councils.

### Telephony and Contact Centre

This project involves transitioning from Skype to Teams telephony and developing a new contact centre. The procurement stage is completed and the rollout phase has begun. The new system will enhance communication capabilities, improve customer service and support remote working for all councils.

### Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Forms

This project aims to capture all customer transaction data and activate MyAccount for EDDC and ECC. Significant progress has been made with over 50,000 transactions captured. The CRM system will enhance customer service, provide valuable insights and support digital transformation initiatives for EDDC and ECC.

### Middleware

The project focuses on establishing an Enterprise Middleware Architecture (EMA) to manage application programming interfaces (API's) secure databases and automate service processes. The proof of concept is completed and the core parts of the test infrastructure are set up. This architecture will improve data integration, enhance security and support digital transformation for all councils.

### Mobile App for Citizens linked to Notifications

The project aims to provide another channel for communication linked to the Notifications enabler. The mobile app will enhance citizen engagement, improve communication and support digital transformation for all councils.

### Notifications

The Notifications system will enable end users to send templated notifications via various channels. The focus has been on EMA, scheduled to go live in Q4

2024/2025. This system will improve communication, enhance customer service, and support digital transformation for all councils.

### **SharePoint**

The project involves implementing SharePoint for secure and efficient document management and retrieval. A detailed architecture and pilot are completed and learning from the initial pilots is currently being evaluated to support roll out in 2025. SharePoint will improve data management, enhance collaboration and support compliance for all councils.

### **Finance Management System - FMS**

The project involves implementing a new Finance Management System. The new system will streamline financial processes, improve accuracy and support strategic financial planning for all councils.

### **Print and Post**

The project will involve the implementation of advanced printing solutions and automated postal systems which will cut down on manual labour and ensure faster and more reliable service. Additionally, the project will explore the use of digital alternatives to traditional mail, such as electronic document delivery to further enhance efficiency and reduce environmental impact. This in turn will look at the operational model and possible reductions in service provision.

### **Cyber Security and Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) Readiness**

This is a government led project supported by the Local Government Association (LGA) aimed at enabling councils to improve cyber security. Working with each Council, Strata has completed the nationally recommended CAF readiness actions and as a result each council has been provided with a grant to be used to further develop Cyber Security process and operations.

## 2.2 Connectivity/Cloud

### **Copper Lines and ECC Dark Fibre Migration**

The project aims to migrate from analogue to digital services and replace the unsupported dark fibre network (underground cables connecting council buildings and servers). Significant progress has already been made with a goal to complete by December 2025. This migration will ensure reliable and modern connectivity, reducing maintenance costs and improving service continuity for ECC as the main dark fibre networks and servers are based in the city.

### **Cloud Migration to Azure**

The goal is to move to cloud computing, reducing reliance on physical data centres. An “Azure landing zone” (a network area in the cloud) is set up and specialist skill development is ongoing to manage the new cloud technology. This transition will offer scalable, secure and cost-effective IT infrastructure, enhancing service delivery and reducing operational risks for all councils. A comprehensive project plan is under development with initial phases starting in Q1 2025/2026.

### **GMS system to Cloud**

The project involves transitioning the Gazetteer Management Software (GMS) to a cloud version. The GMS enables Strata to manage the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) which the authorities are contractually obliged to maintain as part of the agreement with Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as it feeds directly into the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG). This national address gazetteer brings together address information from local authorities and Ordnance Survey to create a ‘national address gazetteer database’, providing one definitive source of accurate publicly owned spatial address data for the whole of the public sector. The NLPG underpins many council services alongside many nationally strategically important services such as Elections and the NHS. It is part of the ongoing programme to migrate away from on-premise hosted applications. This transition will improve data management, enhance accessibility and reduce maintenance costs for all councils.

## **Data Platform**

The project involves implementing Microsoft Purview for data governance and management. This platform will ensure data accuracy, security and compliance, benefiting all councils by enabling better decision-making and operational efficiency.

## **SharePoint**

The project aims to implement SharePoint for secure and efficient document management and retrieval across the councils. A detailed architecture and pilot have been completed and lessons learned are being evaluated to ensure a successful rollout. The project will improve data management, enhance collaboration and support compliance with legislative requirements.

## **Storage**

The SharePoint project aims to utilise and manage the latest document data effectively including information “Meta Data” that can tell you what a document is to aid with searching and retention. To preserve historical data that currently resides in file shares, our strategy proposes using cloud storage solutions within the broader context of the Azure migration project. This approach ensures that legacy data is securely stored and accessible for future reference while transitioning to more advanced and scalable storage technologies.

## **Civic Centre Closure**

Exeter City Council has commenced discussions and preparations to relocate from the Civic Centre to a new site. Strata is involved in the initial discussions providing support for communications and ICT equipment. A significant factor driving the move to Azure is the planned closure of the data centre located in Phase 1 of the Civic Centre.

## **Performance Management (EDDC only)**

The project aims to enhance performance management capabilities with a Corporate Performance and Risk Management system for EDDC. Pre-project phases are underway with a kick-off meeting expected in December 2024. The new system will improve performance tracking, enhance risk management and support strategic planning for EDDC.

## 2.3 Applications replacement and rationalisation

### **Maximise Use of HR system – iTrent - ahead of move to the cloud**

The project aims to ensure efficiencies in process and optimisation available in the iTrent MHR solution are utilised and is in the early discovery phase. This initiative will reduce administration, enhance HR processes, improve data management and support strategic workforce planning for all councils.

### **HR System Strategy - iTrent**

The project involves migrating iTrent to a cloud or hosted environment. A health check and gap analysis are planned, subject to business case approval, with migration to iTrent Hosted in Q2 2025/2026. This transition will improve HR processes, enhance data security and support strategic workforce planning for all councils.

### **Council Tax**

The councils spend a significant amount on Council tax systems (circa 600k) per annum, currently the councils are not on a single contract or supplier. The project aims to align all three councils on a common platform for Council Tax systems to leverage contract and efficiency savings. A procurement exercise is planned for Q3/4 2025/2026 in line with contract renewal dates. A unified system will streamline processes, reduce costs and improve service delivery for all councils.

### **StreetScene**

The project aims to procure and implement a comprehensive StreetScene Environmental Management System for East Devon District Council (EDDC). This system will manage all StreetScene assets, streamline work programmes and enhance the monitoring, coordination, recording and management of StreetScene activities, ultimately improving service delivery and customer service standards. As the requirements for this project become clear and are considered by the Architecture Board this may be considered by ECC

## **Homelessness**

Teignbridge have commenced a project to replace their incumbent Homelessness Management system. The new system aligns with the cloud-based system already in place in Exeter. The project is well underway and is expected to move into production in Q2 25/26.

## **Lone Working**

The Lone Worker Software Project aims to enhance the safety and operational efficiency of high-risk lone workers at Teignbridge District Council (TDC) and East Devon District Council (EDDC). It involves procuring a 24/7 Lone Worker application that meets BS 8484 and ISO 9001 standards, providing a reliable solution to replace outdated systems. ECC already has a system in place.

## **Car Parks**

East Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council are exploring options to replace their existing parking management system due to substantial cost increases and support challenges with the current provider, Taranto. The new system aims to improve service control, enhance customer experience and provide better management information and reporting capabilities. ECC, who currently utilise an alternative system, are keen to be involved in the defining business requirements stage of the project to understand any potential benefits for Exeter

## **LalPAC (Licencing system)**

East Devon District Council plans to migrate from the LalPAC Licensing system to Idox Uniform to improve data management and compliance. The project had previously stalled but is now being reconsidered to align with the systems already used by Exeter and Teignbridge

## **Health and Safety**

This project focuses on procuring a comprehensive corporate health and safety management platform for East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils. The new system aims to enhance performance monitoring, improve resource allocation and support compliance with legislative requirements. ECC, who currently utilise an alternative system, are keen to be involved in the defining business requirements stage of the project to understand any potential benefits for Exeter

## 2.4 Embed Enablers

### **EDDC Waste Project**

The project involves the provision of the Recycling and Waste service. It is a large project expected to commence in 2025, requiring significant resources. The new system will improve waste management, enhance service delivery and support environmental sustainability for EDDC.

### **ECC City Development Project**

ECC are embarking on a project to improve their planning system and processes to improve the customer experience of the service and ensure the Uniform system is being used to its full capabilities. Many of the enablers already under development will be integral to the success of the project, such as EMA to ensure integrations are managed efficiently, bookings so that time with a planning officer can be booked automatically, chatbots and good website information to handle some of the more basic planning enquires and CRM integration to make more information accessible to Customer Service Agents, rather than taking up the time of professional planning officers.

### **Bookings**

The project aims to develop a system to manage bookings using Microsoft Bookings, Exchange and in-house development. A proof of concept for Sports Pitch bookings is being designed and tested for Teignbridge. This system will streamline the booking process, reduce administrative overhead and improve user experience for residents and staff.

## 2.5 Operations and Maintenance

### **ITHC Remediation**

IT Health Check (ITHC) remediation involves significant effort to address vulnerabilities and implement improvements following audits. This process includes responding to auditors, prioritising and resolving issues identified during health checks, and ensuring all systems meet compliance requirements. Effective coordination across teams and proactive planning are essential to minimise risks and maintain operational integrity.

### **Server 2012 Replacement**

The decommissioning and replacement of legacy servers running Windows Server 2012 require substantial resources. Migration efforts can be complex, especially for services with intricate dependencies or outdated configurations. Proper planning, testing, and execution are critical to ensure seamless transitions. Server 2012 has reached EOL and if no forward plan exists to migrate, we run the risk of failing PSN Coco audit.

### **Windows 10 End of Life (EOL)**

With the end of Windows 10 support approaching, contingency planning is essential to maintain desktop and user functionality. While End User Computing (EUC) is moving away from the Global Desktop (GD) service, potential alternatives such as a new Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) or an upgrade to Windows 11 are being evaluated. This requires detailed assessments of compatibility, resource requirements, and deployment strategies to ensure a smooth transition.

### **VMware vSphere**

Managing the incumbent VMware vSphere platform requires ongoing effort to ensure stability, performance, and security. Although the migration to Azure will reduce these efforts over time, an element of vSphere management is expected to persist. This includes routine updates, monitoring, and system optimisation to support the infrastructure.

### **Global Desktop (GD)**

Maintaining the Global Desktop service demands continuous attention to ensure reliability and user satisfaction. This includes resolving user issues, applying updates, and addressing integration challenges.

### **DWP MoU Remediation**

Addressing issues identified involves substantial collaboration with councils and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This includes developing coordinated responses, addressing compliance gaps and ensuring that all commitments are fulfilled within the stipulated timelines.



### Starters, Movers, and Leavers (SML)

Improving the processes for onboarding, transitioning, and offboarding staff is an area of focus. Investments in automation aim to reduce reliance on the Service Desk, streamline operations, and enhance the overall staff experience. These efforts are critical for improving efficiency and minimizing delays in role-related changes.

### MFD Replacement

Replacing aging Multi-Function Devices (MFDs) with modern equipment and services requires effort to ensure minimal disruption to users.

### Backup and Disaster Recovery (DR)

Strengthening backup and disaster recovery processes is essential to safeguard critical council systems. Regular testing, process refinement, and validation ensure that systems can be swiftly restored following an incident, minimising potential downtime and maintaining essential services.

## 2.6 Finance Summary

Together with other Council recharges the total budgeted Council payments to Strata for 2025/26 are £8.76m, an increase of 3.4% on the 2024/25 budget.

A full description can be found in Section 6

Contract Payment	Budget	Share by council	2026/27	2027/28
	2025/26	2025/26		
EDDC	£3,367,239	38.6%	£3,476,805	£3,563,725
ECC	£2,911,984	33.4%	£3,016,541	£3,091,955
TDC	£2,438,771	28.0%	£2,486,189	£2,548,344
Total	£8,717,995	100.0%	£8,979,535	£9,204,023
Document Centre Recharge	£16,000		£16,480	£16,892
Mobile Tariff Access Recharge	£28,800		£29,664	£30,406
Total Council Payments	£8,762,795		£8,925,679	£9,048,821

# 3 Organisational Review

## Training and Development

Improving skills empowers staff to handle complex tasks and projects in-house, reducing the need to rely on third-party consultants and ensures staff feel supported and invested in. By developing expertise within Strata, we can address challenges more efficiently, maintain greater control over processes, and respond more quickly to changing needs. This shift minimises consultancy fees, freeing up resources to reinvest in further skill development, tools, and innovation. Over time, building internal capability strengthens our self-sufficiency and enhances overall productivity. Furthermore, we can align with natural staff turnover to maintain a workforce that supports our organisation's evolving demographic and future requirements. This not only helps optimise budgets but also positions us to meet challenges with a workforce tailored to our long-term goals.

Over the course of the last 12 months, staff have been encouraged through the annual appraisal process to undertake courses in the Microsoft M365 platform that complement their areas of expertise. Over the course of the next business plan, remaining staff will be required to undertake the foundation courses as a minimum, with others encouraged and supported to specialise and become qualified in more advanced areas of the Microsoft ecosystem.

Course	Description	Staff Trained
Microsoft Azure Fundamentals	The Microsoft Azure Fundamentals course introduces cloud concepts, core Azure services, security, compliance, and pricing.	8
Microsoft M365 Fundamentals	The Microsoft 365 Fundamentals course provides an overview of Microsoft 365 services, benefits, and features, including cloud concepts, productivity apps, collaboration tools, and security.	1
Microsoft Power Platform Fundamentals	The Microsoft Power Platform Fundamentals course introduces Power BI, Power Apps, Power Automate, and Power Virtual Agents. It covers core capabilities, use cases, and benefits of building apps, automating workflows, and analysing data.	2

<b>SQL Server Database Administration</b>	Database Administration training covers a variety of topics ranging from securables (database schemas, users and general access), backups, performance tuning and enhancements for troubleshooting problems.	1
<b>Microsoft Azure Solutions Architect</b>	It covers advanced topics like virtual networking, storage, compute, identity, security, and governance. Students learn to architect solutions for diverse workloads, optimise performance, and integrate Azure services effectively. Emphasizing cost management and best practices, the course includes practical scenarios to enhance skills.	1
<b>Microsoft Security, Compliance, and Identity Fundamentals</b>	The Microsoft Security, Compliance, and Identity Fundamentals course introduces core SCI concepts, including Zero Trust, identity protection, access management, and compliance. It explores Microsoft tools like Azure AD, Defender, and Sentinel.	1
<b>Contract Management</b>	Providing local Government managers with knowledge around all aspects of Contract management covering Stakeholder Management, Risk management, Procurement and mobilisation, Ongoing design and development, Contract Management & Supplier Performance and Exit and transition for high value or key contracts.	1

As part of the personal development plans, we have Identified areas of training for each department to support the business plan for 2025/26.

Our in-house Trainer has been involved in multiple activities throughout 2024 on behalf of the councils. This includes:

- Microsoft 365 Training courses delivered to large audiences
- SharePoint pilot training generated in preparation for a wider deployment
- Councillor support & training
- Staff drop-in sessions
- Content for new EUC laptop deployment including Windows 11 support
- A brand-new Strata Broadcast Team site for announcements and Training Hints & Tips
- A brand-new training SharePoint site split into three elements

- Strata training documentation – bespoke guidance written in-house for various technologies
- Microsoft Learning Pathways – Microsoft generated learning guidance for various Microsoft technologies
- Modern Digital Toolkit – a collaborative site with multiple guides on how best to use the right tools for the job

For 2025 the training schedule will follow the same plan with further courses being run to help staff get more out of their existing technologies. This is particularly the case with Microsoft 365 and its various collaboration tools, such as Microsoft Teams.

### **Activity**

Across the organisation approximately 40% of time is spent delivering projects with the remaining 60% on delivering business as usual activities, including Incident management, administration and BAU requests. This presents flexibility in approach to financing transformation i.e. opportunity value of approximately 40%.

## Strata Staff Survey 2024/25

In the 2024/25 Strata Business Plan we committed to undertake a staff survey of each of the partner authorities every year to understand their experience of Strata services. on Strata and the services,

This year we are asking the same questions as the previous year so that we can see how the changes we've made through the year have had an impact.

Highlights from the 2023 survey and how we responded are shown below:

You said	We did
The Strata Portal needs to Improve	We've revamped the Strata Portal, introducing new branding, an A to Z, improved search facilities and a service catalogue detailing the services we provide
Service desk opening times	From January 2024 we extended the opening times of the Service Desk to align with the council office times, opening from 08:00 to 17:00. We've also introduced a single, non-geographic Service Desk telephone number to call (020 38 33 2999)
Improve comms – provide better updates to call progress	We have introduced new branding of communication emails, a new Strata Broadcast Team, and new process for managing Major Faults to include WhatsApp and improved regularity of notifications.
Improve hardware and replace aging devices	We've introduced a hardware replacement programme which we're steadily working through. Laptops over 4 years old are being replaced with newer models, with improved performance, to work with the new End User Compute (EUC) model.
Audio visual equipment in meeting rooms needs improving	New Audio-Visual equipment has been installed throughout Blackdown House and Exeter Civic Centre, and the stability issues experienced in Teignbridge offices have been addressed
Improve Global Desktop	We're working hard to remove the need for Global Desktop altogether. The End User Computer model will replace Global Desktop with laptops that run applications natively – without the need to log onto Global. Roll-out of this new way of working began in November 2024 and will continue through 2025.

Improve prioritisation of requests	We've introduced a new work pipeline to manage Projects and Larger pieces of work in a different way to Business-as-Usual requests (BAU). This allows us to wrap an SLA around the BAU work whilst ensuring adequate controls are in place for larger work items.
Skype for Business and needs replacing	We recognise that Skype is old technology that is being de-supported by Microsoft in 2025; as such we've already begun moving officers away from Skype and onto Teams Telephony. This will continue through the early part of 2025

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## 4. Carried Forward 2024-2025

### 4.1 Contact Centre and Telephony

The project is progressing steadily, completing the procurement stage in 2024 and is now at the rollout phase, with a focus on transitioning from Skype to Teams telephony by June 2025. A full procurement process was conducted, which included:

- Requirement Gathering:
- Supplier Evaluation:
- Tender Process:
- Budget and Costs.

**Deliverables for 2025/2026 which will be managed by the project board :**

- **Full Implementation of Contact Centre:** The full minimum viable product (MVP) of the Contact Centre should be delivered within a window between February and May 2025. **Enhanced Capabilities of Contact Centre:** Within the scope of this project delivery is to introduce additional modules within the Contact Centre. These modules are expected to bring efficiency gains to the services:
  - Interaction Analytics – enhanced reporting and insights
  - Enlighten Copilot – an Artificial Intelligence solution that provides additional insight and support to each agent
  - Personal Connection – an outbound campaign dialler
  - Each of these modules are within revenue budget but will require additional capital
- **Replacement handsets:** With Skype for Business being phased out we need to replace many handsets to Teams compatible ones. Anything replaced in the past 12 months are already to specification, but older ones will need a replacement. Of the current state that require replacing, there are 139 devices in scope.
- **Cloud Voice Routing:** Depending on how the contact centre final design is agreed, we are likely to have additional on-premises equipment that is critical to the telephony routing, even though the telephone platform is

within the cloud. An additional project will need to be undertaken to lift this part of the telephony routing out of the Strata datacentre and into the cloud.

**Additional capital included in budget:**

- Handset replacement - £20,850
- Cloud Voice Routing specialist help - £20,000
- Contact Centre agreed additional modules:
  - Interaction Analytics - £8000
  - Enlighten Copilot - £30,000
  - Personal Connection - £4000

**Artificial Intelligence and the Customer Contact Centre**

One of the above modules, called Enlighten Copilot, will bring additional efficiencies to the call handlers, including auto-summary of calls, real-time sentiment analysis. In addition, Strata has been running a discovery for an Artificial Intelligent Chat Bot with the aim to automate low-level enquiries from customers. This has been developed using Microsoft's Copilot Studios with an aim to discover how modern AI works with the council websites.

Through 2024 we have seen a phenomenal change in Artificial Intelligence from the likes of Open AI (ChatGPT), and whilst this shifting landscape has been exciting to witness it is challenging to pin-down what is achievable. Starting early 2025 we will be reforming our Chat Bot project with an aim to recapture Council requirements, and work with the authorities to reassess the content on their websites so they are usable for customers browsing the sites, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO – Google, etc) and how Artificial Intelligent products access the content.

A small-scale pilot in TDC on use of chatbot has been conducted the evaluation of the pilot will consider the long-term suitability of chatbot within the context of our agreed Microsoft default position. Pricing for Chatbots is incredibly difficult to estimate as there is no prior data to base it on. AI Chatbots are based on a per-interaction cost, including how many messages (or minutes) are included in each interaction. Therefore, pricing will increase the more popular the chatbots are.



## High Level Project Timeline for Teams telephony:

Phase	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25
Discovery																		
Licensing purchase and deploy																		
Design document																		
Implementation																		
Internal Testing																		
Plan Strata																		
Deploy Strata (minus SD)																		
Deploy Strata Service Desk																		
Plan Authority																		
Deploy Authorities																		
Handset replacement																		
Decommission SfB																		

## High Level Project Timeline for new Contact Centre:

Phase	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25
Art of the possible																		
Requirements Capturing																		
Procurement Prep & Open																		
Evaluation & Award																		
Contract																		
Implementation																		
Go-Live																		
Decommission A365																		

Note: The go-live for the Contact Centre is to-be determined at time of writing and so the above timeline is an estimate at this stage. The contract with the supplier is being signed around time of publication and thus full design work has yet to be determined.

The agreed roadmap with the authorities is to initially deploy a like-for-like solution – Telephony - and then move into the digital channels, and finally onto the advanced elements such as AI.

## 4.2 Middleware

The Enterprise Middleware Architecture (EMA) project has advanced well, with proof of concept completed and the core parts of the test infrastructure now set-up and running within our live Strata cloud platform. This includes key tools to manage interfaces (APIS), secure databases and automated service processes that support the broader concept.

Phase 1 to replace the existing key API listed in Business plan 24/25 has been completed, future API's to be agreed by demand in agreement with the authorities.

### **Deliverables for 2025/2026:**

In 2025/2026, we aim to achieve the following:

- Completed development of the test platform
- Integration with CRM (Firmstep) and forms
- Available to Citizen developers, including training
- Public website integration
- Bookings system integration
- Mobile Working integration

### **Benefits of the Enterprise Middleware Architecture:**

EMA aims to improve data integration, enhance security, and support digital transformation by managing application programming interfaces (APIs), securing databases, and automating service processes. The project has already completed its proof of concept and set up the core parts of the test infrastructure, including key tools to manage interfaces, secure databases, and automate service processes. This architecture will streamline communication across different parts of the system, protect sensitive information, and ensure that only authorised personnel can access critical data. Overall, the EMA project will lead to more efficient operations, better data management and improved service delivery for the councils.

## 4.3 End User Computing (EUC)

New laptops have been deployed to Strata staff to conduct a thorough technical assessment of the solution. The project has since evolved from a focus on reducing reliance on Global Desktop into a comprehensive replacement programme scheduled for completion by 2025/2026.

The EUC project will deliver fundamental change to how council staff work and heavily modifies the IT operations and support. These changes require leadership from the councils to support the transition and communications across all departments.

As part of this programme we are also taking the opportunity to migrate user data, including documents and H drive content to OneDrive (Cloud) for Business. This transition is designed to reduce dependency on local file servers providing users with greater flexibility and a seamless experience. It is a key strategic step in reducing reliance on local infrastructure, aligning with our Azure migration project, and optimising our investment in Microsoft 365 E5 licensing. Leveraging OneDrive for Business not only improves accessibility but also enhances data security, management and compliance.

Through this plan we are addressing these challenges while reducing our reliance on legacy systems aiming for a modern digital workspace across all councils before the end of the 2025/2026 cycle.

### **Delivery Approach:**

In agreement with Council leadership we will be deploying laptops based on application availability organised by department phases throughout 2025.

This approach is to be agreed with the councils.

## High Level Proposed Project Timeline:

Phase	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25
Pilot															
Strata Deployment															
ECC ELT Deployment															
EDDC Digital Team Deployment															
Application Packaging															
Main Rollout – EDDC					P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	
Main Rollout – TDC					P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	
Main Rollout – ECC					P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	

### Deliverables for 2025/2026:

In 2025/2026, we aim to achieve the following key deliverables as part of the EUC project.

- **Migration of Laptop Users:** Successfully migrate 90% of laptop-using staff away from the Global Desktop (GD) environment to the End User Computing (EUC) platform. This transition will enhance user experience, improve performance and provide greater flexibility for our staff.
- **Assessment of Thin Desktop Estate:** Conduct a comprehensive review of the current thin desktop estate, evaluating options for further migration away from the Global Desktop. This assessment will focus on identifying potential alternatives including a transition to Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD) a product like global, to ensure all staff have access to a modern, efficient computing environment.
- **Data Migration to OneDrive for Business:** Continue the migration of user data including documents and H drive content to OneDrive for Business. This effort will not only reduce reliance on local file servers but also enhance data accessibility, security and compliance.
- **Implementation of Azure Virtual Desktop:** If the review of the thin desktop estate supports the move, initiate the implementation of Azure Virtual Desktop solutions where appropriate aligning with council objectives and data centre evacuation timelines.

- **User Training and Support:** Provide training sessions and resources for staff transitioning to the new EUC environment, ensuring a smooth changeover and empowering users to make the most of their new tools.

DRAFT

## 4.4 SharePoint

SharePoint was one of the key Enablers identified in the 2024/25 Strata Business Plan. It enables the secure and efficient management and retrieval of the vast number of documents the councils use. It meets many of the strategic objectives of the councils such as good data management, compliance with legislation such as the Data Protection Act (DPA) and obligations such as the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (a new security standard imposed to access their data). Properly implemented it will reduce the time of finding and retrieving important documents creating efficiencies across the organisations; manage Data Retention and ensure sensitive documents are handled appropriately.

To date the following has been achieved:

- A detailed Architecture for SharePoint which adheres to the Local Government Classification Scheme (LGCS) standard (a government standard for storing documents), resulting in a storage structure that is based around function not organisational structure. This will futureproof the implementation and avoid filing structures becoming out of date with inevitable organisational restructuring.
- A pilot involving the digital teams of the 3 authorities. This involved migrating the digital teams' data from the existing file servers to the LGCS based SharePoint structure and applying retention, sensitivity and metadata rules.
- Implemented a suite of tools to manage the migrations of data from EDDC and ECC's file servers and TDCs existing SharePoint implementation.

### **Lessons Learned from the pilot**

Once the digital teams have had enough time to evaluate the pilot a detailed lessons learned document will be created. However enough is currently known about the SharePoint process to date, to allow for some high-level conclusions.

- To successfully implement SharePoint, beyond a simple 'Lift and Shift' approach will require more dedicated resource from the authorities than was available from the pilot. It is recommended that each authority has a project manager to oversee and coordinate the activities of the project and

a Business Analyst who can work with each service area to classify existing documents in preparation for Migration. The project will also require good communication about the significant change

- Strata will need a project manager to oversee the project from a technical perspective and an analyst who can administer the SharePoint environment.

Once users are onboarded with SharePoint it will be important to properly manage the environment, co-ordinate the rules surrounding document classifications, data retention and sensitivity and ensure the platform is being used correctly.

SharePoint has the potential to radically improve the efficiency of the councils and their approach to managing documents and data compliance, but only if properly implemented and maintained.

## **4.5 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Forms**

Significant progress has been achieved in 24/25 to date on the CRM and forms project. The requirements identified 3 key areas of development to maximise the benefits of CRM and the wider transformation project:

1. Capture all customer transaction data going through the CRM - This was achieved through the introduction of a Miscellaneous Transaction form for each function area the Customer Contact Centres deal with. The form was designed to quickly capture the Function area, Transaction Type and detailed Activity type the customer was contacting the council for, and other information such as more detailed notes, and value or failure demand to assist with future analysis. The forms have 2 main benefits:
  - Allows for a detailed analysis of demand to help inform future process development to target and automate specific transaction types.
  - Allows a comprehensive customer database to be built, with a rich history of customer contact to be associated with customers. This will enable future benefits such as data surfacing and enable customer service advisors to answer customer enquiries more quickly.



To date over 50,000 transactions have been captured against customers using the miscellaneous forms, this has already helped reduce demand, by identifying improvements that could be made to the automatic queuing, to divert calls that need to be managed by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, away from the customer services.

This is critical to delivering the self-service vision set out in the digital strategies of each council.

2. Activate MyAccount for EDDC and ECC - MyAccount is a feature of the CRM (GovService) that enables customers to have a single digital account with the authority, this helps manage their interactions and services with the council. The 'self-service' nature of MyAccount enables 24/7 service provision and reduces demand.
3. Data Surfacing - A key driver of efficiency for customer services is to reduce the number of back-office systems the staff need to access to answer customer queries. Ideally, the information needed will be available to CSAs directly from the

The screenshot shows a web interface for a customer service system. At the top, there is a search bar with the text 'Search' and a red 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'Customer', 'Customer by Xref', and 'Case reference'. The 'Customer' tab is selected, and the search results show 'Mr David Sercombe' with the address 'Newton Abbot, TQ12 United Kingdom'. A red button labeled '+ Raise Case' is visible in the top right corner.

The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left is a 'Summary' sidebar with a list of links: 'Details', 'Cross References', 'Tasks | Cases', 'Relationships', 'Notes', 'Messaging', and 'Service Summary'. The 'Service Summary' link is highlighted with a red box. On the right is the 'Service Overview' section, which contains a table of services and their details. The table has two columns: the service name and the details. Each row has a blue arrow icon to the right of the details.

Service	Details
Next Scheduled Collection	Thur 21st November Green, Food & Garden Waste Additional Bulky Waste 22nd November
Council Tax	Single Property: EX2 7TG. Band D. Monthly Direct Debit. Last Payment 16th Oct 2024
Planning	1 Open Planning applications: 123456567-213 1 Previous Application
Housing	Not applicable
Revs & Benefits	Not applicable
Licensing	Not applicable
Firmstep Requests	1 My Account request open: 18/10/2024 Graffiti

At the bottom of the screen, there are two buttons: '+ Create Customer' and '+ Create Group/Organisation'.

Figure 1: Data Surfacing/ Service Summary screen shot

CRM system - Using the Unique Customer Reference Number (UCRN) that is generated when a customer account is set up, Strata will be able to link data from back-office systems to the customer record and pull it through to the CRM. Working with the supplier, Strata have added a new menu item to GovService called 'Service Summary' which presents information in a table format to the Customer Service Assistant (CSA) for relevant services. This reduces the number of back-office systems the CSA needs to open and search through to answer customer enquires. This is still in development. phase 1 is scheduled to be taken live in Q4 of 24/25 and includes waste and planning services. Further phases will be determined by the councils, linked to the miscellaneous form feedback.

## **4.6 Bookings**

A key enabler for the 25/26 business plan is to introduce a system to manage bookings. Whilst there are suppliers on the market that can deliver the majority of the business requirements for a booking system they are prohibitively expensive. For example, to deliver in general desk booking and sports pitch booking requirements from Booking Lab, a specialist supplier of booking systems, would be in the region of £150,000 per year, per authority. Strata has undertaken a discovery to deliver an in-house similar system utilising a combination of Microsoft Bookings, Microsoft Exchange and some in-house development to combine these together in a way that will deliver the desired outcomes.

## Search for a Pitch

Choose the date range that you want to search between and select a pitch size.

From	To	Pitch Size
<input type="text" value="07/11/2024"/>	<input type="text" value="14/11/2024"/>	<input type="text" value="Full Pitch"/>
<input type="button" value="Search"/>		

### Thursday 07 November 2024

**Pitch 1**

**Equipment:** Football Equipment 1

Times

**Pitch 1**

**Equipment:** Football Equipment 2

Times

### Friday 08 November 2024

This work is progressing well with a proof of concept for Sports Pitch bookings, the most complex requirement identified in the Business Requirements Document,

successfully working on a test system.



## Book a Football Pitch at Generic Playing Fields (Booking Proof of Concept Demo)

Booking Rules

Pitch booking successful

Thank you for booking a football pitch.

Booked	Pitch 1, Football Equipment 2
When	Saturday 9 November 2024 at 3:00PM until 4:30PM
Booked By	Stephen Thomas

Book another appointment

Work will continue this project throughout the early part of 2025

## 4.7 Notifications

Notifications system will enable end users to send templated notifications via numerous notification channels such as Email, SMS, WhatsApp and others, utilising existing services such as gov.uk Notify. To date work has been focused on the benefits described in the middleware section as this is needed to Underpin the sending of messages via the Notification Engine. EMA is scheduled to go live in Q4 24/25 after which the design for Notifications can be signed.

There is not anticipated to be any development costs of the solution.

## 4.8 Data Platform

The Strata Business Plan for 2024/25 underscores the critical role of a robust data platform in achieving the strategic goals of its partner councils. Central to this vision is the implementation of sound data governance practices facilitated by Microsoft Purview.

Microsoft Purview is a comprehensive data management suite designed to help organisations discover, catalogue and manage their data assets effectively. It provides a unified governance framework that supports the entire data lifecycle, from ingestion to archiving, ensuring that data is accurate, secure and accessible to authorised users.

Microsoft Purview offers a range of features that align with the strategic objectives outlined in the Strata Business Plan:

- **Data Discovery and Cataloguing:** Purview enables automatic scanning and cataloguing of data assets across the organisation, providing a single view of all data sources. This facilitates better data understanding and usage.
- **Data Lineage:** By tracking data flow across various systems, Purview helps in understanding data transformations and lineage, which is crucial for compliance and audit purposes.
- **Data Classification:** Purview supports the classification of data based on sensitivity, ensuring that data handling complies with organisational policies and regulatory requirements.
- **Access Control:** It offers robust access control mechanisms to ensure that only authorised users can access sensitive data, thereby enhancing data security.
- **Policy Management:** Purview allows organisations to define and enforce data governance policies across their data estate, ensuring consistent and compliant data usage.

### **Implementing Microsoft Purview – Initial Discovery**

Preliminary work has been undertaken during the 24/25 to evaluate the use of Purview. Although light touch at this stage several conclusions can be made.

- Purview is a powerful tool for supporting data governance that when implemented properly will give the authorities great visibility and control over their data.
- Purview is vast covering many capabilities each of which will need to be configured.
- Benefits can be gained without having all capabilities in place. The use can then be widened as required.
- To leverage the benefits of Purview dedicated resource will be required to scan and classify the data repositories that the council have as well as those managed by Strata.
- Once the technical configuration has been completed, the use of Purview will become largely administrative.
- There will be a requirement for ongoing resource to own and manage Purview. Purview is Pay as you Go and is charged on 2 main factors: storage of metadata and charge per scan. This will need to be managed carefully so that costs don't increase in an uncontrolled manner. Further work is needed to determine costs to scan the whole estate, and further discussion will potentially be needed to target certain areas.

## 5 Cloud, SAAS and Connectivity

### 5.1 Migration to Azure

An initial Azure landing zone (a prepared cloud environment, a foundation for building and running applications securely and efficiently) has been successfully established to support the Enterprise Middleware Architecture (EMA) project. This foundational environment is a first step toward migrating services to the Azure platform.

To support the business plan for 25/26 the ICT staff are actively building up their knowledge, expertise and certifications on the Azure platform. This skill development will equip our team to manage the Azure environment effectively, supporting a smooth and strategic transition to the cloud. In addition, we have begun working with a potential professional services reseller to evaluate and access specialised migration and early life support. This engagement is intended

to provide us with additional resources and insights as we move forward with our Azure adoption plans. To support these objectives a comprehensive assessment of our existing IT estate has been updated helping us to identify priority areas for migration and future cloud optimisation. We have also established regular review meetings with both the reseller and Microsoft to track progress and align on our strategic roadmap.

Meanwhile, the End User Computing (EUC) project is gradually reducing our reliance on the Global Desktop environment. However, moving away entirely requires a move to Azure Virtual Desktop which is included in the scope of the Azure migration project. This shift supports our strategic goal of decreasing dependency on data centre infrastructure, aligning with our transition to the cloud and optimising our IT resources. Finally, it should be noted that the operations and maintenance effort overhead will be drastically reduced once the migration to Azure has been completed.

Several critical infrastructure milestones are on the horizon. The primary data centre for the councils are in Exeter and are likely to require moving in the near future which means we will need a robust migration strategy to maintain service continuity. Additionally, our storage area network (SAN) is nearing end-of-life by 2026/2027 prompting us to explore replacement options or alternative cloud-based storage solutions. The VMware hosts in Oakwood and Civic Centre are also approaching end-of-life and will require extended hardware support or full replacement to maintain functionality. Both options present significant capital costs compounded by recent increases in VMware licensing fees.

#### **High Level Project Timeline:**

The project timeline for the migration to Azure is still under development and has yet to be formally finalised. However, due to the likely closure of the Civic Centre there is a need to initiate the migration process soon. Subject to Architecture Board approval of the business case we anticipate that the early phases of the migration will need to begin in Q1 2025/2026. With these time constraints in mind the project is likely to follow an accelerated timeline. Our goal is to complete the migration by Q4 2025/2026 ensuring that all essential services are fully transitioned and operational well ahead of the data centre closure deadline. Starting in Q1 2025/2026 allows us to establish a phased approach allowing for

adjustments, testing and risk mitigation to ensure a stable and secure migration process.

The Timeline and costs will be presented to Architecture Board as part of a detailed business case for consideration.

**Deliverables for 2025/2026:**

- **Business Case Approval:** Completion and approval of a comprehensive business case to formalise the transition to Azure. This document will outline strategic benefits, anticipated costs and expected outcomes ensuring alignment with organisational goals and securing buy-in from stakeholders. Expected Q4 2024 with Architecture Board approval within the same month.
- **Optimisation:** A thorough review of the current Azure network design and configuration to confirm it meets security, compliance and scalability standards. This assessment will address any gaps and optimise our Azure environment to support smooth and secure service migration.
- **Project Plan and Migration Waves:** Development of a detailed project plan including defined service migration waves to structure the transition to Azure. This phased approach will prioritise key services, manage risk and ensure minimal disruption to ongoing operations.
- **75%-90% Migration Completion:** By calendar year-end we aim to achieve between 75% and 90% completion of the migration to Azure covering essential services and core infrastructure components. This progress will demonstrate significant momentum towards a full cloud migration and reduce our dependency on legacy data centre infrastructure.



## 5.2 Copper lines and Dark Fibre

### Copper Lines

In August 2021 BT Openreach announced their 'copper switch-off'. As part of the UK government's goal of providing gigabit connectivity across the UK, the public switched telephone network (PTSN) and its copper system was due to be switched off by the end of 2025. In May 2024 the deadline for the switch off was extended to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2027.

The councils use many traditional copper telephone lines for several different purposes including:

- Telephone lines to smaller sites
- Intruder and fire alarms
- Lifts
- Telecare alarm services (Home safeguard and HomeCall)
- Broadband connectivity to many remote sites (ADSL / FTTC)

All these services, if they are still required, will need to be migrated to a digital alternative before the copper circuits are ceased to avoid any loss of connectivity.

Since August 2024 there has been dedicated resource allocated to this project (1FTE) which has enabled significant progress to be made and by end of the 2024/2025 period we expect the work to be over 50% complete. The intention is to aim to complete the transition from analogue to digital by the original deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

This project is generating savings in the revenue costs associated with telephony and network connectivity. This is in part because digital broadband connections are typically lower in cost than analogue broadband over a telephone line, but also due to the number of connections that have been ceased because they are no longer needed.

Capital funds have been allocated by the councils in recent years to enable the switch from analogue to digital services. No requirement for additional capital funding is anticipated to complete the migration to digital.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Spend to date / (Remaining)
Component	Allocation	Allocation	Allocation	
Exeter	£40,000	£30,000	£10,781	£39,976 -£40,805
East Devon	-	£30,000	£11,008	£5,222 -£35,786
Teignbridge	-	£15,000	£8,212	£4,664 -£18,548

#### **Deliverables from 2025/2026:**

- To continue to look for opportunities to rationalise the number of copper services in use by ceasing any which are not required.
- To continue the programme of upgrades of analogue broadband circuits to digital where this is currently available. These should be full fibre (FTTP) connections at all sites which currently have fibre availability, but where fibre is not available, Openreach recommend a technology called 'single order generic ethernet access' or SoGEA. SoGEA provides fast broadband connectivity over the existing copper cable, but without any telephone service.
- Identify replacement solutions for the three remaining analogue telephone systems (PABXs) in use at the Belle Isle Depot in Exeter, and Manor Pavilion Theatre and Thelma Hulbert Gallery in East Devon.
- To continue to work with the property teams at each council to migrate intruder and fire alarms, lifts and any other systems that currently require a fixed copper telephone line to a digital alternative. In most costs, this is likely to involve installation of Digicom or Dualcom devices which use mobile 4G connectivity to replace the telephone line.

#### **Migration away from Dark Fibre (Exeter City Council):**

The Exeter City fibre network was installed around 20 years ago in partnership with Devon County Council, Exeter University and the Royal Devon & Exeter NHS Foundation Healthcare Trust. This has provided the council with a high-speed reliable data network which was free from the monthly rental costs which are typically associated with fibre network connections.

The fibre network is currently unsupported with no service level agreement in place for maintenance or repair. The company that originally installed the network

no longer exists. In the event of any faults the only option available is to use a fibre contractor to investigate the fault on a best endeavours basis or provide an alternative connection. Such repairs/investigations typically cost around £750-£1,000 per day without any guarantee that the issues can be resolved.

In the past two years there have been two faults with the fibre network to the historic Guildhall which have led to extended periods with no network connectivity. There is a significant risk from continuing to use the dark fibre network associated with the possibility of extended outages impacting service delivery, in some cases at revenue generating sites.

Strata are recommending that in the 2025/2026 period sites which are currently connected via the dark fibre network be migrated to commercial full fibre connectivity where this is available. This will provide more reliable connectivity because the connections will be supported by the network provider with SLAs for repair and any faults will only impact a single site whereas a fault on the dark fibre network has the potential to take down multiple sites.

The cost of migrating the sites currently connected via the dark fibre is expected to be in the region of £18,000. This includes installation costs, hardware and line rental costs for the 2025/2026 period. The ongoing revenue cost of the new connections will be covered from savings arising from the wider analogue to digital migration project. There is expected to be a surplus of around £3,000 from the capital fund already allocated and within the core infrastructure budget, an additional £15,000 is required to cover the balance.

Component	Capital requirement for 2025/26
Exeter (SC090)	£15,000

#### **Migration away from fixed point to point data circuits (Teignbridge):**

Teignbridge have several sites which are served by fixed point to point data circuits (leased lines). These are typically larger sites which have not had any high-speed broadband services available. These leased lines differ from the dark fibre in Exeter because they are supported connections provided by commercial

providers, but they are much more expensive than a standard fibre broadband connection (typically around £300-£400 per month).

The leased lines are all connected back to Forde House creating a single point of failure. Any loss of connectivity to Forde House also results in a loss of connectivity at these sites.

Strata are recommending that in the 2025/2026 period, sites which are currently connected via leased lines to Forde House be migrated to commercial full fibre connectivity where this is available. This will significantly reduce the ongoing revenue costs as the monthly costs are between £35-£70 compared with £300-£400 per month and will also remove the single point of failure at Forde House.

The cost of migrating the sites currently connected via leased lines is expected to be in the region of £10,000. This includes installation costs, hardware and line rental costs for the 2025/2026 period. Annual revenue savings of around £12,000 per year will be generated from savings in line rentals.

Component	Capital requirement for 2025/26
Teignbridge (SC095)	£10,000

#### **Copper line closure:**

Strata have reduced the number of copper lines from 498 to a significantly lower count. Of these, 120 lines have been ceased entirely and 73 have been upgraded to modern alternatives. This initiative has streamlined our telecommunications infrastructure but has also reduced the associated core budget from £47,930 to £23,000. Throughout the next financial year the number of lines will be reduced further.

Action	# Lines
Total Lines	498
Lines upgraded	73
Lines ceased	120
Budget 2024/2025	Budget 2025/2026
£47,930	£23,000

## 5.3 Embed Enablers

Strata are dedicated to ensure the councils release the full potential of the enablers started in business plan in 24/25. Ensuring the technical enablers are delivered is only the first stage of the councils' transformation journey – effort will be required to support the councils to embed the organisational change as individual council plan mature.

It is therefore important that the councils share learning and processes where possible – leading to greater efficiency.

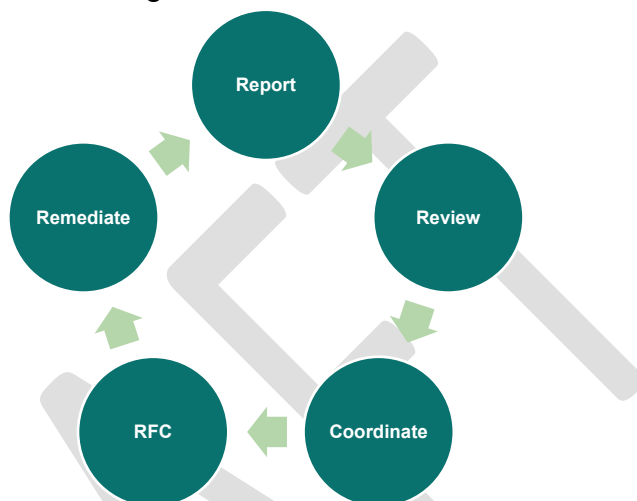
A Rapid Improvement Team Proof of Concept (PoC) contracted by Exeter for deployment January 2025 plans to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Waste and Parks and Open Spaces Services in Exeter, aiming to identify areas where service improvement and digitisation can reduce costs. 3<sup>rd</sup> party experts will conduct a rapid assessment of current processes, systems and performance benchmarking them against best practices and the Council's Digital Customer Strategy.

The initial findings will be shared across all three partners and is driven by the need to address significant technical debt and achieve significant cost reductions across operational services over the next two years. The PoC will deliver a detailed report that includes improvement opportunities, methodologies and cost-benefit analysis options for changes. This report will also propose scenarios for financial productivity and efficiency gains which will be crucial for rolling out similar projects across other council areas in 25/26.

## 5.4 Operations and Maintenance

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) is the cornerstone of a resilient and well-run ICT service. Consistent effort and resources are required to maintain high standards, ensure security and remain compliant with legislative requirements. A structured and proactive O&M approach minimises risks and enhances service reliability benefiting all areas of our organisation.

To uphold security and compliance Strata will develop an "Embedded Security" methodology that integrates with our operational processes. This approach will prioritise regular cycles of reporting, reviewing, coordinating, raising change requests (RFC), remediating vulnerabilities and repeating as necessary. By embedding security into everyday operations we will establish a proactive defence against emerging threats and evolving standards.



To support the Embedded Security methodology it is essential that network infrastructure remains in support as any 'end-of-life' equipment becomes vulnerable when security patches cease to be available and the risk of failure increases with age due to wear and tear on components. A proactive programme of replacement of equipment nearing end-of-life will be carried out to minimise risks associated with equipment failure.

To carry out regular backups of systems and user data hosted in both on-premise data centres and in the cloud. Reliable backups are essential to enable disaster recovery but also in the event of accidental deletion or data corruption. Backups are tested regularly to ensure the reliability of data recovery. Backups are stored securely offsite and retained for up to three lines in line with the data retention policy.

#### **Deliverables for 2025/2026:**

Strata will:

1. Leverage the recently approved DWP MOU Readiness Grant\* to employ a full-time equivalent (FTE) within for a one-year period. This role will be

subject to review in the next business plan cycle. (\*grant of £45K based on TDC/EDDC/ECC at 15K each).

2. Position the Embedded Security (SAS) work as an ongoing project, ensuring full dedication of FTE days as contributing to the resource allocation. This will avoid shock / reactive projects needing short and intense mitigation work historically needed to meet PSN CoCo submissions. (see table below).
3. Continue with the programme of proactive replacement of firewalls, routers and wireless access points.
4. Migrate off Mimecast, providing a saving to the authorities and removing some duplicated functionality provided by Microsoft E5.

Capital funds are allocated by the councils each year into a reserve referred to as the tri-payment which is used to fund Infrastructure replacements. The planned replacement of firewalls, routers and wireless access points will be funded from the tri-payment reserve.

## 5.6 Disaster Recovery

The last major review of our Disaster Recovery (DR) preparations took place in 2018. This, alongside planned and running changes of our ICT operations, it is imperative that we conduct a comprehensive review of our current DR position. This review will require a thorough assessment of our existing DR plans, identifying any gaps or areas for improvement and ensuring that our strategies are aligned with Council priorities. By doing so Strata aims to enhance Council resilience and preparedness in the face of potential disruptions. It is anticipated that this will take circa 138 FTE days during 25/26 to undertake.

### **Deliverables for 2025/2026:**

- 1. Updating Procedures and Processes:** To ensure the effectiveness DR plans, processes and procedures must be updated. This includes creating detailed recovery plans for each system, adding third-party contacts for critical systems and verifying recovery SLAs for critical third-party systems. Additionally, to define processes for accessing and sharing recovery data (passwords etc). These updates will help streamline our recovery efforts and ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed and prepared.
- 2. Incorporating Regular DR Exercises:** Regular DR exercises are essential to validate the effectiveness of our plans and provide audit compliance evidence. We propose incorporating both table-top exercises and full-scale recovery exercises in liaison with council service owners. These exercises will simulate various disaster scenarios allowing us to test our response strategies, identify any weaknesses and make necessary adjustments. By engaging with council service owners we can ensure that our plans are comprehensive and consider the specific needs and requirements of each service area.
- 3. Ensuring Plans are Fit for Purpose:** Our goal is to ensure that our DR plans are fit for purpose and capable of addressing our unique challenges and risks. This involves reviewing the logical running order of recovery, identifying critical missing information and updating the DR plan templates. Additionally, we need to reflect the IT DR actions plan and system-level recovery plans in the business plan and resource plans.
- 4. Providing Audit Compliance Evidence** To demonstrate our commitment to audit compliance we will document the outcomes of our DR exercises



and maintain detailed records of our recovery plans and procedures. This includes creating a highly available repository for DR information, ensuring this information is reviewed frequently and raising awareness of ITDR plans and facilities.

## 6 Finances

### Current financial status of the company

One of the key objectives originally set for Strata by the owners was to deliver cost savings as set out in the original business case and subsequently amended each year since 2017/18. The original ten-year Business Case met its objectives and saving profile therefore the 2024-25 Business Plan moved away from delivering a savings profile and shifted to a transformational focus.

A breakdown of the revenue saving summary is set out below.

	Actual revenue	Projected revenue	Actual variance to projected
	Savings	Savings	
2015/16	£232,000	£262,098	-£30,098
2016/17	£100,000	£20,000	£80,000
2017/18	£565,000	£252,836	£312,164
2018/19	£620,000	£381,961	£238,039
2019/20	£1,074,000	£853,888	£220,112
2020/21	£1,051,000	£696,167	£354,833
2021/22	£1,260,000	£747,804	£512,196
2022/23	£1,079,832	£702,415	£377,417
2023/24	£799,828	£754,254	£45,574
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,781,660</b>	<b>£4,671,423</b>	<b>£2,110,237</b>

The forecast outturn for the 2024/25 core Budget is a net underspend of £305k.

	Revenue budget 2024/25	Projected 2024/25 outturn	Outturn variance to budget
Employees	£4,074,578	£4,106,869	£32,291
Supplies & services	£4,346,439	£4,030,341	-£316,098
Transport	£7,455	£6,838	-£617

Support services	£60,000	£60,000	£0
Tax on interest	£0	£11,036	£11,036
Income - revenue	-£8,476,323	-£8,470,373	£5,949
Investment interest	-£12,150	-£49,662	-£37,512
<b>Net (Income)/Expense</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>-£304,952</b>	<b>-£304,952</b>
<b>2023-24 Profit handback</b>	<b>£197,746</b>	<b>£26,092</b>	<b>-£171,654</b>

The projected underspend of £305k against the core Budget is due to the following:

- **Employee costs** £32k Adverse variance due to redundancy costs from the reorganisation partially offset by cost reductions from later onboarding of staff for new posts created by the reorganisation than Budgeted.
- **Supplies & Services** £316k Favourable variance mainly driven by later delivery of Business Plan initiatives. Budget cost overvalued due to timings of large procurements being delivered in 2024-25
- **Income** £6k Adverse to Budget driven by lower forecast mobile recharge income than budgeted due to renegotiated tariffs, partially offset by higher income from recharges relating to General Election services provided by the Document Centre
- **Investment interest** £26k Favourable (net of Corporation Tax) due to continued high level of Base Rate, compared with more conservative Budget assumption

In the financial year 2024/25 £198k of profit distributed to the councils at the end of 2023/24 was handed back to Strata to continue to fund the programme of organisational change. £26k of these funds are forecast to be spent in 2024-25 leaving £172k which will continue into the financial year 2025/26. It is proposed that these funds along with any unspent funds distributed to the councils at the end of the 2024/25 financial year will be handed back to Strata to fund the additional expenditure expected to be incurred in 2025/26 whilst the onsite servers continue to be used and maintained during the transition to the Cloud (Azure) in 2025/26 as outlined in this business plan. The 2025-26 Budget set out in this Business Plan does not reflect the costs associated with the transition from onsite servers to the Cloud (Azure), this will be subjected to a separate business case.

### **The company's accounts**

The Strata Board has employed PKF Francis Clark to deliver an independent external audit of the company's accounts. The external audit provides confidence to the Board and the councils that the financial performance reported, gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the company. Acting as a company under the terms and conditions of a local authority does however bring challenges.

The company's balance sheet is vulnerable to movements in interest rates due to the Local Government Pension Scheme, and there is no simple solution, whilst the pension scheme remains open to new entrants. The weakness is a risk insofar as it affects the credit rating of the company.

However, the guarantee provided by the three owners of the council enables the directors to assess the company as being able to continue trading despite the Balance Sheet position. The balance sheet value as of 31 March 2024 is £807K (net assets) and has been improved by a significant reduction in the liabilities of the pension scheme in the financial year to 31 March 2023 due to high interest rates however the scheme liabilities will increase as and when interest rates reduce in the future. The balance sheet value in the prior financial year had an overall net asset value of £366K as of 31 March 2023.

## Internal audit

In addition, Strata uses Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) to provide an internal audit service. The latest assurance report from January 2024 confirmed an audit opinion of 'Reasonable Assurance' and stated:



There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Each of the specific sections reviewed were assessed to have a Reasonable Assurance level of Assurance. In 2025/26 the following topics will be audited.

- Audit Planning and Reporting
- Service Design and Operational Efficiency – VFM elects as appropriate; and
- Cyber Security Event Support.

## Summary of revenue budget

The basis of the business plan budget is a build-up of the expected income and costs of the business with an income from the three councils to cover the costs of the business net of any sundry income. The supplies and services cost forecast has been worked up in detail to aid budget monitoring. There is no contingency built into the cost base and therefore should any unexpected additional funding be required it will be requested on an exceptional basis.

The table below shows the cost and income calculations for the next three years.

		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Income	Contract payment	£8,717,995	£8,979,535	£9,204,023
	Document Centre recharges	£16,000	£16,480	£16,892
	Mobile telephony recharges	£28,800	£29,664	£30,406
	Interest income	£20,000	£20,600	£21,115

		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
<b>Total</b>		<b>£8,782,795</b>	<b>£9,046,279</b>	<b>£9,272,436</b>
<b>Staff costs</b>		<b>-£3,965,500</b>	<b>-£4,084,465</b>	<b>-£4,186,576</b>
<b>Transport</b>		<b>-£7,499</b>	<b>-£7,724</b>	<b>-£7,917</b>
<b>Supplies and services</b>	<b>Core</b>	£147,541	£151,967	£155,766
	<b>Infrastructure</b>	£1,435,105	£1,478,158	£1,515,112
	<b>Document Centre</b>	£353,251	£363,848	£372,944
	<b>Compliance and security</b>	£112,662	£116,041	£118,943
	<b>Business systems</b>	£2,429,127	£2,502,001	£2,564,551
	<b>WAN</b>	£285,446	£294,009	£301,360
	<b>Telephony</b>	£20,520	£21,136	£21,664
	<b>Product delivery</b>	£10,000	£10,300	£10,558
	<b>Service desk</b>	£16,146	£16,630	£17,046
<b>Total</b>		<b>-£4,809,797</b>	<b>-£4,954,091</b>	<b>-£5,077,943</b>
<b>Net income</b>		<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>

## Income

Strata's income comprises of contract payment from the councils and sundry income from interest income, mobile phone and Document Centre recharges. Remote access charges have also previously been recharged to the Councils however there are no longer additional costs being incurred in respect of this access so these recharges have been removed from the budgeted income (£60k Budget in 2024/25).

The total contract payment to be paid to Strata by the Councils in 2025/26 is £8,717,995. The contract payment has been calculated to cover the projected costs of the business net of any sundry income/recharges. A comparison of the forecast contract payment by council in each financial year can be seen in the table below:

Contract Payment	Budget	Share by council	2026/27	2027/28
	2025/26	2025/26		
<b>EDDC</b>	£3,367,239	38.6%	£3,476,805	£3,563,725
<b>ECC</b>	£2,911,984	33.4%	£3,016,541	£3,091,955

<b>TDC</b>	£2,438,771	28.0%	£2,486,189	£2,548,344
<b>Total</b>	<b>£8,717,995</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>£8,979,535</b>	<b>£9,204,023</b>

The 2025/26 contract payment reflects a net increase on the 2024/25 payment due to:

- Inflationary increases in the existing contract estate less any contracts terminated and other operating expenditure
- Staff cost inflation, National Insurance increases and inflationary increases on sundry staff and insurance costs
- New additions net of any contract terminations to the contract estate proposed in this Business Plan; and
- New contracts acquired by the councils since the last Business Plan to date.

Since the original baseline Council Budgets were passed over to Strata on implementation in 2014/15, each Council's Contract Payment has increased accordingly for the above factors, resulting in a Contract Payment share in 2025/26 as set out in the table below:

<b>Contract Payment</b>	<b>Cost share by Council 2014/15*</b>		<b>Net cost movement by Council 2014/15 – 2025/26</b>	<b>Contract Payment 2025/26</b>	
<b>EDDC*</b>	37.3%	£1,792,920	£1,574,319	38.6%	£3,367,239
<b>ECC</b>	34.6%	£1,454,430	£1,457,554	33.4%	£2,911,984
<b>TDC</b>	28.1%	£1,933,864	£504,907	28.0%	£2,438,771
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>£5,181,214</b>	<b>£3,536,781</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>£8,717,995</b>

\* Note: Due to significant differences in the Print, Post, Design and Scanning services at each Council at the outset that, although still included within Strata for cost savings reasons, the original shareholding for each Council was calculated with the budget for this service excluded.

The total income budgeted to be received by Strata from the Councils in 2025/26 of £8,762,795, as set out in the table below, in respect of the Contract Payment and recharges has increased by 3.4% overall on the 2024/25 Budget of £8,476,323.

Council Payments	Budget 2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Contract Payment	£8,717,995	£8,979,535	£9,204,023
Document Centre Recharge	£16,000	£16,480	£16,892
Mobile Tariff Access Recharge	£28,800	£29,664	£30,406
<b>Total</b>	<b>£8,762,795</b>	<b>£8,925,679</b>	<b>£9,048,821</b>

The contract payments have historically been split evenly over the four quarters of the financial year however this does not reflect the actual cash flow requirement of the business. A review of the cash movements over the last 12 months has indicated that c60% of the Contract Payment is spent in the first 6 months of the financial year, split evenly across the two quarters, with 40% spent in the later 6 months of the year, again split evening across the two quarters. Strata is therefore proposing that Contract Payments in 2025/26 are paid as follows:

- Quarter 1 – 30%
- Quarter 2 – 30%
- Quarter 3 – 20%
- Quarter 4 – 20%

In addition, other income is forecast to be received by Strata:

Other income	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Document Centre Recharge	£16,000	£16,480	£16,892
Mobile Tariff Access Recharge	£28,800	£29,664	£30,406
Interest income	£20,000	£20,600	£21,115

Document Centre recharges are projected based on expected costs in 2025/26 and have reduced on 2024/25 due to lower expected Election activity. Both recharges reflect inflation at 3.0% in 2026/27 and 2.5% in 2027/28.

Aside from the removal of Remote Access Charges as described at the beginning of this section, mobile phone tariffs have also reduced significantly following renegotiation of mobile contracts during 2024/25. The budget for mobile tariff access recharges has therefore fallen by £115k in total compared with the 2024-25 Budget of £144k.

The forecast for interest on bank deposits is estimated to be lower than the outturn forecast for 2024/25 due to uncertainty over interest rate reductions, following a prolonged period of high interest rates. A conservative estimate for interest income of £20K has been factored into the 2025/26 budget, net of Corporation Tax at 19%.

### **Staff costs**

Staff costs are projected to reduce by c.£109K in 2025/26 due to efficiencies delivered by the organisational change in 2024/25.

The budgeted staff salaries reflect inflation of 3.5% (3.0% inflation + 0.5% for increment increases) for 2025/26 and on-costs (for example, NI employers and pension contributions) are applied and account for c31.5% of staff salary costs. This is an increase of c2.3% on 2024/25 on-costs per employee resulting from an increase in employers National Insurance contributions from 1 April 2025, estimated at £70k.

As in previous years the staff costs figures do not include the Business Systems team resource which is paid for and dedicated to an authority capital project. These resources are recharged to the relevant authority.

An inflation assumption of 3.0% has been applied to staff costs in 2026/27 and 2.5% in 2027/28.

### **Transport**



An inflation assumption of 3.5% has been applied to the forecast 2025/26 costs to calculate the budgeted 2025/26 cost. An inflation assumption of 3.0% has been applied to transport costs in 2026/27 and 2.5% in 2027/28.

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## **Supplies and services**

Contract costs have been estimated for 2025/26 using an RPIX contract renewal inflation assumption of 3.5% that has been applied on renewal for existing contracts in 2025/26, except where a higher than inflation increase is expected, for example where an existing multi-year contract is to be renewed or a product upgrade is to be delivered, or the price is currently fixed by an existing multi-year contract. Other non-contract based operating expenditure has 3.5% inflation applied to the expected annual cost.

A significant addition to the Supplies & Services contract estate for 2025/26 is the new financial system, Cloud Financials, which replaces the incumbent eFinancials system for ECC and EDDC and the in-house system used by TDC.

An inflation assumption of 3.0% has been applied to the forecast 2025/26 cost in 2026/27 and 2.5% in 2027/28.

## **Summary of capital budget**

The capital requirements of the business in 2025/26, as outlined in this business plan, are summarised on the next page.

The capital requirements are in addition to the annual £150k capital Tri-Payment for infrastructure requirements. At the end of 2024/25 there is forecast to be a £120k Tri-Payment reserve that will be carried forward into 2025/26. All Tri-Payment capital spend will be appropriated by the Architecture Board for infrastructure replacement and rectification needs.

As in previous years, any remaining 2024/25 approved capital budget not spent in the approved year is proposed to be carried forward into 2025/26. Earmarks will only be drawn down should projects be approved via Architecture Board and are to enable the councils' internal budgetary purposes.

	2025/26				2026/27*
	Total	Funded by EDDC	Funded by ECC	Funded by TDC	
Percentage split as per the original business plan		38.8%	33.6%	27.6%	

Project					
Car Parks	£250,000	£125,000	-	£125,000	-
LaIPAC (Migration to Uniform)	£50,000	£50,000	-	-	-
SharePoint - wider rollout	£250,000	£91,730	£89,840	£68,430	-
Health and Safety	£75,000	£27,519	£26,952	£20,529	-
EDDC Waste in House	£300,000	£300,000	-	-	-
GMS move to Cloud Version	£15,000	£5,504	£5,390	£4,106	-
StreetScene	£200,000	£200,000	-	-	-
Revs and Bens		-	-	-	£500,000
EzyTreev	£10,000	-	£10,000	-	-
Mobile Working Replacement	£50,000	£18,346	£17,968	£13,686	-
iTrent On Prem to iTrent Hosted	£100,000	£36,692	£35,936	£27,372	-
Azure Migration Prof services	£150,000	£55,038	£53,904	£41,058	-
System upgrades	£100,000	£36,692	£35,936	£27,372	-
EUC	£247,668	£39,842	£53,000	£154,826	£250,000
Transformational Staffing costs	£220,000	£80,722	£79,059	£60,218	-
Telephony	£82,850	£30,399	£29,773	£22,678	-
Dark Fibre Migration	£15,000	-	£15,000	-	-
Fixed Circuit Migrations	£10,000	-	-	£10,000	-
Total capital Funding	£2,122,518	£1,097,484	£452,758	£575,275	£750,000

\* Split by Council share as per the original Business Plan

Each project has been identified for its significant impact on council operations and its contribution to efficient service delivery, improved safety and enhanced public engagement.

## 7 Appendix 1 – Roadmap Applications and rationalisation.

The following applications have been identified by one or more of the councils or Strata for inclusion in the 25/26 Business Plan. Some must do projects are there as they are tied to the end of existing contracts; others will be a choice for the authorities based on expected costs vs business benefit.

Strata has been incredibly successful in rationalising application across multiple councils and work is set to continue into 25/26.

Each project has had an indicative budget included which will be evaluated by the councils via Architecture Board. Each project will need to be the subject of detailed requirements, scoping, design and business case prior to procurement. Costs may change because of the above exercises. Similarly, project plans are indicative and are subject to change as scope and requirements are better defined.

### 7.6 HR System Strategy – iTrent

In early 2023 the 3 authorities undertook a Soft Market Test (SMT) of HR and Payroll systems ahead of the current supplier's contract renewal in September 2025. The SMT was well represented by the major suppliers on the market. It was concluded by the authorities that the functionality and cost of the MHR product vs the other suppliers, it didn't warrant the disruption to service provision that a system swap out would result in. Therefore, the decision was made to stay with MHR.

When the current iTrent contract expires in September 2025 MHR have stated that they will no longer accept new contracts with iTrent being used via an on-premise solution and therefore a move to a cloud or hosted environment will be required.

MHR can continue to host iTrent in their own data centres for the authorities and they also have a dedicated cloud solution called **People First**. This is a completely new system written from the ground up. However, at the time of writing the system is not sufficiently mature to meet the complex HR and Payroll requirements of the authorities. It is however under constant development with a roadmap to offer most, if not all, the functionality needed

by the councils before the end of the 2025. Therefore a staged approach is recommended to migrate to People First.

1. Health check of existing system by supplier to ensure authorities are making best use of system and the data is 'clean'. This is to ensure existing system is delivering efficiencies such as those identified by ECC HR programme.
2. Gap Analysis of iTrent and People First
3. Ensure any changes to iTrent have People First capabilities in mind.
4. Migration to iTrent Hosted est. Q2 2025/2026
5. Adoption of People First only when system meets the authorities' minimum acceptable use criteria
6. Project to move to People First Q2 2026/2027

## **7.7 Revenues and Benefits**

- EDDC and ECC are on rolling annual contracts with Capita
- TDC – existing contract with Civica expires in June 2026.
- Agreed following procurement advice that TDC can issue a VEAT notice to extend their contract with Civica for an additional 2 years from June 2026 to June 2028 to allow for a full procurement exercise to be undertaken and allow sufficient time to replace the existing system if required.
- As per the authorities' mandate for Strata – the ambition will be to align all 3 council on a common platform. Should the authorities consider even closer working arrangements for the revs and bens service, a shared system could also be considered.
- It is recommended that the procurement exercise for a new Council Tax system for take place during Q3/4 25/26 allowing 2 years to align the councils on the same council tax systems.
- During the procurement, it is recommended that a business case to complete the 'Sedgemoor' system is also considered, alongside commercial providers.

## **7.8 Finance Management System - FMS**

Implementation of FMS will be a big feature of the 25/26 Business Plan and will continue to utilise a significant portion of the Strata application team. 6 out of the 9 staff from this team are 80% committed to the project (with the remaining 20% allocated to BAU activities).

## 7.9 Carparks

East Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council's currently have just over 12 months left to run with their existing parking management system provider, Taranto. The shared software package has caused numerous configuration and data access issues, including difficulties in implementing changes, and system inefficiencies.

Given the substantial increase in costs to continue with Taranto and the ongoing support challenges, the authorities are exploring options to replace the system. The proposed project will involve extensive data extraction, validation, and integration efforts, requiring dedicated resources from both councils and Strata.

The new system aims to improve service control, enhance customer experience, and provide better management information and reporting capabilities. It is designed to address the limitations of the current system and support the councils' strategic objectives. The implementation will include procurement support, project management, system configuration, user acceptance testing, and comprehensive training to ensure a smooth transition and effective use of the new system.

With the councils providing dedicated service resource it is anticipated that the project will take 4-6 months for the core system with an additional 2 months for deep integration to the GovService (formally Firmstep) CRM system and finance systems. Exeter have expressed an interest in participating in the requirements phase to explore potential strategic business benefits. Should Exeter then decide to participate in the procurement it is assumed that similar costs would be anticipated for Exeter as for TDC and EDDC

## 7.10 Performance Management

East Devon has procured a Corporate Performance and Risk Management system from InPhase Ltd. This initiative aims to modernize the management and oversight of corporate performance, projects and risks aligning with the recommendations from the Peer Challenge and the expressed needs of the Executive Leadership Team.

. This new system is expected to streamline the reporting process, making it more accessible and user-friendly for managers and staff. It will also enhance the active management of corporate and service risks, thereby supporting informed decision-making and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability within the council.

At the time of writing Strata is assisting East Devon with the pre-project phases ahead of the kick-off meeting with the supplier which is expected in December '24. It is anticipated that the majority of system configuration, data loading and report writing will be undertaken by EDDC with minimal input required from Strata. Should more involvement be required an assessment will be undertaken at the time as to the level of effort required, which will either be resourced from existing staffing levels or will need to be brought in and funded by East Devon.

## **7.11 Street Scene**

East Devon have identified the need to procure and implement a StreetScene Environmental Management System. This software is anticipated to manage all StreetScene assets, streamline work programs, and enhance the monitoring, coordination, recording, and management of StreetScene activities.

The primary objective of this project is to improve service delivery across various aspects, including performance management, proactive work management, and customer service standards. The software aims to create efficiencies, ensure health and safety management, and promote transparency and accountability within EDDC's public service operations.

The successful implementation of the StreetScene management software is expected to address numerous challenges, such as outdated data, inefficient resource allocation and the inability to effectively manage and report on performance and service standards.

This project has the potential to replace numerous manual processes and smaller software systems such as those that currently manage, allotments, play area and beach huts (3 systems). This project also has the potential to replace the Strata written and maintained Mobile Worker app, which requires approximately ½ Strata FTE in ongoing support and development.

Whilst looking at potential systems consideration should be given to the system Exeter City Council use called Confirm which is a market leader in Local Government Asset management and Street Scene software.



## 7.12 Lone Worker

The Lone Worker Software Project aims to enhance the safety and operational efficiency of high-risk lone workers at Teignbridge and East Devon. The need for this project arose from significant operational limitations identified in the current MW App, such as poor battery performance, unreliable emergency activation responses, and lack of integration with existing systems.

The proposed solution involves procuring a 24/7 Lone Worker application that meets BS 8484 and ISO 9001 standards and can be utilised on any device, thereby eliminating the dependency on Strata-provided assets. This new system promises to improve health and safety, offer a more streamlined monitoring process, and provide a single, reliable solution to replace the outdated and disparate systems currently in use. It is proposed that the system will be fully managed by a specialist third party provider that will monitor the system 24/7. The chosen solution will be suitable for officers in higher risk, lone working scenarios provided via a 'key fob' push button solution, and passive monitoring for medium to lower risk filed based officers using a mobile app.

## 7.13 Health and Safety

The Health and Safety System project focuses on procuring a comprehensive corporate health and safety management platform for East Devon and Teignbridge with potential shared use by South Hams and West Devon. This initiative addresses a critical corporate risk due to the absence of an effective management system.

The proposed solution will be chosen for its robust features including integration capabilities with other platforms, strong security measures and alignment with the councils' data strategy. The project aims to deliver significant cost savings and operational benefits. The system will enable detailed performance monitoring, improve resource allocation and support compliance with legislative requirements thereby enhancing the overall health and safety standards within the councils.

The final business requirements are awaiting to be signed off at the time of writing and costs may change as the design is finalised.

## 7.14 Mobile Worker App for Officers

One of the applications that Strata inherited in 2014 was the East Devon Mobile Worker App. This innovative mobile working application enabled the EDDC Street Scene service to complete scheduled and reactive jobs via a mobile phone whilst out in the field. It also provided other functionality such as Lone Worker support and Vehicle Checks. Over time this application has grown and has also been rolled out to Teignbridge District Council.

The application has now reached a scale where an assessment needs to be undertaken on the functionality the application provides, versus the cost of supporting it in house and the risk of doing so. It anticipated that a likely outcome of the review will be to replace the Mobile Worker Application with a Commercial off the Shelf (COTS) solution. As part of this assessment it is recommended that solutions that may be delivered as part of the EDDC Street Scene project (See 100 above) are considered in addition to stand alone solutions that are already available on the market. It is likely that Lone Working functionality (See 7.12) won't be included as part of a Mobile Working solution and will likely be part of a standalone, managed lone working solution.

## 7.15 Mobile App for Citizens linked to Notifications

East Devon has an App that is aimed at its residents and is extremely well used. The App has had 105,000 downloads since its launch in 2013 and has over 55,000 users signed up to receive notifications such as bin day reminders.

The App has a good range of functionality including the ability to remind users to place their bins out for collection, the ability to report issues in the district such as fly tipping and find information such as planning applications in the vicinity.

Conversations have taken place with both Teignbridge and Exeter who have shown interest in making the App available for their residents. A full review will be undertaken by TDC and ECC to ascertain if they wish to pursue the app.

Introducing this App will offer another channel for communication to tie into the Notifications enabler. (See Notifications section).

## 7.16 LalPAC to Uniform – EDDC

East Devon currently use LalPAC Licensing system for the production and management of the Council wide licensing functions. In 2019, a large project was undertaken between Licensing and Strata to migrate the LalPAC data and documents to Idox Uniform. This project was run in parallel with Exeter City Council who completed the migration from LalPAC to Uniform and M3 to Uniform for their Environmental Health suite of applications.

The East Devon project completed the configuration of the Uniform system in Uniform Test, data matching and achieved two full data loads into the Uniform Test system, however the project stalled in October 2020 following a second data load with the Manager citing staffing resources as a reason that the UAT (user acceptance testing) could not proceed towards the Live deadlines proposed in January/February 2021. There has been no impetus from the service to resume this project since that time.

Since Exeter City Council and Teignbridge Council have migrated to Uniform, East Devon are running LalPAC with no knowledgeable resource in Strata to support the LalPAC system. There are currently 3 officers within Strata with extensive knowledge of: -

- Idox Uniform suite of applications/upgrades/patches/maintenance
- Idox DMS – document management system
- Idox Enterprise – workflow and performance tool
- Idox Onsite Mobile apps – together with Idox DMS allowing officers to use the Idox apps to complete site visits and field work.
- Idox Data Management Tool for compliance with data retention and GDPR
- Idox Uniform suite of Public Access and Consultee access applications engaging and producing a consistent information platform for members of the public.

The migration to Uniform for EDDC Licensing also supports Strata's convergence program. The migration of LalPAC data to uniform also expands the use of Uniform within each of the three Authorities covered by Strata with use of Uniform in Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health, Estates (EDDC), Land Charges and Local Land and Property Gazetteer.

## 7.17 GMS system to Cloud

As part of the transition to cloud computing and the ongoing programme of steadily migrating away from on premises hosted software applications, one application that should be considered is the Gazetteer Management Software (GMS). The GMS enables Strata to manage the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) which the authorities are contractually obliged to maintain as part of the agreement with Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as it feeds directly into the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG). This national address gazetteer brings together address information from local authorities and Ordnance Survey to create a 'national address gazetteer database', providing one definitive source of accurate publicly-owned spatial address data for the whole of the public sector. The NLPG underpins many council services alongside many nationally strategically important services such as Elections and the NHS.

## Summary Table included for indicative Budgetary purposes

Application	Purpose	Councils	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Capital (See Capital table page xx for split)	
HR System	Migrate iTrent from On-Premises to iTrent Hosted	EDDC, TDC	£105,000	£100,000	
Revs and Bens	Contract extension to Civica Revs and Bens	TDC		£100,000	
Financial Management System (FMS)	Implement a new Finance Management System.				
Car Parks	Replace existing parking management system to improve service control and customer experience.	EDDC, TDC	£70,000	£250,000	
Performance Management	Enhance performance management capabilities with a Corporate Performance and Risk Management system.	EDDC			Budgeted by EDC during 24/25 FY
Street Scene	Implement a StreetScene Environmental Management System to manage assets and activities.	EDDC	£75,000	£200,000	
Lone Worker	Enhance safety and operational efficiency of high-risk lone workers with a new application.	EDDC, TDC	£18,000	£0	
Health and Safety	Procure a comprehensive corporate health and safety management platform.	ECC, EDDC, TDC	£40,000	£75,000	

Application	Purpose	Councils	Estimated Revenue	Estimated Capital (See Capital table page xx for split)	
Mobile/ Field Worker App for Officers	Assess and potentially replace the Mobile Worker Application with a COTS solution.	ECC, EDDC, TDC	£25,000	£50,000	
Mobile App for Citizens	Provide an additional channel for communication linked to Notifications enabler.	ECC, TDC	£40,000		
Lalpac to Uniform	Migrate LalPAC data to Idox Uniform for better data management and compliance.	EDDC		£50,000	
Gazetteer Management System to Cloud	Transition Gazetteer Management Software to a cloud version.	ECC, EDDC, TDC	£25,000	£15,000	



Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

## **Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan') to be formally 'made'**

### **Report summary:**

The Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan has now successfully passed referendum and must be formally 'made' (adopted) by East Devon District Council in order to form part of the development plan.

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

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### **Recommendation:**

- (1) That Committee agree that the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan be 'made'.
- (2) That Committee note that once made the Plan will carry full weight in the planning decision making process as part of the statutory development plan for this Neighbourhood Plan Area (the majority of the parish of Clyst Honiton).
- (3) That Committee congratulate Clyst Honiton Parish Council and their Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on this culmination of their hard work in developing the Plan.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

The Plan received a majority 'yes' vote in the neighbourhood area referendum, as required by the Regulations, and there is no substantive reason not to make the Plan. In addition, to recognise the significant work over a number of years by Clyst Honiton Parish Council and dedicated volunteers to prepare the Plan.

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### **Portfolio(s) (check which apply):**

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



☒ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

### **Equalities impact** Low Impact

Neighbourhood Planning is designed to be inclusive and extensive consultation is a fundamental requirement. The Clyst Honiton Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of significant consultation and engagement with the community, set out in a detailed Consultation Statement. All persons living in the parish have had the opportunity to be engaged in the Plan's production and all persons registered to vote in the area could vote in the referendum.

### **Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; The only reason for the Plan not to be made now is if the Council consider that to do so would be incompatible with any retained EU obligation or any of the Convention rights within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998. There is a risk that should we take that decision it will be subject to legal challenge and that the Parish Council will feel disenfranchised that their right to produce a Neighbourhood Plan under the Localism Act has been prevented.

**Links to background information** [The Localism Act](#); [Plain English Guide to the Localism Act](#); [National Planning Policy Framework \(2024\)](#); [Neighbourhood Planning Regulations](#); [Neighbourhood Planning Roadmap Guide](#); [East Devon Neighbourhood Planning webpages](#); [Clyst Honiton Parish Neighbourhood Plan webpage](#); [EDDC SEA/HRA Screening Opinion Report](#); [Strategic Environmental Assessment Report](#); [Habitat Regulations Assessment Report](#); [Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report](#); [Clyst Honiton Parish Neighbourhood Plan Referendum Version](#)

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

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
  - ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
  - ☒ Resilient economy that supports local business
  - ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services
- 

## **Report in full**

### **1.0 Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan Referendum**

1.1 On 23 January 2025, a referendum was held on the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan at The Old School, Clyst Honiton from 7am to 10pm.

1.2 Voters were asked the following question:

"Do you want East Devon District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Clyst Honiton to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"

1.3 The Regulations advise that if more people vote 'yes' than 'no' in the referendum, East Devon District Council should use the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Clyst Honiton neighbourhood area. The Plan once made (adopted) will then become part of the statutory development plan for the area.

- 1.4 In East Devon, the development plan currently consists of the East Devon Local Plan (2013-2031); the East Devon Villages Plan (adopted 2018); any made Neighbourhood Plan; the Devon Waste Plan (2011-2031); and the Devon Minerals Plan (2011-2033). As Members will be aware, a new Local Plan for East Devon is currently being prepared and is at Regulation 19 stage consultation. Limited weight is now starting to be able to be applied to some of its draft policies, but neighbourhood plans will continue to primarily be tested for general conformity with the adopted Local Plan until such time as it is replaced. As such, the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan was examined against, and found to be in general conformity with, the adopted Local Plan. It was assessed to meet the 'Basic Conditions' for a neighbourhood plan to be made.
- 1.5 The final results of the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan referendum are shown below:
- Yes: 71
  - No: 14
  - Voter turnout: 30%
  - In favour: 83.5%
- 1.6 This is a sparsely populated Neighbourhood Area, with an electorate of less than 300 voters. The results show a clear majority of those voting in favour of the Plan, and the level of turnout was also good.
- 1.7 The Cabinet must now consider whether it would be appropriate to make the Plan. Once the Plan is formally made it will carry full weight in the planning decision making process. As part of the development plan, any planning applications in the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Area will be judged against the Neighbourhood Plan, as well as policies of East Devon District Council and also the National Planning Policy Framework. In this case, the neighbourhood area is not the entire parish of Clyst Honiton. It includes the vast majority of it, including the village of the same name, but excludes the strategic /major development areas that lie in the parish, including the airport, Skypark, Exeter Business Park, the now Lidl distribution centre and Cranbrook expansion areas.
- 1.8 With regards to implementation of this Plan, it should be noted that the Plan makes an allocation for up to 9 homes at Clyst Honiton village currently occupied by the Slate and Tile business. The intention being to increase the supply of smaller homes (1-2 bed) enabling residents to stay living in the village, as well as to create an enhanced 'gateway' to it. The Plan also seeks to support the continued use and regeneration of various other sites in the village for employment uses and to pave the way for a new community facility to serve the village, which is anticipated to be progressed through a Community Development Order. It should be noted that with the inclusion of an allocation for residential use, the National Planning Policy Framework protects the 'full weight' of the policies in the plan in the determination of applications for a period of 5 years from the date of adoption ('making') in situations where the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a full 5-year housing land supply. This helps to protect the influence that the Plan can have on development, in those circumstance, when otherwise the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' would apply. Along with this benefit, having a made Plan in place will mean that the Parish Council will receive an enhanced level of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) receipts arising from developments in the Plan area, increasing from 15% to 25%.
- 1.9 Overall, effective application of the policies of the Plan once made will ensure that the hard work that has gone into its production will translate into the incorporation of local community expectations and aspirations within the decision-making process. The only reason for the

Plan not to be made now is if Cabinet consider that to do so would be incompatible with any retained EU obligation or any of the Convention rights within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998.

- 1.10 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report was prepared by EDDC on the Pre-Submission version of the Plan. This screened out a need for SEA. HRA was screened 'in' and as such the Screening Report included an Appropriate Assessment. This concluded that the modest level of development proposed through the Plan can be appropriately mitigated through existing strategic mitigation in the form of Local Plan Strategic Policy 5 ('Environment') of the East Devon Local Plan, implemented through the Southeast Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy. The statutory bodies were consulted on the Screening Report. The Environment Agency (EA) offered no comments on the screening opinion. Historic England (HE) disagreed indicating in their opinion SEA was needed. Natural England (NE) indicated that significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes were unlikely and that significant effects on Habitats sites, either alone or in combination, were unlikely. Ultimately, an Environmental Report (both an SEA and an HRA) dated January 2024 were prepared to inform the neighbourhood plan and submitted with it to the LPA. The SEA report confirms that a Scoping Report was prepared and sent to the statutory consultees.
- 1.11 The Examiner considered the report to be a "comprehensive document that deals with the issues appropriately for the content and level of detail in the Plan". It was published for consultation alongside the submission version of the Plan and submitted along with all other relevant documentation to the independent examination. Similarly, the HRA report includes screening and appropriate assessment for the relevant plan policies. The Report concluded that "...in combination with growth allocated across adjoining authorities, the ... Plan in consideration of the mitigation measures outlined in the overarching East Devon Local Plan, will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any international designated sites."
- 1.12 The Examiner considered that in his view, in respect of SEA, retained EU obligations have been satisfied, and with regards to HRA, that the prescribed basic conditions are complied with, in that the making of the Plan would not breach the requirements of the Habitat Regulations. Also, in respect of the European Convention on Human Rights, the examiner found nothing in the plan that would suggest any breach or incompatibility with those Convention Rights.
- 1.13 The matters regarding retained EU obligations have therefore been considered during the examination process, where the Examiner has reported being satisfied that the Plan meets these obligations. Officer assessment is that the Council can be satisfied that the Plan meets the legal requirements. There are therefore not considered to be any grounds not to make the Plan.

## **2.0 Next Steps**

- 2.1 Following the decision whether or not to make the Plan, we will produce a decision notice for the Plan. This will detail the decision and reasons for it and where it may be viewed.
- 2.2 The decision notice will be publicised by:
- publishing it on the neighbourhood planning pages of our website;

- by sending a copy to the Plan producer and requesting that they notify those persons who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area to which the Plan relates;
- by notifying the 'consultation bodies' referred to in the consultation statement;
- by advising:
  - adjoining authorities;
  - anyone who asked to be notified of a copy of the decision, and;
  - all those who made representations to us on the plan.

2.3 In conclusion, Members are now asked to approve the recommendation to enable the Plan to be formally 'made', in accordance with this report.

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### **Financial implications:**

Central Government grant funding is able to be claimed for Neighbourhood plans that have gone through referendum. This income is to cover examination fees and other associated costs such as employment and all other supplies and services. Any residual funds are placed into an earmarked reserve and utilised to cover funding gaps in subsequent years.

### **Legal implications:**

Following a majority vote in favour of the plan at referendum the Council must proceed to adopt (or 'make') the plan within 8 weeks of the referendum, unless in doing so it would be incompatible with any retained EU obligation or any of the Convention rights within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998. The legal position is that the Council must now 'make' the Neighbourhood Plan as modified. As noted, once it had been made, the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan for decision making on planning applications.

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

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