

**Agenda for Council**  
**Wednesday, 9th April, 2025, 6.00 pm**

To: All elected Members of the Council; Honorary Aldermen

**Venue:** Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton

**Contact:** Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager;  
email [andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk) 01395 517541  
(or group number 01395 517546)  
Issued Monday, 31 March 2025



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

DX 48808 HONITON

Tel: 01404 515616

**[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](#)

Dear Sir/Madam

**Meeting of the Council of the District of East Devon on**  
**Wednesday, 9th April, 2025 at 6.00 pm**

You are called upon to attend the above meeting to be held in the Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton. It is proposed that the matters set out on the agenda below will be considered at the meeting and resolution or resolutions passed as the Council considers expedient.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Hendren".

Tracy Hendren  
Chief Executive

**1 Apologies**

**2 Declarations of interest**

Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)

**3 Minutes of the previous meeting** (Pages 4 - 22)

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 February 2025 and the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 19 March 2025.

**4 Public speaking**

Information on [public speaking](#) is available online

**5 Matters of urgency**

Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online

**6 Announcements from the Chair of Council and Leader of Council**

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

To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the Press) have been excluded. There are no items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way, but if confidential minutes from Cabinet and/or the Council's Committees are being discussed, Officers may recommend consideration in the private part of the meeting.

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

**9 Reports from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees and questions on those reports** (Pages 23 - 59)

**10 Discretionary Planning Fees Review** (Pages 60 - 86)

**11 Strata Business Plan 2025/2026** (Pages 87 - 161)

**12 Coach & Tourism in East Devon** (Pages 162 - 173)

**13 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

To consider passing a resolution having been duly proposed and seconded under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting, on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, within the meaning of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Reason: Para 3 Schedule 12A Information relating to the finance or business affairs of any particular person

**14 Placemaking in Exmouth Town & Seafront Group** (Pages 174 - 180)

**15 Seaton Coast Protection Scheme** (Pages 181 - 189)

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, any members of the public are now allowed to take photographs, film and audio record the proceedings and report on all public meetings (including on social media). No prior notification is needed but 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 Chairman 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 Question Time will be recorded.

[Decision making and equalities](#)

**For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546**

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL****Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 26 February 2025****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 9.31 pm

**64 Apologies**

Apologies received from Councillors Sarah Chamberlain, Mike Goodman, Duncan Mackinder, Tony McCollum, Simon Smith, Daniel Wilson and Eileen Wragg.

**65 Declarations of interest**

Agenda Item 14 – Cranbrook Community Governance Review

Councillors Kevin Blakey, Kim Bloxham and Sam Hawkins declared an NRI as they were elected members of Cranbrook Town Council.

Councillors Paula Fernley and Eleanor Rylance declared an NRI as they were elected members of Broadclyst Parish Council.

Agenda Item 22 – Motion on Notice – Highways

Councillors Jess Bailey, Ian Chubb, Marcus Hartnell and Stuart Hughes declared an ORI as they were elected members of Devon County Council.

**66 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 December 2024 and the Extraordinary meeting held on 9 January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

**67 Public speaking**

No members of the public had registered to speak.

**68 Matters of urgency**

None.

**69 Announcements from the Chairman and Leader**

The Chair invited councillors to join in congratulating Councillor Paul Hayward who had been recognised nationally by the LGA Independent Group's Clarence Barrett Award.

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

The Chair confirmed that there would be 1 item of business which was dealt with at agenda item 26.

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

The following Questions on Notice had been received and the responses given are set out as follows:

Question	Question from	Question	Response
1	Cllr Peter Faithfull	How many of our annual affordable homes are made available to buy each year for the last 5 years?	PFH Sustainable Homes & Communities A written response would be provided.
2	Cllr Brian Bailey	Does the cabinet member agree that playing sports is important to keeping people off all ages fit and healthy. Does the cabinet member agree that this Council should do all they can to ensure that facilities are affordable?	<p>Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism</p> <p>Yes, this question neatly captures the vision set out within our Leisure Strategy that</p> <p>Our role is essential in facilitating and enabling provision of good quality, accessible, and inclusive leisure for both residents of, and visitors to, East Devon because of the positive impact being active has on our health and wellbeing, and the contribution it makes to national and local public health initiatives.'</p> <p>That is why we have completed a Leisure Strategy 2021 – 2031 which is available on the Council website and includes an Action Plan that is regularly reviewed at the Leisure Strategy Forum.</p> <p>The Strategy and Action Plan are supported by a number of key principles and the first two resonant directly with the question from Cllr Bailey.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the provision of leisure facilities for residents and visitors alike is an essential function of this Council.</li> <li>2. That such leisure facilities are important to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors alike and thereby support national and local public health initiatives</li> </ol>

By effectively establishing 'need' and having a mechanism to secure resources to contribute towards meeting the need, the council is well placed to achieve both council and community policy objectives in relation to maintaining and improving sport and recreation provision, increasing participation and encouraging more active healthy communities.

We are also working more closely with partners including Active Devon and their push for more movement to change lives for the better and seek more ways of aligning shared goals and outcomes.

**Does the cabinet member agree that this Council should do all they can to ensure that facilities are affordable?**

It is pleasing to note that affordable and accessible leisure facilities is also recognised as one of the key principles within the Leisure Strategy.

It is worth reflecting that in East Devon, there are a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations delivering opportunities alongside those provided by EDDC and its leisure operator LED. This in part reflects the rural nature of the district, with organisations serving relatively small populations across a number of towns and villages.

There are significant challenges with delivering the level of infrastructure and access required, and while the Council has a role in championing and enabling the provision required, it is unrealistic to expect the Council to be able to deliver everything.

Innovative partnerships, cross sector sustainable delivery and funding models, and significant amount of capital funding will be required in order to achieve the level of provision that

			<p>the Leisure Strategy identifies as needed.</p> <p>The council will continue to secure S106 Developers' Contributions (S106) or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) towards improvements to existing and new facilities in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework and policies for planning obligations. Additionally, grant funding and other sources of capital will be explored to provide or improve those sports facilities where planning obligations cannot be justified.</p> <p>That's why it is important that any proposal for provision needs be accompanied by a robust business plan so the financial implications are fully understood. That also rings true for current facilities as well.</p> <p>These strategies will continue to be reviewed by the Leisure Delivery Forum and refreshed as schemes and projects are developed, delivered or changed. After further feasibility work, some projects may be considered unviable. Some may need different forms of support.</p> <p>The overarching approach of the Strategies is one of optimism, and over the next few years we will do what we can to enhance yet further the facilities and opportunities that add so much to the wellbeing and quality of the lives of residents in East Devon.</p> <p>Cllr Brian Bailey asked a supplementary question that fees were going up for renting pitches which was contrary to the response from the portfolio holder. In response Cllr Hookway confirmed that the setting of pitch fees was not within his portfolio area and was the responsibility of the portfolio holder for Economy and Assets.</p>
3	Cllr Colin	At the December full	Leader of Council

	Brown	<p>Council meeting it was agreed.</p> <p>That this Council urges Councillors to stand with Britain's family farmers, to support our rural communities, and that the Chief Executive Sends a letter to the Exchequer and the Minister of State for Food Security to reconsider the proposed changes to the Agricultural Property Relief and farming related Businesses Property Relief.</p> <p>Can the Leader confirm the letter was sent and have the Council received a reply.</p>	<p>The letter has been sent to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Areas. This was dispatched following the further consideration of this issue at the Scrutiny meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> January and references the further work that is now being undertaken locally to understand the impact of the changes to Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief in an East Devon setting. A reply has not yet been received.</p>
--	-------	---	---

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

The minutes from the following meetings were presented:

- Cabinet – 27 November 2024; 8 January 2025; and 5 February 2025
- Scrutiny Committee – 10 December 2024; 15 January 2025 and 30 January 2025
- Housing Review Board – 30 January 2025
- Planning Committee 17 December 2024 and 28 January 2025
- Strategic Planning Committee – 22 and 29 November 2024; 11 December 2024 and 4 February 2024
- Leisure Strategy Delivery – 14 January 2025
- Licensing & Enforcement Committee – 5 February 2025
- Licensing & Enforcement Sub-Committee – 11 December 2024 and 29 January 2025
- Personnel Committee – 14 January 2025
- Placemaking Exmouth Town & Seafront Group – 10 December 2024 and 10 February 2025
- Cranbrook Placemaking Group – 18 November 2024 and 20 January 2025
- Standards Committee – 16 January 2025
- Audit & Governance Committee – 27 November 2024 and 27 January 2025

The Chair confirmed that there were no Called Minutes.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes from the Council's Cabinet and Committees be noted.

73 **Pay Policy Statement 2025/26**

The Chair of the Personnel Committee presented the recommendations in respect of the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/2026.

The Chair of Council moved the recommendation which was approved by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:** That the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/2026 be approved.

74 **Corporate Peer Review Update**

The Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Coordination presented a report setting out an update on the Corporate Peer Review.

Members noted that the Local Government Association (LGA) were commissioned by East Devon Council to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge ("CPC") following a Motion at Full Council in July 2023. The Peer Challenge was conducted in February 2024 and an action plan and timetable address those recommendations was presented to members July 2024.

The Peer Challenge Team returned on 28 November 2024 and the report set out the conclusions reached by the Peer Team when reviewing the progress that has been made.

The Council noted the positive feedback from the CPC indicating that EDDC had made significant progress which was a positive reflection of the hard work that had been undertaken by the council.

Councillor John Loudoun proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Yehudi Levine and having been put to the vote and carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:** To note the report and the positive conclusions from the Corporate Peer Review.

75 **Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation**

The Leader of Council presented a report setting out an update on progress with Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution in Devon.

The Leader confirmed that regular updates would be provided to councillors and an extraordinary full Council meeting would be held on 19 March 2025 to consider the submission of interim proposals to Government on the future arrangements for local government in Devon.

During consideration of the report the following points were raised:

- Importance of dialogue with town and parish councils;
- Timescales to submit proposals and the work required to set up new arrangements is too tight.
- Importance of reviewing policies and strategies for any new authority.
- Funding and spending over the next 2 to 3 years needs to be assessed.
- Consultation with local residents should be part of the proposals.

Members noted that the Council would be holding a briefing session for town and parish councils in March and would continue to provide regular updates for councillors and staff.

Councillor Paul Arnott proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor John Loudoun and having been put to the vote was unanimously supported.

**RESOLVED:** To note the report and that an extraordinary full Council meeting would take place on 19 March 2025 to consider interim proposals.

## 76 **EDDC Culture Strategy 2022-2031 support**

The Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country and Environment presented a report seeking funding for 2025/2026 financial year of £10,000 for Screen Devon and £5,000 for Villages in Action to support the ongoing work set out in the East Devon District Council Culture Strategy.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Nick Hookway and seconded by Councillor Alasdair Bruce.

During consideration of the report members highlighted the importance of any award of funding being subject to recipients being up to date with their statutory Companies House obligations.

Councillor Vicky Johns proposed that the recommendation should be amended to reflect this and this was seconded by Councillor Chris Burhop, members voted on the amendment and this was carried by a majority show of hands. The substantive motion was put to the vote and carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approves an additional budget of £15,000 is provided from the Council's General Fund Revenue account to fund the recommendations to provide additional funding of £10,000 to Screen Devon subject to the company Screen Devon being up to date with their statutory Companies House obligations and additional funding of £5,000 to Villages in Action as set out in recommendations 1 and 2 (set out in the Cabinet report on 8 January 2025)

## 77 **Cranbrook - Community Governance Review**

The Portfolio Holder for Communications and Democracy presented a report setting out a request from Cranbrook Town Council that the Council undertook a community governance review in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to revise the parish boundary of Cranbrook to reflect the planned expansion of the town.

During consideration of the report members discussed the following:  
Consultation – noted that anyone affected by the proposal would be able to participate and make comments on the proposals.  
Length of process – members noted that the review could take at least one year to complete.

Councillor Sarah Jackson proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Ian Barlow and having been put to the vote was carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Council undertake a Community Governance Review of the current Cranbrook Town Council area with a view to establishing whether expansion of the current town boundaries is considered to be appropriate.
2. That the Council agrees the Terms of Reference, including the timetable and arrangements for public consultation.
3. That the Council agree that delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communications and Democracy to make amendments to the Terms of Reference as are necessary and appropriate.
4. That the Council notify Devon County Council that a review is to be undertaken and provide them with a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Review.
5. That Council note that further reports will be brought to Council in order that decisions may be made in respect of draft proposals and final recommendations of the Review.

**78 New Planning Policy - Local Development Scheme**

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning presented a report setting out details of the requirements for the Council to provide a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out the programme and timetable for production of future planning documents. Councillors noted that the proposed new LDS summarised key content and provided more information on plan production considerations.

Councillor Todd Olive proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Bethany Collins and having been put to the vote was carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:** That Council endorse the proposed new Local Development Scheme and that it should take effect immediately.

**79 Statement of Accounts 2023/2024**

The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee presented a report setting out details from a report of the Council's auditors Grant Thornton who were issuing a disclaimer of the 2023/2024 Accounts.

Councillors noted the details and future actions contained in the report.

**RESOLVED:** That Council note the position with the 2023/2024 Accounts.

**80 Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 (incorporating Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy) and Capital Strategy 2025/26**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the Treasury Management Strategy Statement incorporating Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy and Capital Strategy for 2025/2026.

Council noted that these documents provided details on the Council's strategy on investments and borrowing along with prudential indicators which evidenced key

performance measures including the affordability of borrowing. It was further noted that the management of investments and how the Council makes appropriate changes to revenue for the cost of capital.

Councillor Sam Hawkins proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Yehudi Levine and having been put to the vote were carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council adopts the Treasury Management Strategy including the Prudential Indicators for 2025/2026.
2. That Council approves the Minimum Revenue Policy Statement.
3. That Council approves the Annual Investment Strategy, creditworthiness criteria and updated list of counterparts.
4. That Council adopts the Capital Strategy 2025/2026 – 2028/2029.

81 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/2026**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/2026 for working age residents which was unchanged from the 2024/2025 scheme.

Councillor Sam Hawkins proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Tim Dumper and having been put to the vote was unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** That Council approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age residents for 2025/2026.

82 **Council Tax Resolution 2025/26**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the Council Tax set report for 2025/2026.

Councillor Sam Hawkins proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Richard Jefferies and a recorded vote was taken:

**FOR (47):** Councillors Paul Arnott, Aurora Bailey, Brian Bailey, Jess Bailey, Ian Barlow, Kevin Blakey, Kim Bloxham, Violet Bonetta, Colin Brown, Jenny Brown, Alasdair Bruce, Chris Burhop, Maddy Chapman, Iain Chubb, Bethany Collins, Olly Davey, Ime Dumper, Peter Faithfull, Paula Fernley, Steve Gazzard, Del Haggerty, Anne Hall, Matt Hall, Marcus Hartnell, Sam Hawkins, Paul Hayward, John Heath, Nick Hookway, Stuart Hughes, Sarah Jackson, Richard Jefferies, Vicky Johns, Geoff Jung, Dan Ledger, Yehudi Levine, John Loudoun, Melanie Martin, Cherry Nicholas, John O'Leary, Todd Olive, Helen Parr, Henry Riddell, Marianne Rixson, Eleanor Rylance, Andrew Teye, Susan Westerman and Joe Whibley.

**AGAINST (0):** None.

**ABSTENTION (1):** Councillor Roy Collins.

**RESOLVED:** That the formal Council Tax Resolution, be approved.

**The Council is recommended to resolve as follows:**

1. It be noted that on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2025 Cabinet (minute reference 120 refers) calculated the Council Tax Base 2025/26.
  - (a) for the whole Council area as 65,142.52 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")]; and
  - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates as detailed in Schedule 1 attached.
2. As a preliminary step, calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2025/26 (excluding Parish precepts) is £11,190,182.
3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2025/26 in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Act:
  - (a) £111,883,225 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
  - (b) £94,473,037 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
  - (c) £17,410,188 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
  - (d) £267.26 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
  - (e) £6,220,005.70 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per the attached Schedule 1).
  - (f) £171.78 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
  - (g) The amounts stated in column 5 of the schedule 1 attached given by adding to the amount at 3(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area specified in column 1 of Schedule 1 divided in each case by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area set out in column 1 of Schedule 1 to which one or more special items relate.

- (h) The amounts set out in Schedule 2 attached given by multiplying the amounts at 3(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

4. That it be noted that for the year 2025/26 Devon County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the District Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

**Precepting Authority**

Valuation Bands	Devon County Council	Police & Crime Com for Devon & Cornwall	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue
A	£1,200.84	£192.13	£69.79
B	£1,400.98	£224.16	£81.42
C	£1,601.12	£256.18	£93.05
<u>D</u>	<u>£1,801.26</u>	<u>£288.20</u>	<u>£104.68</u>
E	£2,201.54	£352.24	£127.94
F	£2,601.82	£416.29	£151.20
G	£3,002.10	£480.33	£174.47
H	£3,602.52	£576.40	£209.36

5. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3 (h) and 4 above, the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts set out in Schedule 3 attached as the amounts of council tax for the year 2025/26 for each of the categories of dwellings shown in Schedule 3.
6. The Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2025/26 is **not** excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992. As the billing authority, the Council has **not** been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2025/26 is excessive and therefore the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992.

83 **Calendar of Meetings 2025/2026**

The Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Coordination presented the calendar of meetings for 2025/2026.

Councillor John Loudoun proposed the recommendation and having been seconded by Councillor Alasdair Bruce was put to the vote and unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:** That the calendar of meetings 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.

84 **Motion on Notice - Broadband in East Devon**

Councillor Richard Jefferies proposed a motion on notice relating to broadband provision in East Devon which was seconded by Councillor Paul Hayward and supported by Councillors Yehudi Levine, Duncan Mackinder and Todd Olive.

In speaking to the motion Councillor Richard Jefferies raised concerns about broadband in rural areas and noted that there was also a reliance on 4G in some areas.

Councillor Jefferies requested that the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets:

a. Write to all parish and town councils to canvass for evidence and experiences of poor connectivity in East Devon, and where feasible to seek the same from East Devon's many rural businesses, and

b. Write to the Minister for Telecoms and East Devon's MP's to re-iterate the issue of broadband 'not-spots' in our district, and ask what actions government are taking to alleviate this critical constraint on social wellbeing and economic growth; and

2. Asks that the Leader:

a. Invite other authorities in Devon to participate in a joint initiative - following the successful example of the Devon Water Summit - to explore the costs of poor connectivity in the region, and to invite relevant public and industry bodies to explore how superfast fibre rollouts can be further accelerated, and

b. Writes to the Leader at Devon County Council, and the Programme Director of Connecting Devon & Somerset, to express this Council's disappointment at the cancellation of over half of Airband's connection obligations, and to invite them to offer an urgent briefing to this Council regarding efforts to bring superfast broadband to all of our residents, including changes made to Connecting Devon & Somerset's due diligence processes to ensure that such failures do not happen in future.

Councillor Paul Hayward in seconding the motion impacts on rural economy and rural living it was an essential service, particularly as analogue telephony was being phased out and would lead to social isolation. Councillor Hayward further outlined that broadband speed was insufficient in certain areas and was having impacts on local communities.

Members in discussion highlighted instances of poor broadband speed in their area and the importance for local communities and businesses to have good connectivity and supported the motion on notice.

The motion having been put and seconded was carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council request that the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets:
  - a. Write to all parish and town councils to canvass for evidence and experiences of poor connectivity in East Devon, and where feasible to seek the same from East Devon's many rural businesses, and
  - b. Write to the Minister for Telecoms and East Devon's MP's to re-iterate the issue of broadband 'not-spots' in our district, and ask what actions government are taking to alleviate this critical constraint on social wellbeing and economic growth; and
2. That Council asks that the Leader of Council:
  - a. Invite other authorities in Devon to participate in a joint initiative - following the successful example of the Devon Water Summit - to explore the costs of poor connectivity in the region, and to invite relevant public and industry bodies to explore how superfast fibre rollouts can be further accelerated, and
  - b. Writes to the Leader at Devon County Council, and the Programme Director of Connecting Devon & Somerset, to express this Council's disappointment at the cancellation of over half of Airband's connection obligations, and to invite them to offer an urgent briefing to this Council regarding efforts to bring superfast broadband to all of our residents, including changes made to Connecting Devon & Somerset's due diligence processes to ensure that such failures do not happen in future.

85 **Motion on Notice - Highways**

Councillor Paul Arnott proposed a motion on notice relating to highways issues in East Devon.

In speaking to the motion on notice the Leader of Council requested that the Council:

1. Asks that the Leader call on Devon County Council to:
  - a. Urgently review the value and efficiency of its existing outsourced highway maintenance contract,
  - b. Urgently reconsider its decision to continue with "business as usual" at the earliest possible opportunity, inviting genuine consultation with partner authorities and communities through that process;
2. Requests that the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning:
  - a. Invite the relevant Director at Devon County Council to attend a discussion with East Devon District Councillors to air concerns regarding Highways' input into the planning process, and to raise these concerns with the relevant Devon County Council Scrutiny Committee following that meeting,
  - b. Invite relevant Devon Highways officers to provide a briefing for East Devon District Councillors and Town & Parish Councillors regarding how they assess planning applications and provide consultation responses, and
  - c. Following the requested briefing session, to invite East Devon District Council's Development Management team to consult with members regarding how the information provided in Devon Highways' responses to

consultation requests could be improved to provide additional reassurance to Members and the public; and

3. Recommends that East Devon District Council's Scrutiny Committee consider undertaking an investigation of these issues in support of and in addition to the above measures.

In seconding the motion on notice Councillor Nick Hookway commented that it was important for this matter to be considered. The state of roads in East Devon was poor and recent repair schemes had been inadequate and there were also impacts on tourism.

The motion on notice having been put and seconded was put to the vote and carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council:

1. Asks that the Leader call on Devon County Council to:
  - a. Urgently review the value and efficiency of its existing outsourced highway maintenance contract,
  - b. Urgently reconsider its decision to continue with "business as usual" at the earliest possible opportunity, inviting genuine consultation with partner authorities and communities through that process;
2. Requests that the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning:
  - a. Invite the relevant Director at Devon County Council to attend a discussion with East Devon District Councillors to air concerns regarding Highways' input into the planning process, and to raise these concerns with the relevant Devon County Council Scrutiny Committee following that meeting,
  - b. Invite relevant Devon Highways officers to provide a briefing for East Devon District Councillors and Town & Parish Councillors regarding how they assess planning applications and provide consultation responses, and
  - c. Following the requested briefing session, to invite East Devon District Council's Development Management team to consult with members regarding how the information provided in Devon Highways' responses to consultation requests could be improved to provide additional reassurance to Members and the public; and
3. Recommends that East Devon District Council's Scrutiny Committee consider undertaking an investigation of these issues in support of and in addition to the above measures.

86 **Independent Remuneration Panel & Audit and Governance Committee - Appointments**

The Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Coordination presented a report seeking appointments of a new member to the Independent Remuneration Panel, and the Audit & Governance Committee.

Councillor John Loudoun proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Dan Ledger and having been put to the vote were unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council approve the appointment of Charles Summers to serve on the Independent Remuneration Panel effective until 31 March 2028.

2. That Council approves the continued appointment of Nigel Arnold, Ken Bryant and Andy Cockerham until 31 March 2027.
3. That Council approve the co-option of Robert Wood as an Independent Person to serve on the Audit and Governance Committee effective until 31 March 2028.

87 **Outside Bodies - Devon and Torbay Combined Authority Board and South West Energy & Environment Group**

The Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Coordination presented a report seeking to add two outside bodies to the Council's list of outside bodies and appointments to serve on them.

The Chair moved the recommendations which were put to the vote and carried by a majority show of hands.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That Council agree to add the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority Board as an outside body and to appoint the Leader of Council Councillor Paul Arnott.
2. That Council agree to add the South West Energy & Environment Group (SWEED) as an outside body and to appoint the Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Councillor Marianne Rixson and the Assistant Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country and Environment, Councillor Paula Fernley.

88 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED:**

That Council agree that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be conducted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information defined as exempt in accordance with Paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person) in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

The Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country and Environment presented a report on the recycling and waste future service model business case.

Councillor Geoff Jung proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Paul Arnott and having been put to the vote was unanimously carried.

**RESOLVED:**

That Council:

1. Support the preferred option as set out in the exempt report.
2. agree that an implementation and mobilisation budget is made available as set out in the exempt report.
3. endorses the role of the Portfolio Holder Team in providing oversight of the development and implementation of the proposals in line with an approved Implementation Plan.

4. As a priority receives a further report setting out the Full Business Case for the proposals set out in the exempt report.

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

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

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

Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager  
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)  
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

#### **Councillor apologies:**

S Chamberlain  
M Goodman  
M Howe  
B Ingham  
D Mackinder  
T McCollum  
S Richards  
S Smith  
D Wilson  
E Wragg

Chair .....

Date: .....

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 19 March 2025**

**Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.18 pm

90 **Apologies**

Apologies received from Councillors Jess Bailey, Colin Brown, Jenny Brown, Iain Chubb, Anne Hall, Matt Hall, Sam Hawkins, Mike Howe, Stuart Hughes, Vicky Johns, Geoff Jung, John O'Leary, Yehudi Levine, Sophie Richards and Henry Ridell.

91 **Declarations of interest**

92 **Public speaking**

None.

93 **Matters of urgency**

None.

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

None.

95 **Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution**

The Leader of Council presented a report setting out an update on progress of proposals for local government in Devon to be reorganised into a single tier of local government. Members noted that the report set out proposals to submit an interim plan to Government by 21 March 2025.

During consideration of the item the following comments were made:

- Importance of ensuring that any work on a final bid to Government should be adequately resourced and not impact on business as usual at the Council.
- Engagement with Town and Parish Councils should be included in any proposals.
- Public consultation on any proposals should be carried out.
- Need to understand the net costs for running a new authority.

Members were informed that the districts proposal has been developed with a shared belief that a single unitary council for the whole of Devon would be too large and remote to best serve the interests of its residents and communities.

It was noted that the interim plan was essentially an initial expression of interest, and that extensive, detailed work would need to be undertaken before a detailed business case was developed that will enable thorough consideration of the risks and opportunities of the proposal. This would need to include extensive stakeholder engagement before the deadline for final proposals to be submitted to government on 28th November 2025.

The Leader of Council confirmed that seven district councils in Devon issued a joint statement on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation on 28th February stating that stated that initial agreement had been reached to work towards the formation of two new councils that combine existing areas as follows:

- A unitary combining the South Hams, Teignbridge and West Devon areas with Torbay
- A unitary including East, Mid and North Devon alongside Torridge District and the City of Exeter

Members were presented with a draft interim plan reflecting this agreement which sets out a high level business case which accords with the guidance issued by government in terms of size, working to existing local authority boundaries changes and viability. The draft had been agreed in principle by leaders and chief executives but, importantly, is subject to different governance arrangements at the relevant councils and maybe subject to change right up until the submission deadline.

The Leader of Council recognised the comments from councillors and highlighted the importance of East Devon District Council having a say and being able to participate in any discussions around the future of local government in Devon.

Councillor Paul Arnott proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor John Loudoun and having been put to the vote was carried by a majority show of hands.

## **RESOLVED**

That Council approve that the Chief Executive be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Council Leader, to submit an Interim Plan based on the proposals set out in this report in response to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution's letter dated 5th February 2025 by the deadline of 21st March 2025.

## **Attendance List**

### **Councillors present:**

P Arnott	P Faithfull	J Loudoun
A Bailey	P Fernley	D Mackinder
B Bailey	C Fitzgerald	M Martin
I Barlow	S Gazzard	C Nicholas
K Blakey	M Goodman	T Olive
K Bloxham	D Haggerty	H Parr
A Bruce	M Hartnell	M Rixson
C Burhop	P Hayward	E Rylance
M Chapman	N Hookway	A Toye
B Collins	B Ingham	S Westerman
R Collins	S Jackson	J Whibley
O Davey	R Jefferies	D Wilson
T Dumper	D Ledger	E Wragg

### **Officers in attendance:**

Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager  
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health  
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Andrew Wood, Director of Place

**Councillor apologies:**

J Bailey  
C Brown  
J Brown  
I Chubb  
A Hall  
M Hall  
S Hawkins  
M Howe  
S Hughes  
V Johns  
G Jung  
Y Levine  
J O'Leary  
S Richards  
H Riddell

Chair .....

Date: .....

Report to: **Council**

Date of Meeting 9 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



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

### **Report summary:**

To receive and note the minutes from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees and receive any questions on those minutes from meetings between 17 February 2025 and 31 March 2025.

Recommendations from Cabinet and the Council's Committees are set out as separate agenda items and contained in the agenda pack.

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

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### **Recommendation:**

To note the minutes from Cabinet and the Council's Committees and the responses to any questions raised.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

In accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Officer: Andrew Melhuish (Corporate Lead Democratic and Scrutiny) –  
andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

### **Report in full**

The minutes from the following meetings are included:  
page 23

Cabinet – 17 February and 5 March 2025

Placemaking Exmouth Town & Seafront Group – 18 March 2025

Overview Committee – 20 March 2025

Asset Management Forum – 3 March 2025

Poverty Working Panel – 24 February 2025

Planning Committee 25 March 2025

Audit & Governance Committee – 20 February and 20 March 2025

---

**Financial implications:**

None.

**Legal implications:**

None.

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of 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
-----------	--

**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: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 5 March 2025**

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

The meeting started at 6.03 pm and ended at 9.26 pm

#### **154 Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the previous meetings of Cabinet held on 5 February and 17 February 2025 were agreed.

#### **155 Declarations of interest**

Min 165. River Axe SAC Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund governance.  
Councillor Paul Hayward, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Employee of Axminster Town Council.

Min 165. River Axe SAC Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund governance.  
Councillor Sarah Jackson, Affects Non-registerable Interest, the nature of which I am not required to disclose under section 32 of the Localism act 2011.

Min 168. Discretionary Planning Fees Review.  
Councillor Paul Hayward, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Employee of Axminster Town Council.

Min 168. Discretionary Planning Fees Review.  
Councillor Sarah Jackson, Affects Non-registerable Interest, the nature of which I am not required to disclose under section 32 of the Localism act 2011.

Min 173. Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 February 2025.  
Councillor Aurora Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 173. Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 February 2025.  
Councillor Brian Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 173. Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 February 2025.  
Councillor Nick Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 173. Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 February 2025.  
Councillor Steve Gazzard, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 174. Investment / Placemaking opportunity in Exmouth.  
Councillor Aurora Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 174. Investment / Placemaking opportunity in Exmouth.  
Councillor Brian Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 174. Investment / Placemaking opportunity in Exmouth.  
Councillor Nick Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 174. Investment / Placemaking opportunity in Exmouth.  
Councillor Steve Gazzard, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is an Exmouth Town Councillor.

Min 176. Cranbox Modular Space Delivery in Cranbrook Town Centre.  
Councillor Kevin Blakey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is a Cranbrook Town Councillor (changed from previous declaration of Other Registerable Interest).

Min 176. Cranbox Modular Space Delivery in Cranbrook Town Centre.  
Councillor Kim Bloxham, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is a Cranbrook Town Councillor (changed from previous declaration of Other Registerable Interest).

Min 176. Cranbox Modular Space Delivery in Cranbrook Town Centre.  
Councillor Sam Hawkins, Affects Non-registerable Interest, is a Cranbrook Town Councillor (changed from previous declaration of Other Registerable Interest).

156 **Public speaking**

Councillor Mike Goodman asked the question to when the public would be given access to the results of the Housing Stock Condition Survey? His next question concerned the provision of leisure facilities and why had adult football and rugby pitches increased by 50%? The Chair stated that his questions would be passed onto the relevant officers for their response.

157 **Matters of urgency**

There were two late items which officers recommended should be dealt with in this way recorded at Minutes 163 and 176.

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

There were four items which officers recommended should be dealt with in this way recorded at Minutes 173 – 176.

159 **Minutes of Strata Joint Executive Committee held on 28 January 2025**

Members noted the Minutes of the Strata Joint Executive Committee held on 28 January 2025.

160 **Minutes of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 29 January 2025**

Members noted the Minutes of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 29 January 2025.

161 **Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 30 January 2025**

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of the Housing Review Board held 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.

162 **Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2025**

Members noted the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2025.

163 **Minutes of Overview Committee held on 20 February 2025**

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of the 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.

The Chair expressed his thanks to Cllr Haggerty for working closely with officers to get the council to this stage.

164 **UK Shared Prosperity Fund Plan 2025-26**

The report updated Members that an additional year of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) had 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). EDDC had 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.

Members thanked Tom Winters and his team for their successful efforts in securing this funding.

### **RESOLVED 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 of the report, and grants delegated authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets 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 of the report 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 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:**

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

The water quality of the River Axe Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) had been a concern for a long time. The River Axe SAC was 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, was required to consider the implications of these matters on the River Axe SAC before permitting any further development which had the potential to result in additional phosphate loads entering the catchment. This applied to all development of any scale and for any purpose if it potentially increased phosphate loading.

The allocation of £4.3 million by Government to EDDC to address these issues required the creation of an agreed governance framework that could provide advice, monitoring, and support to enable the delivery of the programme scheme.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet agreed:**

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 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, the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio Holders for Coast, Country and Environment, Strategic Planning, and Communications and Democracy 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, the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio Holders for Coast, Country and Environment, Strategic Planning, and Communications and Democracy, 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.
5. That the Leader agrees the democratic input with the Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Coast, Country and Environment, Strategic Planning, and Communications and Democracy.

**REASON:**

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.

The Tree, Hedgerow & Woodland Strategy (THaWS) for EDDC 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 EDDC THaWs.

The Strategy had ensured it was 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 was synergy

**RESOLVED 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:**

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

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

The report informed members that 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.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

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.
2. Approves the principle and proposed method fee structure for BNG monitoring and reporting based on full cost recovery subject to the Portfolio Holders for Coast, Country and Environment and Strategic Planning being included as consultees on all applications for habitat banks prior to Phase 3 assessment.
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:**

Facilitating habitat banks would 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 was willing to enter into legal agreements. It required a transparent framework to recover reasonable fees with the council's costs associated with BNG.

**168 Discretionary Planning Fees Review**

The report explained 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. The fee review aimed to enhance the Planning Service's capacity, efficiency, and sustainability. Aligning fees with operational costs and regional benchmarks ensured competitiveness and met community needs.

**RECOMMENDED to Council;**

that the revised schedule of fees for discretionary planning fees be adopted.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet;**

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

**REASON:**

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

**169 Council Plan delivery plan update**

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

**RESOLVED that Cabinet;**

Receive the progress report of the delivery plan and note the progress of the actions to date.

**REASON:**

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

**170 Strata Business Plan 2025/2026**

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

**RECOMMENDED to Council;**

That the Strata Business Plan for 2025/2026 be approved.

**REASON:**

The business plan for 2025/26 was a vital framework, guiding both financial allocations and strategic initiatives essential to achieving the council's 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.

**171 Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan') to be formally 'made'**

The Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan had successfully passed referendum and must be formally 'made' (adopted) by EDDC in order to form part of the development plan.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet;**

1. Agree that the Clyst Honiton Neighbourhood Plan be 'made'.
2. 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. Congratulate Clyst Honiton Parish Council and their Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on this culmination of their hard work in developing the Plan.

**REASON:**

The Plan received a majority 'yes' vote in the neighbourhood area referendum, as required by the Regulations, and there was no substantive reason not to make the Plan. In addition, to recognise the significant work over several years by Clyst Honiton Parish Council and dedicated volunteers to prepare the Plan.

**172 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).

**173 Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 February 2025**

Members noted the Minutes and amended recommendations of the Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 February 2025.

**174 Investment / Placemaking opportunity in Exmouth**

**RESOLVED:**

The recommendations were agreed.

**175 Review of Leisure Subsidy for 2025/26**

**RESOLVED:**

The recommendations as set out in the report were agreed.

The Chair express his thanks to the LED Monitoring Forum (now the Leisure Delivery Forum) and officers for their dedicated hard work in getting EDDC to this worthwhile position.

**176 Cranbox Modular Space Delivery in Cranbrook Town Centre**

**RESOLVED:**

The amended recommendations were agreed.

**Attendance List**

**Present:**

**Portfolio Holders**

M Rixson  
G Jung

Portfolio Holder Climate Action & Emergency Response  
Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment

S Jackson	Portfolio Holder Communications and Democracy
N Hookway	Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
S Hawkins	Portfolio Holder Finance
T Olive	Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning

**Cabinet apologies:**

D Ledger	Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes & Communities
J Loudoun	Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination

**Also present (for some or all the meeting)**

Councillor Aurora Bailey  
Councillor Brian Bailey  
Councillor Ian Barlow  
Councillor Kevin Blakey  
Councillor Kim Bloxham  
Councillor Colin Brown  
Councillor Jenny Brown  
Councillor Roy Collins  
Councillor Peter Faithfull  
Councillor Steve Gazzard  
Councillor Mike Goodman  
Councillor Richard Jefferies

**Also present:**

**Officers:**

Jo Avery, Management Information Officer  
Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation  
Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer  
Will Dommett, District Ecologist  
Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management  
Naomi Harnett, Corporate Lead (Interim) – Major Projects & Programmes  
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Alistair Jeans, Arboricultural Team Manager  
Mike O'Mahony, Senior Leisure Officer  
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure  
Zoe Smith, Economy Projects Assistant  
Doug Stanton, Project Manager Estates  
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health  
John Symes, Finance Manager  
Frances Wadsley, Project Manager, Planning, Growth, Development & Prosperity  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
Tom Winters, Interim Economic Development Manager  
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

Chair .....

Date: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held at Online via the Zoom app on 18 March 2025**

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

The meeting started at 10.02 am and ended at 10.55 am

#### **23 Minutes of the previous meetings held on 10 December 2024 and 10 February 2025**

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 10 December 2024 and 10 February 2025 were noted as a true and accurate record.

#### **24 Declarations of interest**

Cllr A Bailey – Minutes 28-30; Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Cllr O Davey – Minutes 28-30; Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Cllr T Dumper – Minutes 28-30; Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Cllr M Hall – Minutes 28-30; Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Cllr N Hookway – Minutes 28-30; Affects Non-Registerable Interest: Member of Exmouth Town Council.

#### **25 Public speaking**

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

#### **26 Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

#### **27 Confidential/exempt items**

There were no confidential/exempt items.

#### **28 Update on the Exmouth Placemaking Plan review**

The Interim Project Manager Place and Prosperity introduced this report which outlined the progress made to date in developing the strategy and approach for the Exmouth Placemaking Plan, to allow the next stage of this work to be brought forward.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- There had been some challenges engaging with the Placemaking consultants due to a change in personnel, but officers had had a positive meeting last week with the new project team which included some new and some familiar faces.
- A timeline is in place setting out the steps up to adoption of the Placemaking Plan in early August, and officers do not foresee any reason for a delay against this timeline.

## 29 **Governance Strategy**

The Interim Project Manager Place and Prosperity introduced this item which provided an update in regard to the Governance Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement to be delivered as a result of all works associated with the Placemaking Plan.

Discussion included the following points:

- Officers were asked to reconsider the position of Exmouth Town Council on the Proposed Stakeholder Map following feedback that it does not accurately reflect the Town Council's high level of interest in the Placemaking project.
- Town councillors would welcome full meetings with EDDC officers as part of the engagement process.
- It was suggested that community organisations, such as the Exmouth Community Association, could be included as stakeholders.
- It would be appropriate to renew efforts to engage with Devon County Council following the county in elections in May.
- One Member was of the view that meetings of the Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group should be held in person rather than virtually online, suggesting that it was easier to talk face to face.
- The Placemaking work needs to be a corporate project across the Council and with buy-in from all key partners, particularly Exmouth Town Council and Devon County Council, in order to get the necessary traction for the Plan to be delivered and so that private investors can have confidence in it.

## 30 **Update on Queen's Drive Space and Beach Gardens concept designs**

The Place and Prosperity Officer introduced this item which provided an update regarding the works for Queen's Drive Space and Beach Gardens.

Discussion included the following points:

- The draft concept designs for Queen's Drive Space and Beach Gardens are being finalised along with cost estimates, and will be presented to Members at a workshop in April.
- There is a need for bicycle racks along the seafront and it was noted that the current provision is insufficient.

### **Attendance List** **Councillors present:**

P Arnott (Vice-Chair)  
A Bailey  
O Davey  
T Dumper  
M Hall  
P Hayward

N Hookway (Chair)  
T Olive

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

I Barlow  
G Jung  
E Rylance

**Officers in attendance:**

Anne Mountjoy, Growth Point Communications Officer  
Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation  
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer  
Katie Webb, Property Lawyer  
Marie Ainsworth, Place & Prosperity Officer  
Rachel Papworth, Interim Project Manager Place and Prosperity  
Louie Belfield, Corporate Engagement Business Graduate Partner

**Councillor apologies:**

A Hall

Chair: .....

Date: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Audit and Governance Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House on 20 February 2025**

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

The meeting started at 2.30 pm and ended at 3.31 pm

#### **53 Declarations on interest**

There were no declarations given.

#### **54 Public speaking**

None.

#### **55 Matters of urgency**

None.

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

There were no items which officers recommended should be dealt with in this way.

#### **57 Statement of Accounts 2023/24**

The Director of Finance and Peter Barber from Grant Thornton presented the council's Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 to the Committee for approval. Members were asked to note the letters of representation to Grant Thornton in respect of the financial statements for 2023/24. Members were informed there was a national issue with over half of Local Authorities having had their accounts backstopped. For transparency for the Committee a programme of events was being completed for Members to track future progress.

Discussion included the following:

- Assurance that the council was covering the Plan and reaching deadlines set.
- The setting of the Budgets and auditing of the Accounts happened at the same time – this was a problem especially with staffing resource.
- To work with Grant Thornton to get the complicated accounts submitted earlier.
- Work would start on auditing the draft accounts by mid-September.
- Cannot always be assured of the staffing position, the key was resilience in the Finance team. Statutory Accounting was very specialised.
- The need for planning earlier with all concerned working together for the 2024/25 audit of accounts.
- Having a coordinator as one point of contact being tasked to chase up responses from managers.
- Perhaps share working practises with other authorities who had more success with accounts delivery.
- The possibility of contracting out certain elements to external companies.
- The Committee could help the process with useful further debates and discussions.

In response to whether the Plan was presently in place, the Director of Finance stated a detailed timetable had been completed for the production of the Accounts but more

emphasis on the backing papers required. The Finance team needed to be more proactive with the auditors with a managed approach and there were lessons learnt from this year's audit for both the finance team and the audit team. The recruitment of a Principal Accountant was proving difficult. The Director and Finance and Grant Thornton stated their commitment to work together to get the auditing of accounts process working and progressing going forward. External Audit Progress would be a set item on future Audit and Governance Committee agendas.

Cllr Mike Goodman had submitted the following questions which the Chair asked be recorded in the minutes along with the subsequent officer answers.

Question 1:

We all understand that the back stopped is being put in place. What was not covered in the last audit meeting was confirmation that although in each of the last three years the external audit has not been completed. Can the audit committee have confirmation that there is no element of the external audit that has been not investigated at least once during the last three years. If this assurance is not available this does leave the Council at risk and what can be done to rectify this situation?

Answer:

There are many areas that have not been covered at least once during the last 3 years. For 2021/22 and 2022/23 no substantive audit work was undertaken and in 2023/24 whilst lots of work commenced, very little was concluded. So, there is little assurance to be gained from audit coverage over the last 3 years.

Question 2 to Grant Thornton:

The red risk of the financial health of housing review board is a concern. Is Grant Thornton satisfied that everything is being done and can we have an update report at the next audit meeting?

Answer:

We will follow up the significant weakness in respect of the Housing Revenue Account as part of our 2024/25 VFM work. We cannot comment on whether adequate progress is being made in this area until this work is complete.

Question 3:

On page 12 of the Grant Thornton report recommended in 2022/23 that council should strengthen their financial planning of HRB to include updating the 30-year business plan, and that prudent levels of HRB reserves should be maintained over the medium term. This report replaces this with further recommendations. In the view of Grant Thornton was the 2022/23 recommendations delivered and are you confident the new recommendation will be delivered in 2025/26?

Answer:

No, the 2022/23 recommendation was not delivered as this is why the replacement recommendation still includes updating the 30-year business plan as well as other new areas for attention.

Question 4:

Recommendation 2

Are we confident that the adverse variance regarding leisure for 2025/26 be met?

Answer:

Current meetings and analysis indicated that LED would meet their commitment to the 2025/26 budget agreed.

Question 5:

Recommendation 3

How confident can members be that the asset strategy will not prove to be a strain on the 2025/26 outturn budget and when will the strategy be in place?

Answer:

Until the Strategy and Asset Management Plan is produced this is unknown, however this is more likely to affect budget in 2026/27 onwards as the Service with Finance have established a robust programme of works of 2025/26 that is included in the budget.

Question 6:

Recommendation 7

Although templates have been put in place officers are always completing these sections and this needs to be rectified.

Answer:

Staff training currently taking place on new templates and reports will be rejected by ELT unless completed properly. Member session on new templates details was held this week.

Question 7:

Page 40 complaints. It says complaints are regularly being taken to Scrutiny Committee. The last paper was discussed at the Scrutiny Committee in January 2024 and is not on the forward plan for March 2025, can this be corrected?

Questioned passed to Monitoring Officer and asked her to reply direct.

### **RESOLVED:**

To adopt the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts and delegated authority be given to the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee and the Director of Finance (S151 Officer) to sign when all matters concluded. That the letters of representation be approved and signed by the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee and the Director of Finance (S151 Officer).

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

I Barlow  
K Bloxham  
C Brown  
C Burhop (Chair)  
R Collins  
O Davey (Vice-Chair)

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

Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer  
Peter Barber, Grant Thornton  
Simon Davey, Director of Finance  
John Symes, Finance Manager  
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

#### **Councillor apologies:**

C Fitzgerald  
M Goodman  
Y Levine

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Audit and Governance Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House on 20 March 2025**

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

The meeting started at 2.32 pm and ended at 3.48 pm

#### **58 Minutes of the previous meetings**

The minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 27 January and 20 February 2025 were confirmed as a true record.

#### **59 Declarations on interest**

No declarations were given.

#### **60 Public speaking**

No members of the public wished to speak.

The Chair welcomed Robert Wood the recently recruited independent person to the Audit and Governance Committee.

#### **61 Matters of urgency**

None

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

None

#### **63 Internal Audit Activity Progress Report - Quarter 3 2024/25**

SWAP presented the Internal Audit Activity Progress Report (March 2025) to the Committee. During discussion comments were made on the outstanding priority 1 actions. The Chief Executive assured the Committee that there was now a robust approach moving forward and the Executive Leadership Team would ensure these would be addressed in a timely manner. The Chair spoke of the need to work towards continuous improvement.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Audit and Governance Committee note the progress against the 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan as of 24 February 2025, and the findings reported.

#### **64 Internal Audit Plan and 2025/26 Internal Audit Charter**

Following input from the Audit and Governance Committee members and senior management, SWAP had prepared the proposed Internal Audit Plan for Half 1 of 2025/26 (1 April to 30 September 2025). SWAP required formal approval from the Audit and Governance Committee to proceed with the Plan.

The Internal Audit Charter must be approved by the board that oversees the internal audit function. At EDDC this board was the Audit and Governance Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the 2025/26 Half 1 Internal Audit Plan and the 2025/26 Internal Audit Charter be approved.

65 **External Audit 2024/25 - verbal update**

The Finance Manager informed the Committee that the statement of accounts was underway and that audit planning now played an important role to keep on top of this work. Working together with Grant Thornton was productive and more proactive.

It was agreed that verbal updates to the External Audit 2024/25 would be on the agenda for all future Audit and Governance Committees.

66 **Statement of Accounts 2024/25 - Review of Accounting Policies**

The report highlighted that it was good practice for the Audit and Governance Committee to approve the Accounting Policies to be adopted in advance of the preparation of the Statement of Accounts.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Accounting Policies for the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts be approved.

67 **Financial Monitoring report update**

The report was presented to Cabinet on 5 February 2025. It was now presented to Audit & Governance Committee to inform of the financial position for December 2024 and to note any recommendations to Council.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Financial Monitoring position and the recommendations to Cabinet on 5 February 2025 be noted.

68 **Audit and Governance Forward Plan**

Audit and Governance Committee Forward Plan items to be considered at the next committee included:

- Internal Audit Annual Opinion Report 2024/25
- Revenue and Capital Outturn Report 2024/25
- Financial Monitoring report update 2025/26
- Treasury Position Review
- Risk Management Review
- Partnership Review 2024
- Strata Annual Internal Audit report 2024/25
- Boiler Trial project review (Part B)
- External Auditor's Annual Report
- External Audit Committee update
- External Audit Accounts 2024/25 update

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

I Barlow  
K Bloxham  
C Burhop (Chair)  
R Collins  
O Davey (Vice-Chair)  
M Goodman  
Y Levine

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

**Officers in attendance:**

Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer  
Lisa Fryer, SWAP  
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Connor McLaughlin Nester, SWAP  
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health  
John Symes, Finance Manager  
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)  
Andrew Wood, Director of Place  
Robert Wood, Independent Person

**Councillor apologies:**

C Brown  
C Fitzgerald

Chair .....

Date: .....

## **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: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Asset Management Forum held at online on 3 March 2025**

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

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 10.41 am

#### **18 Notes from the previous meeting held on 2 December 2024**

The notes of the previous meeting held on 2 December 2024 were agreed.

#### **19 Declarations of interest**

Minute 23

Cllr I Barlow: ANRI, Sidmouth Town Council member

Minute 24

Cllr O Davey, ANRI Exmouth Town Council member

Minute 26

Cllr J Brown: ANRI Honiton Town Council member

#### **20 Public speaking**

None.

#### **21 Matters of urgency**

None.

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

There was one item which officers recommended should be dealt with in this way.

#### **23 Major Projects and Programmes Team Update**

The Corporate Lead Major Projects and Programmes' report provided a summary of the more high profile projects that the Major Projects and Programmes Team were currently involved in delivering. The projects were wide ranging, supporting the delivery of a range of Council Plan objectives. The update report included:

- Depots review
- Public toilets, Esplanade and Drill Hall, Sidmouth
- UKSPF feasibility studies, Exmouth Placemaking Plan
  - Exmouth Placemaking Plan
  - UKSPF feasibility study for Queens Drive Space and Beach Gardens
- Stalled employment sites
  - Cloakham Lawn, Axminster
  - Seaton and other sites
- Seaton Moridunum
- Clyst Meadows Country Park
- Cranbox, Cranbrook

Discussion covered:

- The initial Depots Review report was received from consultants in summer 2024 and was reported to the Recycling and Waste Future Service Member Working Group, supported by consultants, lesa. A value engineering exercise is currently underway and following a review of this, an outline business case will be prepared and reported to Cabinet. A timeline for this work will be shared with Asset Management Forum members shortly.

The Forum noted the report

## 24 **Estates Team Update**

The Senior Estate Surveyor's report provided an update on the areas of work the Estates Team were involved in:

- An initial expression of interest in the Community Asset Transfer had been received in respect of the Norman Lockyer Observatory and consultation had begun.
- Changes to discounts available to tenants under the Right to Buy scheme had led to a significant number of requests for valuations within a three week period – the equivalent to what was usually undertaken in two years. The team had worked hard to balance this additional work with the ongoing workload in order to provide valuations to allow housing colleagues to process the applications.
- The team had successfully agreed terms for a new letting of a unit at Manstone Workshops, Sidmouth, ensuring the site remained fully let.
- Disposal of Category B & C public toilets continued to progress with transfers to Town and Parish Councils close to completion. Two sites were to be sold at auction in April 2025 and work continued to progress lease arrangements for sites where a commercial operator had been identified.
- The overall general fund portfolio continued to perform well with very limited voids and rental growth in most areas. In the financial year to date the increase in rental income due to lease renewals, new lettings and rent reviews was £52,154.
- The team had assisted the housing service in agreeing terms for access rights and easements in respect of sewage treatment and drainage works.
- The team were in the process of undertaking a revaluation of a portion of the Council's land and building assets. The assets being revalued had a combined value of £65m - £70m and this significant piece of work was being undertaken for inclusion in the Council's financial reporting.

Discussion included:

- The business units on Salterton Road, Exmouth were nearing completion, and the team had an extensive list of those who had expressed an interest in the units. Members would have an opportunity to visit the site once the works were finished.
- Two toilet sites were due to be auctioned; Marsh Road, Seaton, and Sidford Cross. Both were non-controversial and had been closed for some years. There had been reports of antisocial behaviour and it was appropriate to dispose of them.
- The Chief Executive would liaise with the Monitoring Officer and Communications Manager to explore whether it was appropriate to delay the auction of the aforementioned toilet sites until after the 1<sup>st</sup> May County Elections due to the potential for social media commentary on the matter.
- The reported increase in rental income of £52,154 was an increase on £1.2 million, representing the asset value rather than rental value.

The Forum noted the report.

## 25 **Community Asset Transfer request**

The Asset Management Forum were consulted on a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) application received in respect of the public toilet building in School Lane car park, Newton Poppleford. Consultation had been undertaken with relevant council officers and the local ward member. Following consultation, a decision on whether to go to Stage 2, where Newton Poppleford Parish Council would prepare a detailed business case, would then be made by the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets on the basis of a report from the Assistant Director – Place, Assets and Commercialisation.

The report considered by the AMF included the:

- Council's procedure for Community Asset Transfers.
- Site detail.
- Consultation with relevant council services and ward member.

The Senior Estates Surveyor shared with the Forum the expression of interest form which had been submitted to the Council from Newton Poppleford Parish Council.

Discussion included:

- Members were supportive of disposing of the free car park at the site of the public toilet building, and officers were asked to liaise with the parish council to explore if there was interest in the car park via CAT or an extension to the current CAT.
- The Senior Estates Surveyor was asked to provide details of how many other car parks the Council had which were free, and how many toilet buildings were leased to parish councils; this information to be provided by email to Cllr Geoff Jung and the Chair.

**RESOLVED:** that Asset Management Forum

1. notes the report and offers its thoughts on the application, as part of the consultation process.
2. notes that following completion of this consultation, that in accordance with the Procedure, Officers will make a recommendation to the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets on whether the applicant should be invited to submit a business case for the site
3. notes that should the recommendation be that this application does not progress to the Business Case stage, officers will contact the Parish Council to discuss their proposals and identify whether there is scope for a collaborative approach to achieve some of their objectives set out in the EOI.

The meeting went into private session.

## 26 **Employment Site, Honiton**

The Development Delivery Project Manager and the Interim Project Manager's report provided the Asset Management Forum with an update on progress in regard to an allocated employment site in Honiton.

Members discussed the report at length, and asked direct questions.

The Forum noted the update and next steps.

### **Attendance List** **Councillors present:**

T Olive  
P Arnott  
P Hayward (Chair)

G Jung

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

I Barlow  
C Brown  
J Brown  
O Davey  
M Hall  
N Hookway

**Officers in attendance:**

Andrew Champion, Development Delivery Project Manager  
Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Commercialisation  
Naomi Harnett, Corporate Lead (Interim) – Major Projects & Programmes  
Rob Harrison, Senior Estates Surveyor  
Alison Hayward, Project Manager Place & Prosperity  
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive  
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer  
Anne Mountjoy, Growth Point Communications Officer

**Councillor apologies:**

S Hawkins

Chair: .....

Date: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Poverty Working Panel held at Online via the Zoom app on 24 February 2025**

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

The meeting started at 10.01 am and ended at 11.00 am

#### **17 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 November 2024**

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

#### **18 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **19 Public speaking**

One member of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

Mr Jack Rowland commented that the draft Housing Strategy was a fantastic document and very ambitious. He observed from the Strategy that in October 2023, a total of 312 homes had been empty for more than 6 months. He asked if more recent data were available and whether data from previous years could be included, for comparison. He went on to suggest that the objectives set out within the Strategy should be revised to ensure they were SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound). Finally, he asked whether the Housing Investment and Delivery Plan would incorporate the possibility of using Public Works Loans to build council houses on Council owned land.

The Housing Projects Officer thanked Mr Rowland for his comments and responded that more recent statistics on empty homes would be provided for the final Strategy document, along with previous years' data. He agreed with Mr Rowland's point concerning SMART objectives and confirmed that an action plan setting out how progress would be measured, along with timescales, would sit underneath the Strategy document. He added that he would liaise with colleagues to obtain an answer regarding development on council-owned land, and provide a response outside of the meeting.

#### **20 VCSE Anti-Poverty Event - verbal update**

The Chair provided a verbal update on the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Anti-Poverty event which had taken place at the Council's offices earlier in the month. The event had been well attended and very well received, and the Chair congratulated officers on their good work.

Discussion included the following points:

- The event had facilitated networking but also provided a valuable opportunity for interaction with statutory teams.
- Officers had taken away a lot of learning and would be providing some feedback to attendees imminently. Many action points would be reflected in the new Poverty Strategy and others would be addressed more immediately.

21 **Celebrating and contributing to the work of Open Door Exmouth: Environmental Health's support in response to the cost of living crisis - verbal update by Helen Wharam, Public Health Project Officer**

The Public Health Project Officer introduced this item, outlining how COMF (Contain Outbreak Management Fund) covid-recovery funding had contributed to Open Door Exmouth's activities during 2024. The grant had enabled Open Door too:

- Extend Community Café opening on Saturdays throughout 2024
- Furnish the Community Café
- Support Parent Hub running costs for 2024
- Support Community Craft Room running costs for 2024.

A report had been received from Open Door noting outcomes, reflecting on issues arising and offering very positive and welcome feedback.

22 **Planning beyond Planning - presentation by Naomi Harnett, Corporate Lead - Major Projects and Programmes**

The Corporate Lead – Major Projects and Programmes delivered a presentation which illustrated how the Major Projects and Programmes team use their connections across the authority and with stakeholders to address poverty within the district and the wider area.

Discussion included the following points:

- The anti-poverty agenda is interwoven into the work of the Major Projects and Programmes team as part of its commitment to equality in the district, and with consideration for how a project is going to live after the authority's involvement in it is over.
- The Corporate Lead – Major Projects and Programmes regular engages with the Planning team to ensure there is an understanding of the wider anti-poverty objectives that the Major Projects and Programmes team are looking to achieve.
- The district has a high level of micro-enterprises with fewer than nine employees, and such businesses can be more vulnerable than larger businesses to financial shocks. However, the impact on the district's economy in the event of the demise of a smaller business is lesser than if a major business fails, therefore micro-enterprises can make the economy more resilient.

23 **Draft Housing Strategy**

The Housing Projects Officer delivered a presentation which provided an overview of the draft Housing Strategy 2025-2030, its key objectives, and next steps.

Discussion included the following points:

- Currently the highest need in the district's rental sector is for 1 and 2 bed homes.
- Affordable housing is considered 80% of market rent value, and social rent is 60% of market rent value. Some properties are let at the Local Housing Allowance Rate, this being the amount which the government contributes towards the cost of rent through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.
- Advice for tenants regarding prevention of damp and mould is published in the Housing Matters magazine and on the council's website.
- The Homeless team work with private landlords regarding rent deposits and some behavioural issues, and loans and grants are available to landlords to improve property standards.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

P Arnott  
C Brown  
J Heath  
D Ledger (Chair)  
M Martin  
M Rixson  
S Smith

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

R Collins  
P Faithfull  
E Rylance

**Officers in attendance:**

Naomi Harnett, Corporate Lead (Interim) – Major Projects & Programmes  
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer  
Libby Jarrett, Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Customer Access, Fraud & Compliance  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer  
Tim Laurence-Othen, Housing Projects Officer  
Helen Wharam, Public Health Project Officer

**Councillor apologies:**

B Collins  
M Goodman

Chair: .....

Date: .....

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting of Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 25 March 2025**

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

The meeting started at 10.03 am and ended at 2.50 pm

#### **263 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Chair advised that consideration of the minutes of 25 February 2025 will take place at a future meeting.

#### **264 Declarations of interest**

Minute 268. 24/2576/FUL (Minor) OTTERY ST MARY.  
Councillor Peter Faithfull, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Known to the Directors of Ottery Larder which occupies the former school but remained open minded in the consideration of this planning application.

#### **265 Matters of urgency**

There were none.

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

There was one confidential item recorded at minute 273.

#### **267 Planning appeal statistics**

The Committee noted the Development Manager's report which included three updates on the planning appeals that had been decided.

Members were advised about two planning applications that had been allowed. Planning application 23/2506/MFUL for the installation of solar array and associated infrastructure, access and landscaping had been allowed as the Inspector determined that the public benefits would outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area. The second application 23/0571/MFUL for the former council offices at Knowle, Sidmouth had also been allowed as the Inspector determined that the proposal was well designed and would not be prominent in its surroundings.

Members were also advised about planning application 24/0640/FUL for the construction of manager's accommodation and extension to Lily Farm Vineyard business premises that had been dismissed.

Following a reoccurring question about the total figure for costs awarded against the council, the Development Manager advised that this could be included in the annual appeals report that would be brought to Committee at a future meeting.

#### **268 24/2576/FUL (Minor) OTTERY ST MARY**

**Applicant:**

Darren Mullin (Broadoak Services SW Ltd.)

**Location**

Former School, Yonder Street, Ottery St Mary.

**Proposal:**

Conversion of Old Boys School to three apartments and retention of community facilities.

**RESOLVED:**

Approved as per the officer recommendation but subject to the adoption of the Appropriate Assessment and the following amendments to the conditions:

- Condition to require that a minimum of four parking spaces are provided on-site for the community use.
- Condition 4 to be amended to include an earlier trigger point to agree details: 'prior to installation or prior to the commencement of works to construct the mezzanine floor, whichever is the sooner'.

269 **23/2385/FUL (Minor) SIDMOUTH SIDFORD**

**Applicant:**

Mr Aldam.

**Location:**

87 Sidford High Street, Sidford, EX10 9SA.

**Proposal:**

Demolition of the existing dwelling and redevelopment of the site to provide four dwellings and a new vehicular access.

**RESOLVED:**

Approved as per officer recommendations but subject to the adoption of the Appropriate Assessment and the following amendments to the conditions:

- Condition 9 (CEMP): Amend to include 'no burning on site' and to require that the receptor sites for the slow worms shall be as close to the site as is reasonably possible.
- Condition to require provision of smart water butts providing 200 litre capacity per bedroom prior to occupation.
- Condition requiring submission and approval of a sustainability statement prior to development continuing above slab level to demonstrate sustainable methods of construction which should consider the provision of solar panels. Development to accord with the agreed details which shall have been provided prior to first occupation.

270 **24/1849/FUL (Minor) SEATON**

**Applicant:**

Kerri-Ann Betty.

**Location:**

30 and 32 Queen Street, Seaton, EX12 2RB.

**Proposal:**

Demolition of existing upvc conservatory and construction of single storey rear extension with roof terrace above.

**RESOLVED:**

Refused in accordance with the officer recommendation except that the reason for refusal (impact on conservation area) is to be omitted.

271 **25/0100/FUL (Minor) WOODBURY & LYMPSTONE**

**Applicant:**

Mr I White.

**Location:**

Land north east of Grange Close, Lympstone, EX8 5LD.

**Proposal:**

Erection of two detached dwellings with integral double garages, to include associated hard and soft landscaping.

**RESOLVED:**

Approved as per officer recommendation but subject to the adoption of the Appropriate Assessment and the following amendments to the conditions:

- Condition to require provision of smart water butts providing 200 litre capacity per bedroom prior to occupation.
- Condition requiring the submission and approval of a sustainability statement prior to development continuing above slab level to demonstrate sustainability methods of construction which should consider the provision of solar panels. Development to accord with the agreed details which shall have been provided prior to first occupation.

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

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

273 **22/1910/MFUL (Major) EXMOUTH**

**Applicant:**

Mr Azim Lalani.

**Location:**

Devoncourt Hotel, 16 Douglas Avenue, Exmouth.

**Proposal:**

Demolition of the existing Devoncourt building and outbuildings, construction of 51 open market and 15 affordable residential apartments and new 65 bed hotel with access via Maer Road car park, associated car parking and landscaping works.

The Development Manager updated the Committee on matters regarding the current appeal which is ongoing.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

B Bailey  
I Barlow  
K Bloxham  
C Brown  
J Brown  
S Chamberlain  
M Chapman  
O Davey (Chair)  
P Faithfull  
S Gazzard  
D Haggerty  
A Hall  
M Hall (Vice-Chair)  
M Howe  
S Smith  
E Wragg

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

A Bailey  
R Collins

**Officers in attendance:**

Wendy Ormsby, Development Manager  
Damian Hunter, Planning Solicitor  
Jill Himsworth, Planning Officer  
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer

**Councillor apologies:**

Chairman .....

Date: .....

Report to: Council



Date of Meeting 9 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

## Discretionary Planning Fees Review

### Report summary:

This report sets out the Cabinet recommendation to Council arising from their consideration of a report following a review of Discretionary Planning Fees at their meeting on 5 March 2025.

Note: The references in this report to Paper A relate to the relevant report considered by the Cabinet with recommendations for Full Council to consider and are appended to this report for reference.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

That Cabinet recommends to Council that the revised schedule of fees for discretionary planning fees be adopted.

### 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: Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager ([andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk) )

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

---

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.

---

**Financial implications:**

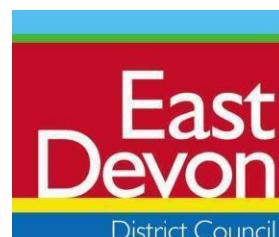
The report recommends that discretionary planning fees are increased from 1 April 2025 to support rising operational costs. (AB)

**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								
------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

\*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	
Other Discretionary Fees		
Type	Comment	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.
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)

Report to: Council

Date of Meeting 9 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



## Strata Business Plan 2025/2026

### Report summary:

This report sets out the Cabinet recommendation to Council arising from their consideration of a report on the Strata Business Plan for 2025/2026 at their meeting on 5 March 2025.

Note: The references in this report to Paper A relate to the relevant report considered by the Cabinet with recommendations for Full Council to consider and are appended to this report for reference.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

That the Strata Business Plan for 2025/2026 is approved.

### 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, Democratic Services Manager ([andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk) )

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 5 March 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

---

## **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) )

---



# Business Plan 2025/2026

Author:

Strata Management Team

Version:

1.0

## 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).

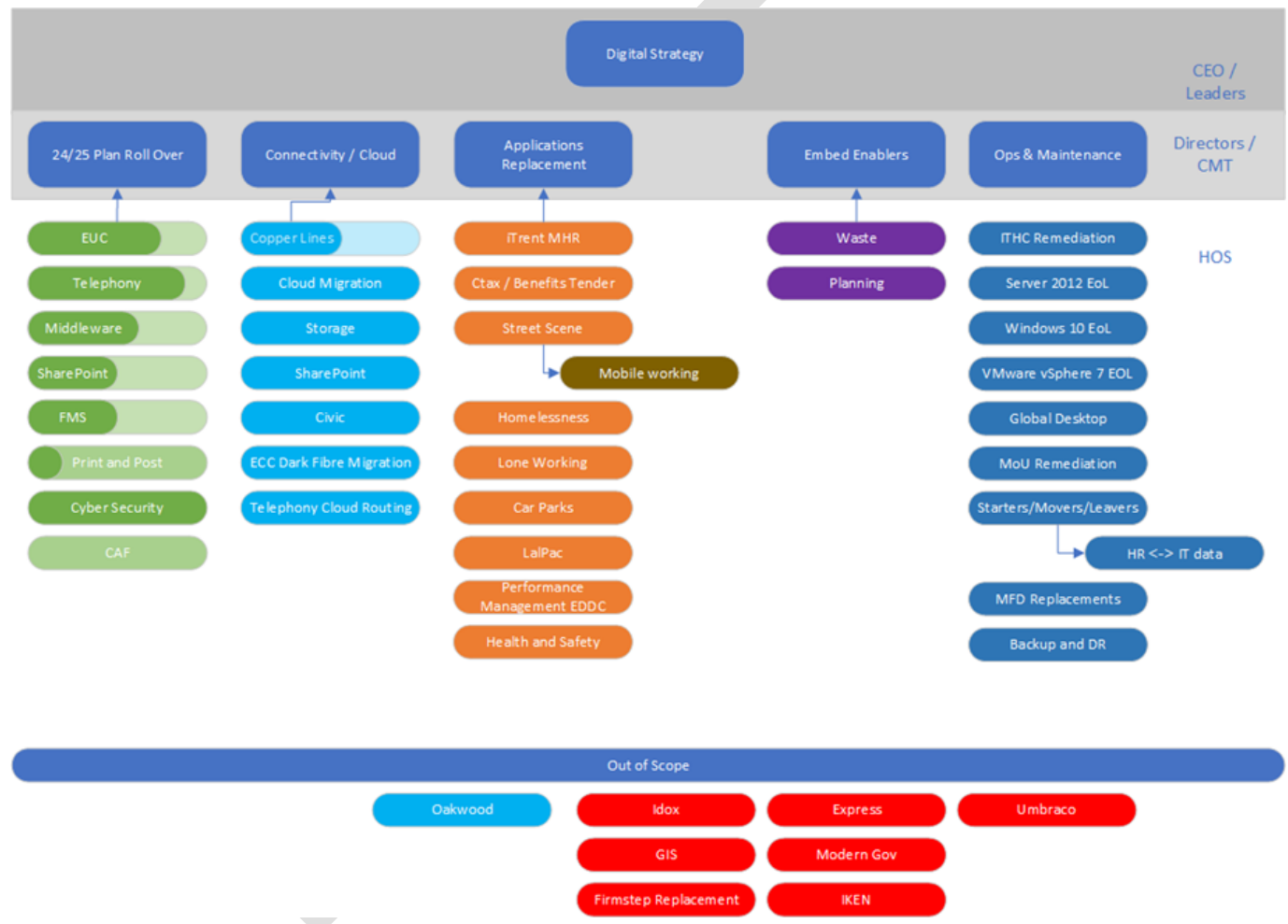
In light of LGR, the four partners recognise that priorities may change in the coming months. Therefore, flexibility is built into the 25/26 plan. Councils can adjust priorities through the governance model and boards. Critical items from 24/25 such as Azure migration, telephony replacement, CRM, financial 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		
<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>
<b>Document Centre Recharge</b>	£16,000		£16,480	£16,892
<b>Mobile Tariff Access Recharge</b>	£28,800		£29,664	£30,406
<b>Total Council Payments</b>	<b>£8,762,795</b>		<b>£8,925,679</b>	<b>£9,048,821</b>

# 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

DRAFT

## 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

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.

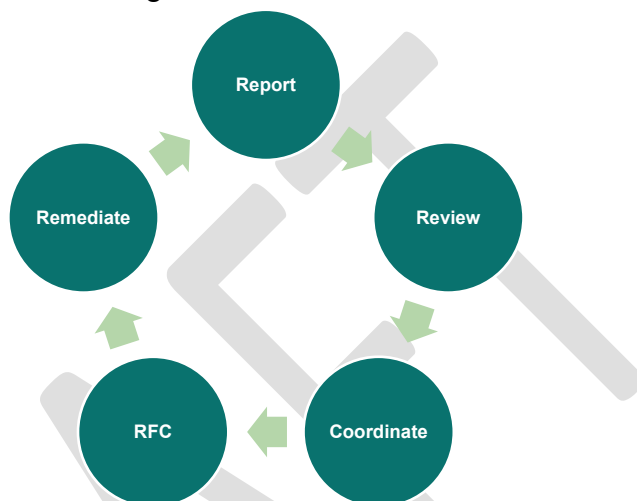
A Rapid Improvement Team Proof of Concept (PoC) contracted by Exeter for deployment January 2025 plans to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Waste and Parks and Open Spaces Services in Exeter, aiming to identify areas where service improvement and digitisation can reduce costs. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

DRAFT

## **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	



## **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.**

<b>Steve Mawn</b> <b>Director of ICT and Transformation</b>	<b>Contact details</b> <b>Tel: 07709 715091</b> <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:steve.mawn@strata.solutions">steve.mawn@strata.solutions</a></b>
--	---

Report to: Council

Date of Meeting 9 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



## Coach Tourism in East Devon

### Report summary:

This report sets out the Cabinet recommendation to Council arising from their consideration of a report from the Overview Committee following the work of the Coach Tourism Task and Finish Group.

Note: The references in this report to Paper A relate to the relevant report considered by the Overview Committee with recommendations for Full Council to consider and are appended to this report for reference.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☐ No ☒

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

That Council agree 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

### Reason for recommendation:

To facilitate further growth of the coach tourism sector and assist our town's in achieving the Coach Friendly accreditation which should encourage a higher number of visitors and thus support local economy.

Officer: Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager ([andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk) )

Report to: Overview Committee

Date of Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



---

## Coach Tourism in East Devon - Task and Finish Forum Update

### Report summary:

This report outlines 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.

It provides summary on key benefits of coach tourism and key factors, which facilitate its development.

It points out what the TAFF managed to achieve and sets out recommended steps ahead.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☐ No ☒

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

Recommendation 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 town and parish councils meeting the remaining 50% of the costs.

### Reason for recommendation:

To facilitate further growth of the coach tourism sector and assist our town's in achieving the Coach Friendly accreditation which should encourage a higher number of visitors and thus support local economy.

Officer: Geri Panteva, Senior Economic Development Officer, [gpanteva@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:gpanteva@eastdevon.gov.uk), 01395 571750 and Richard Easthope, Parking Services Manager, 01395 571 505, [reasthope@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:reasthope@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** Medium Impact

Coach tourism has positive impact in terms equality and inclusivity as it caters predominantly (but not exclusively) to an older demographic. It enables people who cannot yet drive, for example school children and students and those who can no longer drive to enjoy cultural, educational and leisure experiences.

### **Climate change** High Impact.

Coach travel has significant green credentials and lesser environmental impact, minimising traffic on roads: one single coach can take a minimum of 12 single cars off the road.

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

**Links to background information** N/A

**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**

### **Background**

The Coach Tourism in East Devon Task and Finish Group was set up in April 2024 with the aim to increase coach passenger visitors to East Devon.

The terms of Reference outlined the following areas of activity:

1. To improve signage for attractions, coach & car parking, town centres toilets & TIC.
2. To investigate the introduction of free coach parking facilities in East Devon.
3. To identify designated drop off and pick up points for coach passengers.
4. To assess whether coach driver facilities can be introduced.
5. To assess whether meet and greet service possibly linked with TIC, towns & attractions can be introduced.
6. To foster working together as one East Devon Team improving the tourist footfall, aimed at working for our district.

The indicator of success was set up as working with a range of partners and stakeholders to improve the tourist footfall in the East Devon District area.

The following stakeholders were identified: Parish and Town Councils; DCC; Confederation of Passenger Transport; coach travel operators; TICs.

A series of meetings took place between May 2024 and January 2025. The final meeting agreed options and recommendations for consideration by Overview.

The Executive Leadership Team have reviewed and welcomed the outcome of the Task and Finish Forum and have suggested that the Overview Committee might wish to consider recommending a consultation to ascertain the public's views concerning coach tourism in the district.

### **Coach Tourism key stats and benefits**

At the beginning of the work of the TAFF a briefing paper was produced providing an insight into coach tourism as an industry and specifically its development in Devon, to highlight the importance of the sector, set the context and inform the work and decision-making process of the TAFF.

The full briefing paper is presented in Appendix A.

### **Key UK stats on coach tourism**

- Coach tourism contributed £14 billion to the UK economy (2019)
- One coach can keep up to 50 cars off the road
- In 2019 there were 23 million visits to tourist attractions and locations by coach
- The coach industry employs 42,000 people
- There are 2,500 coach operators in the UK
- 80% of the coach industry's income is from tourism-related work

### **Key facts about coach tourism and its importance**

- Year-round operation, significant contributor to occupation during the shoulder season
- Very loyal customer base; consistency, predictability, ability to plan - bookings occur up to an year in advance
- Requires a 'full package' approach - from coach parking, accommodation and attractions to visit to food & drink and shopping experiences. Established itineraries are key.
- Accessibility is very important, both in terms of ease of access for coaches and accessible facilities, including public toilets provision
- Economic enabler - very important to expanding the season/maintaining business during shoulder periods
- Resilience of the sector – predicted decline has not materialised; growing market nationally, but tends to stick to familiar destination, tried & tested approach
- Tends to cater for an older demographic, for many holiday makers this type of travel is now their holiday of choice. However, it's not just an OAP market - attracting younger profile of visitors via increasing share of school trips, university groups, professional associations, special interest groups, etc.
- Green credentials, lesser environmental impact, minimising traffic on roads: one single coach can take a minimum of 12 single cars off the road and that can easily rise to 24 cars for a full 48-seater coach.
- Inclusivity: coach travel enables people who cannot yet drive, for example school children and students and those who can no longer drive to enjoy cultural, educational and leisure experiences. Coach travel is an inclusive form of transport that brings customers to destinations and towns which they may otherwise not visit or experience. Contributes to a more welcoming and inclusive visitor experience that benefits local residents, as well.

### **Main enablers for its development**

- Road infrastructure and parking facilities
- Good signage and accessibility
- Established itineraries and content to sell

- Sufficient accommodation provision
- Ability to offer familiarisation visits for prospective group organisers and operators

### **What incentivises coach tourism**

- Provision of sufficient coach parking and rest stops
- Drop off points conveniently located for coach passengers to access services
- Facilities for drivers, incentives, e.g. vouchers, food & drink provision
- Well-maintained roadside facilities
- Clear guidance on traffic management affecting coaches
- Group travel offers and visitor information
- Established relationship with coach tour operators; welcoming environment

### **Risks associated with increased coach tourism and mitigation against them**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Increased pressure on road infrastructure	Assessment of capacity to handle any increased traffic by professional bodies like the Confederation of Passenger Transport; Ensuring there is clear signage provision
Pressure on parking facilities	Assessment of current parking provision and potential to increase it
Pressure on accommodation provision	Assessment of available provision
Risk of overtourism	Assessed via current and expected volume and value of tourism

In East Devon's case coach tourism is still not a fully developed offer so there is potential to encourage further development for the local economy benefit. EDDC's Tourism Strategy identifies the role of the Council as an enabler for the sector and through facilitating further developments and improvement of infrastructure, it will create better conditions for private sector to take advantage of the benefits this type of tourism brings.

EDDC's Parking strategy seeks to actively encourage tourism and ensure the long-term economic sustainability of our towns, coastline and shopping areas. It encourages coach tourism through suitable parking arrangements.

Internal review of coach parking assessed current provision and determined there is suitable coach parking provision and should there be increased demand more coach park spaces can be created.

The tourism sector is still recovering from the impact of the Covid pandemic and visitor numbers and spend have not reached pre-pandemic levels so there is no risk of overtourism. There is slowing down of initial growth straight after the end of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis has further slowed down growth in the last couple of years.

Confederation of Passenger Transport conducts audits for all settlements applying for Coach Friendly status so it assesses the area's road infrastructure and its capacity to handle increased coach numbers.

Accommodation provision in East Devon was assessed as part of the development of the Tourism Strategy and it was determined that serviced accommodation provision is sufficient.

### **Work of the Coach Tourism TAFF**

The TAFF identified that one of the main ways to support coach tourism is to encourage our towns and villages to apply for a Coach Friendly status, a national scheme run by Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT): [Coach Friendly Scheme | CPT \(cpt-uk.org\)](https://www.cpt-uk.org/coach-friendly-scheme)

The scoping document indicated that the target towns are Exmouth, Budleigh, Sidmouth, Beer, Seaton, Honiton, Colyton, Axminster, Ottery St Mary.

The clerks of the above towns and villages have been approached with information on coach tourism and Coach Friendly application for their consideration.

On the invitation of the TAFF, applications for Coach Friendly status were submitted to CPT from six town and parish councils: Beer, Exmouth, Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Seaton and Sidmouth, representing significant progress and commitment to the coach friendly initiative.

Axminster and Budleigh Salterton expressed interest in the Coach Friendly scheme for their towns but are not yet in a position to apply.

Coach parking is a major consideration for all of the towns wishing to apply for coach friendly accreditation and EDDC coach parking provision was assessed as well as that offered by local businesses.

It was deemed that there was suitable coach parking provision in all towns except Axminster and Budleigh Salterton, and that the coach parking bays in Ottery St Mary were in need of reinvigoration as part of the upcoming resurfacing works in the Land of Canaan car park.

Existing coach parking tariffs were also reviewed and these were not seen as a barrier to the towns gaining the desired accreditation.

Where the aspiration is that all towns achieve coach friendly status in order for EDDC to be deemed a completely coach friendly district, coach parking provision will need to be identified in Axminster and Budleigh Salterton should they wish to continue with their application. As there is currently no EDDC coach parking provision in either of these locations, space will need to be identified on EDDC land, or be provided a local business or landowner. The impetus for progressing this will remain with the relevant town council with EDDC committing to support reviewing the various options, including providing new coach parking bays within EDDC car parks.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) was approached and asked to inspect the towns and report on the steps they need to take to meet the criteria for coach friendly status.

The TAFF received presentations on best practice and helpful contributions to inform priorities from Lauren Clark of Stuart Line Cruises, Lisa Bowman, Exmouth Town Clerk, Rons Boatman, Exmouth Town Council's Tourism Officer and Phil Smith from the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT), the Coach Friendly awarding body.

Additional support was agreed from the Sustainable Tourism Programme funded through the UKSPF for sponsoring our Coach Friendly status ready towns to take part in a dedicated Group Travel Campaign run by Visit South Devon (which includes East Devon).

The Coach Friendly status and the Group Travel campaign were identified as an excellent starting point for towns and villages looking to attract more coach tourism and benefit from increased group tourism visitors.

CPT's Phil Smith visited East Devon in November to carry out a Coach Friendly audit of the towns. In the event, due to heavy snowfall, he was only able to visit Exmouth, Honiton and Sidmouth. The outcome from the audits was that all three locations needed to install some directional signage, to satisfy the requirements for Coach Friendly accreditation.

The audits for Ottery St Mary, Seaton and Beer remain outstanding.

Exmouth has been awarded Coach Friendly status currently on a 12-month rolling renewal, having obtained a written commitment from DCC that the required signage will be built into the delivery

timetable for the Dinan Way extension, at no additional cost to the town council. Sidmouth and Honiton are in the process of exploring costs.

The CTP representative will return to East Devon to complete the audits of Beer, Seaton and Ottery in early Spring.

The recommendations of the audits already performed have informed this report and its own recommendations.

The TAFF considered that it should be a joined responsibility of the district and the towns to secure financial resources for the additional signage required, as the benefits of the increased tourism will be widely felt across the district.

As an outcome from the TAFF's work, this report recommends to Cabinet that the costs for signage are met 50/50 by the respective town and parish councils and EDDC up to the maximum identified above.

**Financial implications:**

The request for is Council to approve a supplementary (new) budget of up to £12,000 which will have to be from the General Fund Balance.

**Legal implications:**

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

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Coach Tourism in East Devon Task and Finish Forum**

#### **COACH TOURISM IN DEVON BRIEFING PAPER**

**(May 2024)**

#### **Background**

This paper looks to provide an insight into the coach tourism as an industry, and specifically its development in Devon, in order to inform the work and decision-making process of the newly formed Coach Tourism in East Devon Task and Finish Forum at EDDC.

#### **Key UK stats**

- Coach tourism contributed £14 billion to the UK economy (2019)
- One coach can keep up to 50 cars off the road.
- In 2019 there were 23 million visits to tourist attractions and locations by coach
- The coach industry employs 42,000 people
- There are 2,500 coach operators in the UK
- 80% of the coach industry's income is from tourism-related work

#### **Key facts about coach tourism and its importance**

- Year-round operation, significant contributor to occupation during the shoulder season
- Very loyal customer base; consistency, predictability, ability to plan - bookings occur up to an year in advance
- Requires a 'full package' approach - a destination must tick all of the boxes for operators and group organisers in order to be attractive: from coach parking, accommodation and attractions to visit to food & drink and shopping experiences
- Itineraries are key
- Accessibility is very important, both in terms of ease of access for coaches and accessible facilities, incl. public toilets provision
- Economic enabler - very important to expanding the season/maintaining business during shoulder periods
- Resilience of the sector – predicted decline has not materialised; growing market nationally, but tends to stick to familiar destination, tried & tested approach
- Not high-end but good volumes
- Tends to cater for an older demographic, for many holiday makers this type of travel is now their holiday of choice. However, it's not just an OAP market - attracting younger profile of visitors via increasing share of school trips, university groups, professional associations, special interest groups, etc.
- Green credentials, lesser environmental impact, minimising traffic on roads: one single coach can take a minimum of 12 single cars off the road and that can easily rise to 24 cars for a full 48-seater coach.
- Inclusivity: coach travel enables people who cannot yet drive, for example school children and students and those who can no longer drive to enjoy cultural, educational and leisure experiences. Coach travel is an inclusive form of transport that brings customers to

destinations and towns which they may otherwise not visit or experience. Contributes to a more welcoming and inclusive visitor experience that benefits local residents, as well.

### **Main enablers for its development**

- Road infrastructure and parking facilities
- Good signage and accessibility
- Established itineraries and content to sell
- Sufficient accommodation provision: 75 – 80 bedrooms min; 120 – 130 rooms optimum
- Ability to offer familiarisation visits for prospective group organisers and operators

### **Key stakeholders**

- Coach travel operators
- DMOs
- Accommodation providers (major hotels)
- Tourist attractions
- Leisure facilities
- Local authorities (parking arrangements, meet & greet services, public realm maintenance)

### **Key players**

#### Industry Bodies

- Coach Tourism Association <https://coachtourismassociation.co.uk>
- Visit England [Home | VisitEngland](#)
- Visit Britain [UK Tourism Industry Statistics & Research | VisitBritain.org](#)
- Confederation of Passenger Transport [CPT | CPT \(cpt-uk.org\)](#)
- Road Haulage Association [Coach Membership \(rha.uk.net\); https://www.rha.uk.net/Campaigns/Coaches](#)

#### Main coach tourism operators

- Shearings: <https://www.shearings.com/coach-holidays/uk>
- Just Go Holidays <https://www.justgoholidays.com>
- National Holidays <https://www.nationalholidays.com>
- Johnsons Coaches <https://www.johnsonskoaches.co.uk/holidays/>
- Alfa Travel <https://www.alfatravel.co.uk/>
- Caledonian Travel <https://www.caledonian.com/>

### **What incentivises coach tourism?**

- Provision of sufficient coach parking and rest stops
- Drop off points conveniently located for coach passengers to access services
- Facilities for drivers, incentives, e.g. vouchers, food & drink provision
- Improved/well-maintained roadside facilities
- Clear guidance on traffic management affecting coaches
- Group travel offers and visitor information
- Established relationship with coach tour operators; welcoming environment

### **Key Devon coach tourism destinations**

- Torquay
- Paignton

- Plymouth
- Exmouth
- Sidmouth
- Ilfracombe
- Lynton
- Dartmouth

East Devon's main coach travel destination geared to receive higher volume of group visitors by coach are Exmouth, Sidmouth and Seaton.

### **Main players in Devon**

The Coach Tourism Association (CTA) has a number of active and engaged members in Devon, including Stuart Line Cruises, Devon's Top Attractions, Babbacombe Model Village, Brend Hotels, South Devon Railway, Destination Plymouth, Plymouth Boat Tours and Coldharbour Mill Museum. Devon is one of their strongest counties in terms of membership numbers among attractions, and they report strong appetite and market for coach groups in the region.

**Destination Plymouth** - Plymouth is home to some incredible group friendly attractions, catering for different interests – from the UK's largest aquarium to historical boat trips around Plymouth, museums like The Box and experiences like tours of the Plymouth Gin Distillery. Breadth and richness of the offer and experiences is key. Well-developed itineraries for group visits.

**Devon's Top Attractions (DATA)** - Devon's Top Attractions represents high-quality visitor attractions in Devon. Annually inspected to meet quality standards, ensuring visitors enjoy a quality day out on every level. They offer a whole host of interesting and varied days out. Members range from castles, botanical gardens, museums to theme parks, zoos, steam railways, narrow gauge trams and boat cruises.

A one stop information shop and a group trip itinerary planning service is available, plus attractive prices and joint ticketing options.

**Visit South Devon** – VSD has been active in this market for a few years now and has created a new area on their website dedicated to Group Travel [Group Travel and Coach Parties to South Devon \(visitsouthdevon.co.uk\)](http://visitsouthdevon.co.uk). It has developed a group travel plan to help increase awareness of the towns in South Devon as a group/coach friendly destination for the travel trade and tour operators. It provides bespoke itineraries for the towns who have bought into their Group Travel Campaign last year. They are about to launch the same campaign for this year in the coming month. They are planning to create thematic itineraries linking up the towns across all of South Devon (which also covers East Devon), e.g. Heritage, Cultural, Food and Drink, Sustainability, etc.

They have exhibited at the British Tourism & Travel Show (BTTS) this year and the past 3 years with Devon's Top Attractions (DATA). They also have developed an extensive new database of Group Travel, Coach companies and Tour ops which we have built over the past 3 years.

**Visit Exmouth** – There is significant activity supporting coach tourism, and an engaged Town Council providing meet & greet service to coach operators. Resources have been developed over the years including coach drivers directory, enclosed coach driver's flyer produced by ETC and the Council has previously provided vouchers for coach drivers in partnership with local cafes.

The town is well geared towards coach tourism, offering 'the full package' of facilities and opportunities and has some of the most active players, like Stuart Line Cruises and World of Country Life.

**Visit Exeter** - Exeter is a well-established coach tourism destination focusing on shopping, heritage and culture. It's a market Visit Exeter has focused on in the past, benefitting from a lot of day visitors from nearby destinations with overnight coach trips, such as Torquay and Exmouth.

Visit Exeter used to provide a helpful and informative one-stop booking service, including organising guided tours with Exeter's Red Coat Guides: booking attractions visits; suggesting tailor-made group itineraries; accommodation advice and help with coach parking.

It used to run campaigns to promote Exeter as a destination for groups, e.g. press releases, advertising and editorial in the group travel publications, attending exhibitions aimed at that market such as Excursions, the Group Leisure & Travel Show and BTTS (British Tourism & Travel Show), and producing group itineraries and a group travel guide. They have also worked with local cafes to offer incentives to coach drivers, e.g. free drink/cake in a local café while they wait.

Last year they had major cuts to the tourism department, so this is no longer a market they're able to focus on, due to lack of budget and resource. They still have a section on their website with info and itineraries etc.: [Group Visits in Exeter \(visitexeter.com\)](http://www.visitexeter.com), and send out e-newsletters to a database of group travel organisers occasionally, but we no longer do any paid advertising or offer incentives.

**North Devon:** While North Devon is still an important coach tourism destination in Devon (Ilfracombe being the main destination), currently no organisation has a leading role in coach travel arrangements locally. The district council does not engage directly in activities supporting the sector. There have been issues with loss of hotel provision, decrease of this type of holidays as they are not specifically nurtured or incentivised. The area is aiming at a more affluent/higher spend market; There are coach drop off points in existence, but provision has not been increased and there have been turning circle issues in Ilfracombe.

#### Enclosed:

**Coach driver's flyer** Exmouth Town Council produced in 2016:



00256 ETC Coach  
Drivers Flyer FVIS Fir

**Devon Guide for Groups** by Beau Media: [Bespoke Guide to Devon for Groups by Beau Media - Issuu](#)

**Photo of Exmouth's coach park**, taken on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 showing some of the 12 coaches parked on the day:



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

Document is Restricted

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

Document is Restricted

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

Document is Restricted

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

Document is Restricted