



Agenda for Cabinet Wednesday, 3rd September, 2025, 6.00 pm

Members of Cabinet

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

Venue: Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton

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Tuesday, 26 August 2025

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

- 1 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 4 - 13)
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Declarations of interest
Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)
- 4 Public speaking
Information on [public speaking is available online](#)
- 5 Matters of urgency
Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online

There is one late item listed at item 16.
- 6 Confidential/exempt item(s)
To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the Press) have been excluded. There are three items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.
- 7 Minutes of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held on 9 June 2025 (Pages 14 - 19)
- 8 Minutes of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held on 4 August 2025 (Pages 20 - 23)
- 9 Minutes of Overview Committee held on 17 July 2025 (Pages 24 - 29)

- 10 Minutes of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 30 July 2025 (Pages 30 - 34)
- 11 Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 31 July 2025 (Pages 35 - 47)

Key Matters for Decision

- 12 Household Support Fund 7 (Pages 48 - 53)
- 13 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan update (Pages 54 - 63)

Matters for Decision

- 14 **Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy public consultation** (Pages 64 - 71)
- 15 **LGR and Devolution update** (Pages 72 - 106)
- 16 **Naming of East Devon's Second New Community** (Pages 107 - 109)
- 17 **Forward Plan** (Pages 110 - 120)
- 18 **Build & Buy - A Housing Investment & Delivery Plan for East Devon** (Pages 121 - 136)
- 19 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Vice-Chair to move the following:

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

Part B Key Matters for Decision

- 20 Build & Buy Plan: Acquisitions & Preliminary Site-Specific Proposals (Pages 137 - 154)
- 21 Update on delivery of the Cranbox scheme and procurement of modular provider and employers agent (Pages 155 - 160)
- 22 Cranbrook Leisure - Governance and Consultant Procurement (Pages 161 - 177)

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

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EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 30 July 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.45 pm

39 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meetings of Cabinet held on 9 July 2025 were agreed.

40 Declarations of interest

Min 44 Adoption of East Devon National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030
Cllr R Jefferies, Affects Non-registerable Interest: Chair East Devon National Landscape Partnership

Min 46 Exmouth Motorhome Parking – Overnight stopovers
Cllr N Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest: Member of Exmouth Town Council and Devon County Council
Cllr S Gazzard, Affects Non-registerable Interest: Member of Exmouth Town Council and Exmouth Motorhome Task and Finish Forum
Cllr B Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest: Member Exmouth Town Council
Cllr A Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest: Member Exmouth Town Council

Min 50 Clyst St Mary and Sowton (Bishops Clyst) Neighbourhood Plan
Cllr M Howe, Affects Non-registerable Interest: Parish Councillor of Bishops Clyst
Cllr M Hall, Other registerable Interest: Strategic implications to the neighbouring authority for which Cllr Hall works (and left the meeting for the item)

Min 51 Recommendation from Strategic Planning Committee
Cllr M Hall, Other registerable Interest: Strategic implications to the neighbouring authority for which Cllr Hall works (and left the meeting for the item)

Min 53 Delivery of second new Community
Cllr M Hall, Other registerable Interest: Strategic implications to the neighbouring authority for which Cllr Hall works (and left the meeting for the item)

41 Public speaking

Mr Whitely thanked the Leader for the opportunity to raise concerns about East Devon's Local Plan. He argued the plan must be based on correct principles, but believe it relies on flawed data and assumptions, particularly from the ORS report used to determine housing needs.

His key concerns included:

- No fixed Government target exists for East Devon, and alternative housing calculation methods are allowed under national policy if properly justified.
- ORS followed the standard method but failed to consider that 60% of the district lies within National Landscapes (NLs), which have different demographics and legal protections.
- The use of uniform data across the district skews housing need calculations, leading to an inflated housing target of 21,000 homes instead of a more accurate estimate of around 16,000.

- As a result, housing is being disproportionately allocated outside the NL and even within protected areas, potentially violating laws like the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and National Planning Policy Framework provisions.
- 700 homes in the plan may be illegal, as they serve communities outside the NL, effectively redrawing protected boundaries without Parliamentary approval.
- The speaker emphasises that this is a national issue, not one that should be borne by East Devon alone, and criticises the lack of scrutiny over the ORS report and absence of public consultation on these statistical and legal issues.

He urged the council to reconsider and properly assess the plan's foundation.

In response, Cllr Olive informed the Cabinet that correspondence with Mr Whiteley had already been exchanged on this issue. The Chair thanked Mr Whitely for his contribution.

Cllr Kevin Blakey informed Cabinet that, at its meeting on 9 June 2025, the Cranbrook Placemaking Group discussed the future of Wellbeing Cranbrook, the successor to Sport England's local pilot. The East Devon New Community Manager had committed to providing key information and updates—specifically:

1. The job description for the Community Wellbeing and Activity Organiser,
2. Clarification from the NHS on funding for a Community Connector role, and
3. A discussion with Cranbrook Town Council about potentially hosting Wellbeing Cranbrook.

However, none of these actions have been completed.

Cranbrook Town Council (CTC) was eager to develop youth-focused services, given the town's young and socio-economically challenged population. For instance, 29% of pupils at Cranbrook Education Campus are eligible for pupil premium, above the national average. CTC believes investment in youth services would have wider community benefits.

A social housing provider has shown interest in contributing funding toward a youth role, but progress is stalled due to uncertainty over the future of Wellbeing Cranbrook and potential funding from the Place Partnership or East Devon District Council.

Cllr Blakey asked Cabinet to:

- Ensure the previously promised information is shared with the Placemaking Group immediately, and
- Request that the overdue report on Wellbeing Cranbrook be prepared in time for the next Cabinet meeting on 3 September.

Cllr Blakey requested a written response to his concerns.

Cllr S Gazzard spoke of his learning of a decision to dispose of Radcliffe House community hall, being sold to a charity to run it. The two Ward Members were not consulted, nor were the regular users of the facility. Cllr Gazzard requested a written response on the issue.

42 **Matters of urgency**

One matter of urgency listed under minute 51.

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

Two items were considered, listed under minute 53 and 54.

44 **Adoption of the East Devon National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030**

Daniel Wynn, East Devon National Landscape Manager updated Members on the review of the current AONB Management Plan, as required under Section IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Public consultation on the reviewed management plan took place in February to April 2025, and now adoption of the East Devon National Landscape Management Plan by EDDC and the other relevant local authorities was required before publishing the management plan and lodging it with Defra.

The plan had been adopted by Devon County Council the previous week; therefore the Chair, in light of being present and voting at that meeting, left the meeting for this item.

The work involved in bringing the Plan to this point in a short period of time after previous staff exits was acknowledged and the EDNL Manager was thanked for his hard work.

RESOLVED that Cabinet;

Agree to adopt the East Devon National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.

REASON:

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 relevant local authorities were required to prepare and publish a plan which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and review the Management Plan at intervals of not more than 5 years. EDDC with other local authorities had authorised the East Devon National Landscape Partnership to review the Management Plan for the East Devon National Landscape (formerly known as AONB) on their behalf. The review had been completed, and the plan was ready to be published.

45 **Stewardship of Public Amenities**

The report highlighted that the population of East Devon was increasing at more than twice the national average, driven in part by new housing developments. Prompted by financial pressures, the council took a decision around 15 years ago to stop adopting public amenities in such developments. In the intervening period a private management model has emerged, part of a wider national trend. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has recently concluded that the proliferation of such models was leading to significant customer detriment.

The report set out the need for a new approach to the stewardship of community assets in East Devon's new housing-led developments, including strategic scale new communities, that focuses on creating social value for the lasting benefit of residents. This included:

- A Stewardship Strategy targeted at new developments;
- A Charter Mark for community friendly developments;
- Annual quality of life survey in new developments
- Establish a Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder Group to consider the Council's approach and report to Cabinet

Cllr Kim Bloxham welcomed the report and its recommendations, especially the creation of a Portfolio Holder group; and expressed a desire to join the group. She stressed the importance of including input from the *Cranbrook Placemaking Group*, which she felt was currently underrepresented in the report.

Key concerns she raised included:

- **Service Disparities:** A significant and complex disparity between “Old” and “New” East Devon. Residents in new developments like Cranbrook pay for services through both council tax and estate rent charges, while those in older areas receive more services from East Devon District Council (EDDC) without extra charges. This inequality is especially noticeable within parishes like Broadclyst.
- **Estate Rent Charges & Management Companies:** She strongly criticised the use of private Management Companies funded by estate rent charges, citing high fees, lack of accountability, and poor service quality. Cranbrook’s experience in 2018 showed that transitioning services to the Town Council reduced costs for residents and improved transparency.
- **Lack of Clarity and Risks in Governance:** There is confusion between the roles of Management Companies and Management Agents. The current model is hard to unwind once established, and some developers resist handing over public open spaces to councils. She warned against the formation of interim Management Companies while waiting for Community Governance Reviews, which risk locking communities into costly and unaccountable arrangements.
- **Need for Local Accountability:** She argued that Town and Parish Councils were best placed to manage local services. If they don’t take on these responsibilities, residents will continue to pay more. Cranbrook has shown this model works and could serve as a template for other towns.
- **Future Governance & LGR:** With the potential shift toward a unitary authority, the role of Town and Parish Councils should be re-evaluated. A clear, sustainable stewardship model for Cranbrook depends on a boundary review and avoiding new management company setups in future developments.
- **Urgency and Opportunity:** She asked Cabinet to act decisively, adopt the report’s recommendations, and lead a national example in addressing the problems associated with estate rent charges and management companies, which are increasingly seen as a source of customer harm by bodies like the Competition and Markets Authority.

She concluded by emphasising that East Devon has a unique opportunity to lead on this issue and push for meaningful change.

Other comments included:

- Timescale for developing and bringing forward the stewardship was tight, in light of local government review;
- Concern that discretionary assets such as parks and gardens would be lost once a unitary authority was in place;
- Pressures on local councils who were not best placed to take on and manage assets; and the timing of calculating precepts for them was tight;
- Examples of experiences of estate charges and their value;

- Opportunity to link with emerging local plan to be genuinely transformative in approach.

Cllr Mike Howe also expressed his desire to be a member of the Portfolio Holder group recommended.

The Chair explained that Government directive was currently not to push liability down to town and parish level. Local Government Reorganisation should give the opportunity to look at a new “year zero”. This was an opportunity to set the standard for future developments.

RESOLVED that Cabinet;

1. Recognised the vital role that the effective stewardship of public amenities plays in supporting the establishment of sustainable communities.
2. Supported the commissioning of a Stewardship Strategy targeted at new developments coming forward in the District, alongside the formulation of a Charter Mark for community-friendly developments.
3. Supported an annual quality of life survey being undertaken across all new developments in the district in order to monitor progress.
4. Supported the establishment of a Place, Infrastructure & Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder Group to consider the Council’s approach to the stewardship of public amenities in new developments across the district, and an Assets & Economy Portfolio Holder Group to consider the future of the Council’s existing assets in the community in light of Local Government Reorganisation, with both groups to bring an initial report back to Cabinet within six months

REASON:

To ensure that new housing-led developments in the district were supported by high quality community infrastructure and public services through a management regime that was predicated upon the creation of social value.

To ensure that the Council’s approach to the stewardship of public amenities more widely remained in step with the changing context of future local government reorganisation and expected budgetary pressures.

46

Exmouth Motorhome Parking - Overnight stopovers

A statement was read out on behalf of Mr R Kathro, an Exmouth resident, who could not be present at the meeting.

His statement raised concerns about ongoing, unregulated camping in Exmouth’s car parks and highways, which he felt stemmed from a poorly managed trial initially meant to last two years, but now ongoing for eight. He criticised a biased consultation process that favoured expanding camping despite factual and data errors.

He urged East Devon District Council (EDDC), Devon County Council (DCC), and Exmouth Town Council (ETC) to take action to address persistent poor behaviour by some campers, as reported by residents. A document titled “*To car park manager vF.docx*”, based on input from about 95 residents, outlined suggested steps for improvement and had been circulated to Cabinet members. The statement stressed that, without proper management, issues will continue to be exploited by irresponsible campers, and called on the councils to act responsibly and effectively.

Cllr Anne Hall, Chair of Overview Committee, informed the Cabinet of their previous meeting where the proposed improvements to overnight stopover arrangements were debated. She felt that the debate had added value to a derisive subject, and the committee had tried to mitigate to the best solution possible. As a result the proposed recommendations had been amended before presentation to Cabinet.

Discussion on the proposals included:

- Differentiating between a managed camp site and the proposals, particularly relating to the fee and how that may impact on nearby campsites;
- Emergency works by South West Water could not be halted as they had legal power of entry to the site to carry out such work; Members were informed that relations with SWW had improved in that proactive liaison is now in place;
- Impact of motor homes on highways both in Exmouth and other areas;
- Welcomed the previous debate at Overview Committee;
- Suggestion to add in a recommendation to include a safety fence at the eastern end of the site to prevent pollution of the brook, with the design and installation aspects to be delegated to the appropriate Portfolio Holder and officers.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Approve the improvements to the overnight stopover arrangements as follows;

- a) Install a drive-over grey wastewater (shower & dishwater) disposal point in Maer Road Car Park
- b) Install a chemical toilet waste disposal point in Maer Road car park – connected directly to the sewerage network
- c) Install a fresh water tap in Maer Road car park.
- d) Reduce the maximum permitted number of consecutive overnight stays to 2 nights, with no return within 72 hours. This is in line with other authorities and prevents the risk of paid habitation within the car parks.
- e) Improve the signage stating the rules and restrictions for overnight stays within both car parks – including ground markings along Queen's Drive Echelon to designate bays suitable for overnight parking, stipulating a safe distance between vehicles.
- f) Trial RingGo only payment for overnight parking sessions to prevent vehicles remaining on site for longer than the maximum permitted number of nights.
- g) Increase the overnight stopover fee to £20.00 (currently £11.00) per night in recognition of the additional costs incurred in managing, maintaining and installing the physical improvements to the overnight parking arrangements.
- h) Ring-fence £5.00 (25%) from each overnight parking stay to fund enforcement activity specifically related to overnight parking;
- i) A yearly review to be carried out by the appropriate scrutiny committee;
- j) Explore the costs and feasibility of erecting a fence at the eastern end of the Maer Road car park; with a budget limit of £6k that can be met from the current capital programme (with delegated authority to the PH Finance and the Director Finance); the design and installation to be delegated to PH Environment Operational in conjunction with officers; for reasons of safety, and to prevent pollution of the Littleham Brook on the site.

REASON:

The recommendations of the Exmouth Motorhome TAFF were first reviewed by Cabinet in January 2024. At that point it was determined that public consultation should be carried out to gather further feedback and provide assurance on the recommendations. The consultation has now been carried out with most respondents supportive of the proposed improvements. These recommendations have also been formally endorsed by Exmouth Town Council in April 2025. The recommendations were reviewed and

amended to their current iteration by the EDDC Overview Committee on the 17th July 2025.

47 **Winter Parking Offer Review - 2025**

A review of the Winter Parking Offer, first introduced in 2016, was presented to Cabinet. This sought approval for changes to the winter parking tariffs and an end to the £2.00 promotional offer.

The varying charges for car parks in Sidmouth was queried; local Ward Members explained that the variances were to encourage a shorter stay for a shoppers car park to encourage the turnover. Members were also reminded of the good value that car parking permits offered.

Cllr Matt Hall called for care in communicating any changes to parking charges, as they were open to misinterpretation and may be perceived as an additional cost burden to local businesses and the public. The Chair informed Members that, subject to their approval, a press statement had already been prepared to mitigate against that.

RESOLVED that Cabinet approved the changes to the winter parking tariffs and the subsequent end to the £2.00 promotional offer which had been available since 2016.

REASON

Considering inflation, the £2.00 winter parking offer introduced in 2016 is effectively the £1.33 winter offer in 2025. Unlike the cost of maintaining our car parks and providing other services, the winter offer had not increased for 9 years. Initially introduced to encourage seasonal exploration and shopping, the winter offer had become a permanent overlay to the standard parking tariffs, with most sites now offering this promotion as the standard rate for winter parking.

The proposal to replace the winter offer is a blanket promotion of -50% of summer charges across all sites during the winter. This will better reflect the demand and use of each site, and the maximum stay restrictions that are present during the summer, will remain in the winter. The -50% winter tariff will provide cohesion between the summer and winter charges and simplify future tariff changes.

It should be noted that most authorities are moving to a single tariff model, with no variance between summer and winter charges, so this will continue to be an enticing promotion for East Devon and meet the objectives of the original offer.

48 **Financial Outturn for 2024/25 and Quarter 1 monitoring update**

The revenue budget and capital outturn positions at the end of the financial year 2024/25, and a summary of the Council's financial position for quarter one of 2025/26 were presented to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that Cabinet;

1. The variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process up to Quarter one be acknowledged.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

2. The outturn position for 2024/25 including the implications and proposals relating to the Balances and Reserves held by the Council.

3. The proposed reserve transfers contained within the report and give delegated authority to the Director Finance in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder for any amendments to these transfers as any additional year end data becomes available.

REASON:

To accord with the Council's financial regulations, the report presented the outturn position for the Council's approved budgets for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Expenditure.

The report updated Members on the overall financial position of the Authority and included recommendations to reserve transfers and for corrective action, when required, for the remainder of the current financial year.

49 **Risk Report quarter one 2025/26**

Risk information for the first quarter of 2025/26 financial year was supplied to allow Cabinet to have oversight of the strategic risk register. This followed the full review of risks by responsible officers during May/June 2025. Most of the reviews were completed by the responsible officers with the Interim Performance & Risk Team Leader.

The format of the report had also been improved to assist Members.

RESOLVED that Cabinet;

Note the current status of the strategic risks following the full risk review undertaken in May/June 2025.

REASON:

To ensure that Cabinet had oversight of the strategic risks that were currently being monitored and managed by directorates across the council.

50 **Clyst St Mary and Sowton (Bishops Clyst) Neighbourhood Plan (First Review) - Examiner's Report**

The purpose of the report was to provide feedback on the outcome of the independent examination of the first review of the Clyst St Mary and Sowton (Bishops Clyst) Neighbourhood Plan and secure formal decision on the findings.

The Examiner had found that, with proposed modifications, the Plan proposal met the necessary 'basic conditions' and recommended to the District Council that it could go forward to referendum.

Cllr Mike Howe expressed his thanks to the Neighbourhood Planning Team and the Parish Council for their work in reaching a good compromise.

RESOLVED that Cabinet;

1. Endorse the Examiner's recommendations on the Clyst St Mary and Sowton (Bishops Clyst) Neighbourhood Plan (First Review).
2. Agree a 'referendum version' of the Plan be produced (incorporating the Examiner's modifications with minor amends for corrections where stated, as set out in Annex 1 of this report) and proceed to referendum, and that a decision notice to this effect be published.

3. Congratulate Bishops Clyst Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on their hard work.

REASON:

The legislation required a decision notice to be produced at this stage in the process. The Plan was the product of significant local consultation and has been recommended to proceed to referendum by the Examiner subject to modifications which were accepted by the Parish Council.

51 **Recommendation for Cabinet's consideration from the meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee on 8 July 2025**

The work programme for planning policy production in East Devon was recommended from the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 8th July 2025.

RECOMMENDED to Council to adopt the proposed new Local Development Scheme – work programme for planning policy production.

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

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

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).

53 **Delivery of second new Community**

RESOLVED: To approve the recommendations set out in the report.

Attendance List

Present:

Portfolio Holders

P Arnott	Leader of the Council
S Hawkins	Portfolio Holder Finance
P Hayward	Portfolio Holder Assets and Economy
N Hookway	Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
S Jackson	Portfolio Holder Communications and Democracy
R Jefferies	Portfolio Holder Environment - Nature & Climate
G Jung	Portfolio Holder Environment - Operations
D Ledger	Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes & Communities
T Olive	Portfolio Holder Place, Infrastructure & Strategic Planning

Cabinet apologies:

J Loudoun	Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder Corporate, Council & External Engagement
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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 Christopher Burhop
Councillor Roy Collins
Councillor Steve Gazzard
Councillor Mike Goodman
Councillor Anne Hall
Councillor Matt Hall
Councillor Mike Howe
Councillor Sophie Richards
Councillor Marianne Rixson

Also present:

Officers:

Mark Barrow, Interim Director Place
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Richard Easthope, Parking Services Manager
Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health
John Symes, Finance Manager
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place
Daniel Wynn, East Devon National Landscape Manager
Debbie Meakin, DSO

Chair

Date:

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held at Conference Room, Younghayes Centre, Cranbrook on 9 June 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.33 am and ended at 11.52 am

1 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 March 2025

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 March 2025 were agreed as a true record subject to the correction of Councillor Leslie Bayliss' name.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public speaking

There were no members of the public present.

4 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

5 Confidential/exempt items

There were no confidential or exempt items.

6 Discussion with the Cranbrook New Community Partners

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the table.

The following items were addressed.

Land transfers and existing s106 obligations related to the town centre MOU and draft deed of variation

The New Community Manager sought clarification from the New Community partners (the consortium) as to why there had been some fundamental changes to the town centre deed of variation without any prior discussion with EDDC and DCC. The most significant change related to inclusion of parcel TC1 (extra care land) when the signed MOU had made no reference to this. In response Richard Harrison from Taylor Wimpey, Exeter referred to a January 2021 Cabinet report that stated parcels TC1, TC2 and TC4 would be transferred. Discussions followed about whether this was correct.

The New Community Manager strongly advised that TC1 would not be agreed to be included in the deed of variation and again sought clarification why it this had been included. Although Mr Harrison could not explain why, he gave reassurance that the consortium was very keen to see the delivery of the extra care facility, but it was also important to secure the s106 deed of variation to control the transfers for TC1 and TC2.

Other changes related to:

- The MOU states that TC2 would be offered for transfer 7 days after completion of the MOU and such an offer was made with work currently being progressed on this transfer. New clause states that this land would only be offered for transfer after all three planning applications have been granted, delaying the completion of the transfer.
- TC4C is stated as being offered for transfer to DCC but should be amended to read 'transfer to EDDC' in line with the MOU)
- The financial contributions to Cranbrook Town Council are not acceptable to them as the MOU is silent on indexation.
- The deed of variation would result in the omission of the requirement to offer to transfer TC4B. This is not acceptable.

In response to the other changes Mr Harrison from Taylor Wimpey advised that there was a make sure the provisions in the MOU were in the s106 deed of variation to give all parties clarity but said in the meantime he would welcome receipt of EDDC's workstream priorities. The New Community Manager advised she would set up a meeting.

Delays e.g. with retrofitting play areas with electricity and water

Fran Walker, Associate Director of Brookbanks advised that the electricity service connections had been put out to tender and they were currently waiting for a work programme and costings and that a meeting had been arranged with South West Water on 26 June 2025 to discuss the water connection.

Delays with the delivery of play areas as a result of consortium delays to the delivery of infrastructure

The Associate Director of Brookbanks advised the works to the play area in Basin 2C works were due to start in the next two weeks.

Councillor Bloxham made the consortium aware about the lack of communication about the delayed start date. The Associate Director of Brookbanks apologised for this and would instruct their Communications Manager to get something out to advise the Cranbrook residents that it had been delayed until 21 June.

Councillor Bloxham made the consortium aware that the town council had not received a licence for the proposed works. The Associate Director of Brookbanks confirmed this would be sent to the Town Council.

Update on town centre MLR uplift

Quotes are still outstanding with regard to the moving of the bellmouth between parcels TC1 and TC2.

The New Community Manager sought an update on the wider uplift. The Associate Director of Brookbanks advised that they still had not had an update from Eon about their proposed upgrade works to the network. Discussions took place regarding the potential for works to stop vehicles driving into the town square on Tillhouse Road and suggested that temporary planters, a bench or bollards could be put in place as an alternative solution. The consortium undertook to explore the potential for works to manage this situation.

Phase 2 high street shops land

Mr Harrison advised that they had not received any interest or offers for the site apart from an offer from EDDC which was for half of the site's evaluation. Mr Harrison advised they would continue to test the market.

The Chair invited the Group to raise any other issues with the consortium.

Councillor Kim Bloxham addressed the outstanding 'to do list' from the monthly partners meetings which included the bunding around the parcel of land in Badger Way, sorting out the utilities cabinet and installing the path. It was advised that a timeline and dates would be provided.

The Cranbrook Town Clerk advised that the damage caused by the Persimmon Sales Office to the car parking surfacing at the Ingram Sports Pitches had still not been rectified and that the town council would be instructing remediation.

The Director of Place emphasised the need to continue to have good working relationships with the consortium and raised concerns that whenever the council had tried to make progress with the town centre it is used as leverage and is unnecessary, frustrating and detrimental to everyone involved. The consortium acknowledged the fragile partnership and was disappointed that it had reached this point but gave reassurance they were keen to see Cranbrook delivered.

The New Community Manager suggested that to help rebuild relationships it would be good to reinstate the catch-up meetings with the consortium. All parties agreed.

RESOLVED:

The New Community Manager to reinstate the catch-up meetings with the consortium.

7

Community Governance Review

The Group received a verbal update on the present position of the Community Governance Review which would bring forward new boundaries for the expansion areas. The Cranbrook Ward Members had received invites to attend a meeting on 24 June that would give an update on the timeline, costs and the polling review.

The Director of Place acknowledged the town council's concerns about the maintenance of assets and public communities and advised further discussions were needed to find appropriate funding from the district council.

The Cranbrook Town Clerk questioned why the town council had not received the same communication that had been sent to the Ward Members. The Director of Place suggested this could be because it was a district council review but advised he would seek confirmation from the Director of Governance.

RESOLVED:

1. That the issues with Community Governance Review be noted.
2. Officers to circulate the community governance review timeline with the delivery of the expansion areas.
3. Director of Place to seek confirmation in writing from Director of Governance that the communication sent to the Cranbrook Members could be sent to all parishes.

8

Stewardship of Public Amenities in New Developments

The Group considered the draft cabinet report that Cabinet would consider on 30 July 2025 about the need for a new approach the stewardship of community assets in East Devon's which included strategic scale new communities. This included the west end area in locations within Cranbrook, West Clyst and Tithebarn/Mosshayne.

The report acknowledged the challenges the council was facing as a result of further reductions to funding and set out various options that the council could follow which included a community-lead approach, a parish-led approach, the readoption of public amenities by local authorities or as a last resort private estate management companies.

The Director of Place invited comments which would be taken back to Cabinet:

- Councillor Bloxham was pleased to report that her comments made to the earlier report had been taken into account.
- The Town Clerk was not in support of the community-led approach as it would not be as accountable or transparent as a parish or district level approach and suggested this should be addressed in the report.
- It was questioned whether the parish precept would increase as referenced in the parish-led management column.

RESOLVED:

The Group noted the report.

9 **Cranbrook Place Partnership**

The Group considered the Cranbrook Place Partnership report noting that EDDC's Cabinet would be considering on 30 July 2025 to endorse the re-establishment of the 3-year Wellbeing Cranbrook programme.

As part of the programme it was proposed that there was a need to create a Community Wellbeing and Activity Organiser post and a Community Connector post to run the day-to-day management of Wellbeing Cranbrook. There was also a need to strengthen EDDC's representation on the Cranbrook Place Partnership to ensure Cranbrook's interests were adequately represented.

The Group noted that this would require an additional budget at a time when the Council was facing a significant deficit in future budgets.

The New Community Manager invited the Group to provide feedback and suggested to start with the third recommendation which was for the need to strengthen representation on the overarching Place Partnership governance and structure so that Cranbrook's interests are adequately represented.

Members agreed there was a need to strengthen governance as to 'walk away' would have implications to receiving future funding from Sports England which would jeopardise the future leisure centre.

RESOLVED:

The Group agreed with Recommendation 3 as written.

The New Community Manager invited the Group to provide feedback on the first recommendation to endorse the re-establishment of the Wellbeing Cranbrook programme for a period of 3 years and the creation of a Community Wellbeing and Activity Organiser for 4 days/wk and a Community Connector for 4 days/wk.

Comments included:

- Clarification was sought on whether the £32,278 detailed in paragraph 10 had been carried forward to this financial year. It was advised that this figure was carried over as it has not yet been paid to Exeter City Council.
- It was questioned whether the updated job description delivers value for money and there was a need to add more responsibility.
- The Town Council would like more focus on young people to help capture the next generation. In response the New Community Manager suggested this could be established as part of the programmes priorities rather than in the job description.
- It was queried whether the role of the Community Connector should be part of the NHS.
- It was acknowledged there was a need for further discussions at a Senior Officer level.
- There is a need for a longer term commitment of 3-5 years
- It was suggested that both roles could be combined to create one full time post to attract good quality individuals.

The New Community Manager thanked everyone for their comments and invited the Group to send any further comments by email.

RESOLVED:

1. The New Community Manager to send the Group a copy of the job description for the Activity Organiser
2. The Group to email any further comments for both job descriptions to the New Community Manager
3. The New Community Manager to contact NHS Devon to seek clarification for funding for the Community Connector role.

Comments received for the second recommendation to discuss the options for hosting and day-to-day management of proposed Wellbeing Cranbrook roles included:

- It was suggested that the day-to-day management should be managed locally and not in Exeter
- Do not support EX5 Alive/Inspiring Connections being the host.
- Support was expressed for the Town Council to be the host with a continue relationship with EX5 Alive
- Do not support Ted Wragg hosting as they will pass the line management to EX5 Alive/Inspiring Connections.

RESOLVED:

1. The New Community Manager to discuss the process with the Town Council if they were to host Wellbeing Cranbrook.
2. Further discussions needed with Ted Wragg about whether they would like to host and line manage.

10 **Implementation Plan**

The Group received the Implementation Plan which set out the progress and the Corporate Lead – Major Projects and Programmes provided a brief update on the Town Centre Delivery Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Implementation Plan be noted and to include the update to London Road.

11 **Forward Plan**

The Group received the Forward Plan that covered the period from 4 August 2025 to 8 December 2025 which were in line with future meetings. Clarification was sought about why the Management of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace – preferred approach has been moved to December 2025. In response the New Community Manager advised this was due to ongoing work and suggested it could potentially be brought forward to October 2025.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan was noted and further discussions were needed in respect of youth support provision.

Attendance List

Councillors present (for some or all the meeting)

Kim Bloxham (EDDC)
Todd Olive (EDDC)
Leslie Bayliss (CTC)
Henry Gent (DCC)

Also present (for some or all the meeting)

Richard Harrison, Land and Planning Director, Taylor Wimpey Exeter
Fran Walker, Associate Director, Brookbanks
Ian Chilcott, Commercial Director, Persimmon Homes
Dan Heathcote, Managing Director, Persimmon Homes
Damon Buckle, Technical Director, Persimmon Homes

Officers in attendance:

Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Wood, Director of Place
Sarah Ratnage, County Planning Manager, DCC
Alexandra Robinson, Deputy Clerk, Cranbrook Town Council
Nicola Wilson, Principal Planning Officer (DCC)
Janine Gardner, Clerk to Cranbrook Town Council
Thea Billeter, Cranbrook New Community Manager
Naomi Harnett, Corporate Lead (Interim) – Major Projects & Programmes

Councillor apologies:

K Blakey
S Hawkins
N Vanstone

Chair

Date:

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held at Conference Room, Younghayes Centre, Cranbrook on 4 August 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 11.09 am

12 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2025

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2025 were agreed as a true record.

In response to two questions raised about whether there was a procedure in place to follow up on actions agreed at previous meetings and about the timely publication of the minutes, the Director of Place explained that there were current capacity constraints that were limiting the ability to complete all actions in a timely manner. The Director of Place gave assurance that an update on the Community Connector position would be provided at the next meeting in October.

13 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

14 Public speaking

There were no members of the public present.

15 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

16 Confidential/exempt items

There were no confidential or exempt items.

17 Education provision

The Chair welcomed Simon Niles, DCC Service Lead – School, Organisation, Planning and Admissions to the meeting who gave an update on the current position in Cranbrook for primary, secondary and special school provision outlining:

- Challenges to existing early years and childcare provision due to families buying their first homes which will inevitably lead to pressure for primary school places. There is now a need to deliver the next phase of an additional primary school at the Cobdens expansion area in September 2027
- It is anticipated that 2026 will be a difficult year for school admissions.
- Phased expansion of the Cranbrook Education Campus will increase capacity to 1,300 students. Further work will be needed to improve the kitchen facilities
- The Cranbrook Special School is very problematical as the free school programme is currently under review by the national government. DCC have requested regular updates from the Department of Education.
- A feasibility study is in progress for expanding Rockbeare C of E Primary School to create another class of 20 children

Responses to questions from members of the group included:

- It was noted that there was a betterment for the existing facilities at Rockbeare C of E School.
- In response to whether there was a plan for secondary school capacity due to the bulge of young people at primary school, the Group was reassured that the Campus had sufficient capacity to maintain inclusive communities.
- In response to whether it would be better to have smaller schools, Simon Niles questioned their financial sustainability and the significantly increased costings of building smaller schools.
- It was noted that the catchment area for Stone Barton, which was split in half, had been resolved and would be moved so it fell within Cranbrook Education Campus catchment.
- A concern was raised about the phasing of smaller developments and when trigger points for education contributions/provision would be reached.
- It was queried whether DCC's pupil ratios aligned with those new published by the Department of Education and whether they risked under-estimating the likely number of pupils over the short, medium and long term.
- It was noted that the capacity for the secondary school was for a maximum of 1,300 places.
- It was questioned whether the opening date of September 2027 for the Cobden's primary school was realistic.
- It was noted that DCC received regular data drops from the NHS in terms of place planning and there were no concerns for the cohorts coming forward.

RESOLVED:

That the education briefing paper be noted.

18 **London Road upgrades**

Devon County Council's Principal Planning Officer gave a brief summary of the current London Road footway/cycleway improvements which was in line with the Cranbrook Plan requirements to deliver sections of the London Road that were not covered by the developer's proposals.

Responses to questions from members of the group included:

- It was queried whether Rockbeare Parish Council had been included in communications about the improvements.
- In response to a question about whether shared footpaths/cycleways should be reconsidered as they are dangerous for pedestrians which also resulted in them being used for car parks, the Group were advised that improvements were in line with revised guidance of the LTN120.
- It was noted that land at Ingrams should not be referred to as Cranbrook United Football Club.
- Group Members were supportive of viewing the improvement plans so as to have an input into the design.

The Group agreed to invite Chris Burridge-Barney, DCC Transportation Planning Officer to give a presentation setting out the details for the proposed footpath/cycleway.

RESOLVED:

1. To invite Chris Burridge-Barney, DCC Transportation Planning Officer to attend a future meeting to give a presentation on the detail of the proposed improvements and to consider inviting Rockbeare Parish Council as the adjoining parish council.
2. Devon County Council's Principal Planning Officer to liaise with the New Community Manager about the CIL funding agreement.

19 **Update on leisure and health and wellbeing projects**

The Group received a brief verbal update from the Director for Place on the leisure and health and wellbeing projects outlining the pressure for primary care space and the business case to secure funds for a combined health and wellbeing campus and centre. He advised that a workshop took place last week to help bring all parties with an interest in the town centre together and that a further workshop would take place to progress the proposals.

The Chair advised that EDDC's Cabinet were due to have a briefing this week to discuss the working plans for the leisure centre project.

RESOLVED:

A written report would be brought to the next meeting in October.

20 **Community Governance Review**

The Group noted that the Community Governance Review was now live.

RESOLVED:

The Director for Place to confirm the potential impact to the timescales if the consultation runs for 3 months.

21 **Implementation Plan**

Group Members received the Implementation Plan and updates were provided on the following:

- Cranbox – the risk around the timing of the transfer of the land was currently being considered if the project went forward during the preconstruction stage.
- Extra Care Housing – land transfer not yet completed.
- Town Centre planning applications – Taylor Wimpey Sales Office has temporary planning permission until 22 August 2025.

RESOLVED:

Director of Place to follow up on enforcement.

- Phase 2 retail acquisition – land being marketed but no interest. The Group agreed to consider a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the units.

RESOLVED:

Director for Place to explore a CPO to acquire the units.

- Town Centre highway uplift works – discussions over timetable of works.

RESOLVED:

The New Community Manager to update at the next meeting.

Non-Group Member, Councillor Peter Faithfull requested that adjoining parish councils for expansion areas 1-4 be consulted and invited to take part in discussions

RESOLVED:

That the Implementation Plan be noted.

22 **Forward Plan**

The Group received the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED:

The Group noted the Forward Plan subject to the discussions on the London Road upgrades and the amendment to the Management of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace – preferred approach being moved forward to 6 October 2025.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

Kevin Blakey (EDDC)
Kim Bloxham (EDDC)
Todd Olive (EDDC)
Leslie Bayliss (CTC)
Henry Gent (DCC)

Also present (for some or all the meeting)

Simon Niles, DCC Service Lead – School, Organisation, Planning and Admissions

Officers in attendance:

Andrew Wood, Director of Place
Alexandra Robinson, Deputy Clerk, Cranbrook Town Council
Nicola Wilson, Principal Planning Officer (DCC)
Janine Gardner, Clerk to Cranbrook Town Council
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

S Hawkins
S Ratnage
N Harnett
T Billeter
E Freeman

Chair

Date:

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

Overview Committee held on 17 July 2025

Minute 40 Exmouth Motorhome Parking – Overnight Stopovers

The report has since been approved by Cabinet on 30 July 2025.

Minute 42 Animal Licensing and Enforcement Policies

1. To formally adopt the draft Animal Enforcement Policy
2. To formally adopt the draft Animal Licensing Policy

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 17 July 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.35 pm

35 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 March 2025

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 March 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

36 Declarations of interest

Minute 40, Exmouth Motorhome Parking – Overnight Stopovers
Cllr Tim Dumper, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Former member of the Exmouth Town Council Motorhomes TAFF.

Minute 40, Exmouth Motorhome Parking – Overnight Stopovers
Cllr Paula Fernley, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Has a campervan.

Minute 40, Exmouth Motorhome Parking – Overnight Stopovers
Cllr Geoff Jung, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Sat on the Exmouth Town Council Motorhomes TAFF.

Minute 40, Exmouth Motorhome Parking – Overnight Stopovers
Cllr Steve Gazzard, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council and member of the Exmouth Town Council Motorhomes TAFF.

37 Public Speaking

Two members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

Mr Robert Kathro spoke in connection with Exmouth Motorhomes Parking – Overnight Stopovers item (minute 40 refers). He outlined shortcomings with the public consultation, including the data collection exercise and reporting and analysis of the results. Mr Kathro also spoke of issues around fire safety, rule breaking, lack of enforcement, and financial questions, many of which were identified within the report but to which credible and meaningful solutions were not provided. He requested that the Committee rejects the proposals before them and suggested that they needed to be reworked.

The Democratic Services Officer read out a statement of behalf of Mr Sav Spall, concerning Exmouth Motorhomes Parking – Overnight Stopovers (minute 40 refers). Mr Spall strongly opposed the policy of allowing overnight stopovers for motorhomes on the seafront and in Maer Road Car Park. He outlined examples of inconsiderate behaviour and unsafe practices which were not being policed, and parking restrictions which were not being enforced. He asked why out of town car parks were not being used to accommodate vehicles, given this would be easier for the Council to regulate and would make owners have to walk through the town to the seafront, providing footfall for shops, cafes and restaurants. Mr Spall referred to the public consultation which he said should

have been a fair and democratic process but in effect, served only to promote and entice motorhomes and campervans to the seafront.

38 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential/exempt items.

40 **Exmouth Motorhome Parking - Overnight Stopovers**

The Parking Services Manager presented his report which set out recommendations for a number of proposed changes to the overnight stopover arrangements for motorhomes in two Exmouth car parks, following public consultation. The recommendations had been formally endorsed by Exmouth Town Council in April 2025.

The Chair welcomed Exmouth Town Councillor Fred Caygill who was attending as an external witness in his capacity as Chair of Exmouth Town Council's Motorhome Task and Finish Forum (TAFF). A briefing paper provided by the Town Council had been published with the agenda papers and Cllr Caygill verbally outlined the background and context to the TAFF's recommendations.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The council's current policy on motorhome parking is set out in the Parking Strategy.
- Some members were of the view that motorhomes on the seafront should be banned. On visiting Exmouth, they were surprised at the number of motorhomes in the area, taking up spaces which could otherwise be used by local families who want to enjoy the beach.
- Other members noted that campervans are popular worldwide and it is not feasible to ban them. The Council needs to cater for them which in turn helps the local population who do not want campervans parked outside their driveways and on residential streets.
- There is dedicated parking enforcement daily except for Christmas Day; however, there is no resource for enforcement beyond 6pm and into the night.
- Members noted that RingGo would prevent people from paying to stay for more than 3 consecutive nights but were concerned that no enforcement is in place to stop people from returning after 6.00pm, and parking overnight for free. The Parking Services Manager responded that from experience, most people are conscientious and observe the restrictions. He added that enforcement officers are active from 6.00am.
- It was suggested that 2 consecutive nights would be more appropriate for stopovers, still allowing people to stay and enjoy the town and seafront.
- The Council has committed to accept payment by cash for as long as practically possible; however, it is intended to only take payment by RingGo for motorhomes parking, as a specific and bespoke solution to the particular problem of people parking for longer than the maximum stay restrictions.
- Some members were of the view that Queen's Drive Echelon is unsuitable for campervans and motorhomes. Spaces cannot accommodate vehicles of the size which typically have on-board facilities, and the closest public toilets are closed overnight from 10.00pm. The Parking Services Manager responded that there is an expectation for people to be responsible and use the facilities for waste disposal as they need them. There is no requirement for their vehicles to be self-contained, however he felt the nature of the recommendations would naturally attract vehicles that have on-board facilities.
- Members felt that the overnight stopover fee was too low at £15.00 for 24 hours given that it costs £8.00 to park a car for the day, and motorhomes would benefit from

enhanced facilities. It was suggested to set the fee at £20.00, with the £5.00 uplift to be ringfenced to increase enforcement activity, in the most appropriate way.

- Members proposed that the overnight stopover arrangements are monitored and reviewed annually at the appropriate scrutiny committee.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

Improvements to overnight stopover arrangements as follows:

1. Install a drive-over grey wastewater (shower and dishwater) disposal point in Maer Road car park
2. Install a chemical toilet waste disposal point in Maer Road car park – connected directly to the sewerage network
3. Install a fresh water tap in Maer Road car park
4. Reduce the maximum permitted number of consecutive overnight stays to 2 nights, with no return within 72 hours.
5. Improve the signage stating the rules and restrictions for overnight stays within both car parks – including ground markings along Queen's Drive Echelon to designate bays suitable for overnight parking, stipulating a safe distance between vehicles.
6. Trial RingGo only payment for overnight parking sessions to prevent vehicles remaining on site for longer than the maximum permitted number of nights
7. Increase the overnight stopover fee to £20.00 (currently £11.00) per night in recognition of the additional costs incurred in managing, maintaining and installing the physical improvements to the overnight parking arrangements.
8. The uplift in charging to be ringfenced to increase enforcement activity.
9. A yearly review to be carried out by the appropriate scrutiny committee.

The Chair thanked Cllr Caygill for his contribution to the meeting.

41 Review of Petition Scheme

The Democratic Services Manager presented this report which set out proposed changes to the Petition Scheme for the Committee's consideration.

Members were invited to comment on the proposed wording, for submission to the Constitution Working Group which would make a final recommendation to a future Council meeting.

The Democratic Services Manager informed the Committee that implementation of the new e-petitions platform was delayed. It had been intended to introduce the platform on the Council's website by 30 May 2025, and the Democratic Services Manager stated that he would provide an updated timeline by email to the Chair, during the week commencing 21 July 2025.

Discussion included the following points:

- The e-petitions platform is an additional offering to members of the public but the Council will continue to accept hard copy petitions.
- Costs for the e-petitions platform are yet to be confirmed.
- In the Democratic Services Manager's experience where authorities have an e-petitions scheme, this has not led to a significant increase in petitions submitted.
- Need to be careful with the wording in the petitions scheme so as not to set a public expectation that the Council will fix an issue over which it has no control.
- At section 3.2 of the scheme which covers Petitions for Council Debate, consider setting the signatures threshold at a percentage of the population rather than a fixed number, given the chances of getting 1,500 signatures in a village will be quite slim, relative to a town.
- Review whether section 3.3 is needed, in relation to petitions calling for Council employees to give evidence at any meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

- In reference to section 5.12 concerning petitions which the Monitoring Officer may decline to accept, it would be appropriate for this to be subject to Member oversight, in the interests of transparency.
- Consider setting out in the Petitions Scheme what this Council does not do, given that people often do not know what individual councils do.

42 **Animal Licensing and Enforcement Policies**

The Assistant Director – Environmental Health presented this report which proposed service-specific policies relating to Animal Licensing and Animal Enforcement, to ensure a consistent and effective approach to animal related enforcement.

In discussion, it was suggested to put out communications to promote awareness of the policies among the general public.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

1. To formally adopt the draft Animal Enforcement Policy
2. To formally adopt the draft Animal Licensing Policy

43 **Work programme 2025 - 2026**

Members received and noted the Overview Committee's Work Programme for 2025-2026.

Having reviewed the Cabinet Forward Plan, the Chair suggested adding the Public Spaces Protection Orders consultation to the Committee's work programme, for a future meeting.

Members also considered a proposal form submitted by Cllr Geoff Jung concerning beach hut arrangements and charging review of current agreed policy. It was agreed to add this item to the Committee's work programme, for scoping work to be undertaken.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Collins
R Collins
T Dumper (Vice-Chair)
P Fernley
A Hall (Chair)
M Hall
Y Levine
D Mackinder
D Wilson

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Faithfull
S Gazzard
G Jung

Officers in attendance:

Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health

Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Richard Easthope, Parking Services Manager
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Melhuish, Democratic Services Manager

Representatives of Exmouth Town Council in attendance:
Cllr Fred Caygill, Chair of the Exmouth Motorhomes Task and Finish Forum

Councillor apologies:
A Bailey
B Bailey
D Haggerty
M Hartnell
J Heath

Chairman

Date:

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

Recycling and Waste Partnership Board on 30 July 2025

Minute 42 – Simpler Recycling

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Cabinet approve the reallocation of £200,000 from the existing refurbishment capital budget to fund the required vehicles.
2. that Cabinet approve the completion of a TEEP assessment to support the co-collection of paper, glass and cardboard.
3. that Cabinet note the early stage work for 'films and flexibles' implantation was underway.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held at online via Teams on 30 July 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.40 am

36 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2025 were agreed as a true record.

37 Declarations of interest

Declarations of interest.

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

38 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

39 Joint operations and contract report

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager gave the Board a joint contract and operational update for the first quarter of 2025-26, which saw consistently strong service levels across all areas, despite the additional pressures brought by the four bank holidays during the period. Peak holidays tended to be a peak time for the service and required careful planning and resource management to ensure continuity and minimise disruption for residents.

Complaints remained below threshold for quarter one, with a reduction from April to June. Missed collections also remained well under the performance levels set. Assisted missed collection figures were slightly increased due to a couple of crew issues on service. Sickness levels had vastly improved.

The health and safety indicators showed a positive increase in safety conversations with teams, used to point out situational awareness, since March 2025. Along with the introduction of hazard observations in January 2025, making the staff more proactive to concerns, the crews were reporting more by the introduction of digital access to through a QR code link in every vehicle.

The contract was currently in a strong and positive position. Crews were consistently completing their daily rounds on time, without exceeding contractual working hours. This had led to low overtime rates, delivering valuable cost savings for EDDC. This efficiency was also having a positive impact on staff morale. It was noted that staffing levels were sustainable, but not ideal. The contract was currently 7 LGV and 5 loaders against budget headcount. A driver incentive had been added from the beginning of June for new drivers, but there was a national shortage of LGV drivers. Sickness levels had significantly improved and were at an average of 2.78% (including long term).

Work was continuing well in the material recycling facility (MRF), dealing with waste flows. Environment Agency (EA) sampling was operating correctly, with new sampling equipment and teams getting to understand the system. SUEZ support teams were working with the EA to understand changes and recommendations on criteria.

There had been a slight gain in materials prices. A request was made for material prices to be included in the next report to the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board.

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager and the SUEZ Contract Manager were thanked for their report.

40 **Performance Framework**

The Board noted the performance report which showed performance across the contract. It highlighted eight parts of the contract that officers focused on and allowed officers to look for areas of improvement and put plans in place if necessary. Assisted missed collection figures were a little higher but this was being addressed. The Recycling and Waste Service Manager highlighted the overall good performance and reported that the contract had never invoked a penalty.

41 **Green waste accounts**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager presented the green waste accounts for quarter 1, 2025-26 to the Board and thanked the accountant for producing them.

It was noted that as it was quarter 1 there remained a lot of predictions but the service was doing well and the predicted accrual income position for the year was £393,028.

42 **Simpler Recycling**

The Recycling and Waste Service Manager's report explained that Simpler Recycling was a national reform aimed at standardising the collection of recyclable materials across all local authorities in England. The legislation required councils to collect a consistent set of materials (glass, metal, plastic, paper/cardboard, food waste, and garden waste) ensuring clarity for residents and improved recycling performance. Local authorities could co-collect certain materials, such as paper/cardboard with glass, but only where a TEEP (Technically, Environmentally and Economically Practicable) assessment supported it. Separate weekly food waste collections and access to a garden waste service must also be in place.

To meet the April 2026 compliance deadline, two key actions were proposed:

- completing a TEEP assessment for the co-collection of paper/card with glass (as per the current collection method),
- and introducing a narrow-access green waste collection service (not currently offered).

A narrow access green waste service would require capital investment in a 12-tonne refuse collection vehicle and a Transit Style Bin Lift Tipper. It was recommended that £200k be reallocated from existing capital vehicle refurbishment funds to support this purchase. Work on the later requirement for films and flexibles collection, due by March 2027, had begun with early research and planning.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Cabinet approve the reallocation of £200,000 from the existing refurbishment capital budget to fund the required vehicles.

2. that Cabinet approve the completion of a TEEP assessment to support the co-collection of paper, glass and cardboard.
3. that Cabinet note the early stage work for 'films and flexibles' implantation was underway.

43 **Absorbent Hygiene Product (AHP) business case update**

The Board considered the report of the Recycling and Waste Project Officer which set out a nappy recycling proposal. East Devon District Council was exploring the introduction of a district-wide nappy recycling service to support its statutory obligation (Environment Act 2021) to reach a 65% recycling rate by 2035, up from the current 60.1%. Disposable nappies accounted for up to 12% of residual waste—the second largest waste stream after food—and were not recycled.

A successful 12-week nappy recycling trial in 2024 demonstrated strong public support, high participation, and around one tonne of nappies collected weekly. The proposed service would involve weekly collections from 3,000–5,000 households, using dedicated vehicles and processing through NappiCycle in South Wales. However, without financial support from Devon County Council (DCC), East Devon would bear all costs, making the service around three times more expensive per tonne than existing recycling.

Four options had been assessed, with the preferred recommendation being to “Proceed with Caution,” plan for a future phased rollout. This approach allowed time to align with other statutory service changes (such as film and flexibles collections, and narrow access green waste collections), secure the necessary Environment Agency permits, and seek financial contributions from DCC to reduce disposal and haulage costs. With DCC support, the cost per tonne could drop from £602 to £339, significantly improving affordability. The service would deliver environmental and operational benefits, including a potential 3.4% boost to the recycling rate, up to 388 tonnes of CO₂ savings annually, and reduced pressure on residual waste services.

The business case explored service costs, carbon and recycling benefits, risks and challenges and next steps, including a proposed phased future rollout to 3,000-5,000 households. Collections would take place weekly using a sack-based system with collections made using 12-tonne vehicles. Processing of nappies would take place at Nappicycle (South Wales), the UK's only specialist nappy recycler.

Options for consideration were:

1. Do nothing optimise existing services. This was not recommended.
2. Proceed with immediate rollout in 2025. This was not feasible.
3. Proceed with caution, plan for a future roll out. Preferred option.
4. Defer and revisit in 2028. Lower priority.

Option 3 was preferred as it allowed time to:

- Maintain some momentum on the nappy recycling proposal while retaining flexibility to focus on more immediate statutory priorities.
- Further explore financial support and partnership with Devon County Council and consider alternative funding opportunities.
- Establish if a permit validation was required and calculate the cost of depot modifications required by the Environment Agency.
- Gain more certainty on the financial viability of the service.

The Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer was thanked for his thorough report. The Board agreed with option 3 and that support was needed from DCC at both officer and member level, and from neighbouring authorities. It was noted that option 3

did not require significant amounts of money and that there were other potential funding options. The Board also agreed that re-useable nappies should be promoted.

RESOLVED:

1. that the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board approve option 3, proceeding with caution for a future roll-out as per the detailed business case.
2. that EDDC promote the use of re-useable nappies.

Attendance List

Board Members:

Councillors present:

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

Officers present:

L Hodges, Recycling & Waste - Service Manager
Mark Barrow, Interim Director Place

Suez present:

V Masseri, General Manager
J Gatter, Contract Manager

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

R Collins
I Barlow
P Faithfull

Officers in attendance:

Angela Baquerizo Thorsen, Recycling and Waste Operations and Projects Officer
Steve Maclure, Recycling & Waste - Operations and Projects Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Suez representatives in attendance:

Jess Prosser, Recycling Officer

Board Member apologies:

Andrew Hancock
Councillor Richard Jefferies

Chair

Date:

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

Housing Review Board on 31 July 2025

Minute 58 Finance report

1. That Cabinet considers and notes the outturn position for 2024/25 including the implications and proposals relating to the balances and reserves held by the Council.
2. That Cabinet notes the year-to-date Housing Revenue Account position for quarter 1 2025/26.

Minute 59 Review of Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

That Cabinet approve the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

Minute 60 Review of Electrical Safety Policy

That Cabinet approve the updates and amendments to the Electrical Safety Policy for Housing, including the clarification of portable appliance testing.

Minute 61 Review of Housing Repairs Policy & Awaab's Law

1. That Cabinet approve the proposed Repairs Policy.
2. That Cabinet note that some final amendments may be made following further feedback from tenant scrutiny and stakeholders. The policy would be brought back to the Housing Review Board should any material changes be required.

Minute 62 Review of Radon Policy

1. That Cabinet approve the proposed Radon Policy.
2. that Cabinet note that some final amendments may be made following further feedback from tenant scrutiny and stakeholders (with a commitment to bring the policy back to the Housing Review Board should any material amendments be required).

Minute 65 Stock condition survey report

That Cabinet note the results of the stock condition survey.

Minute 66 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan update report

That Cabinet note the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan position and required efficiency savings.

Minute 67 Build & Buy - A housing investment and delivery plan for East Devon

1. That Cabinet recommend that Council endorse the Build and Buy Plan.
2. That Cabinet note that the financing of the Build and Buy Plan was subject to approval of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the 2026/27 budget setting process in due course.

Minute 69 Build and Buy Plan: Acquisitions and preliminary site-specific proposals

1. That Cabinet note the proposed development sites; with further design feasibility and stakeholder engagement and consultation plans to be prepared.
2. That Cabinet approve that work to establish a pipeline of affordable housing acquisitions is commenced in line with the vision set out in the Build and Buy Plan.
3. That Cabinet approve that any capital and revenue expenditure above existing approved budgets be subject to the approval of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and budget setting process in 2026/27.
4. That Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities to progress the RIBA stage 3 on sites 1-4 Honiton and RIBA stage 3 on sites 5 and 6 in Exmouth.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Housing Review Board held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton, EX14 1EJ on 31 July 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.10 am and ended at 3.00 pm

51 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2025 were agreed.

52 Declarations of interest

Declarations of interest.

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

Declarations of interest.

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

69. Build and Buy Plan: Acquisitions and preliminary site-specific proposals.

Councillor Steve Gazzard, Affects Non-registerable Interest, some of the development sites were within his ward and the adjacent ward.

53 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

Councillor Dan Ledger, Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes and Communities informed those present that following a 12-week inspection with the Regulator for Social Housing, the Council had received a C2 judgement. He explained the judgement grading and that the C2 judgement acknowledged several key areas of strength and the good experience that was being delivered to tenants. The feedback identified some work was needed to improve and enhance in some areas, but this was already planned for, with action plans in place for the coming year. Only 21 local authorities had been awarded the C2 so far, and only 3 awarded C1.

The housing team had shown dedication, commitment and drive to make significant changes across all teams to improve service delivery and the customer experience. The Portfolio Holder thanked the housing team and the wider teams at East Devon District Council as well as members of the Housing Review Board for their support, and positive approach to achieving such a great outcome.

54 Matters of urgency

There were none.

55 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one confidential/exempt item.

56 **Housing Review Board forward plan**

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

Following on from his motion to Council in July, 'Communication Workers Union – design and positioning of letterboxes', Councillor Faithfull requested that the housing service actively support the work of the Communication Workers Union in relation to the design and positioning of letterboxes in relation to new and replacement doors on Council properties. He also asked for consideration to be given to the time that trade buttons to flats turned off. The Assistant Director – Housing (Regulatory Services) agreed to discuss this further with the housing teams.

Following on from a recent successful training session, members of the Housing Review Board requested that additional training sessions be arranged, particularly in relation to housing finances and the Housing Revenue Account.

57 **Housing staffing update**

The Assistant Director – Housing (Regulated Services)'s report provided the Board with key staffing updates on the housing service.

The Corporate Lead for Housing Property and Assets was in post and recruitment was moving forward with recruitment in other critical roles within the Property and Assets teams. Recruitment was live and ongoing and included:

- Compliance Manager
- Repairs Service Manager
- Senior Surveyor
- Heating Compliance Surveyor
- Maintenance and Planned Works Surveyors

These roles would bring further resource and resilience into the housing property and assets team and would ensure manageable scope and areas of responsibilities. They would support the Council in effective oversight and management of risk and health and safety and would increase the services' ability to respond quicker to requests for surveyor visits and inspections.

It was noted that the interim Repairs Service Manager had left EDDC in June and the Assistant Director – Housing (Regulatory Services) acknowledged his work and thanked him for his time and commitment to EDDC. There were currently no agency staff being employed by the housing service.

Additional resource was also being brought in to support with housing-related complaints, with a full time Housing Performance Lead post beginning on 4 August 2025. In response to a question, it was reported that all complaints were initially administered by the corporate complaints team, but were then reviewed and investigated by the relevant teams across the Council

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

58 **Finance report**

The Housing Review Board considered the report of the HRA Accountant, which set out the revenue budget and capital outturn positions at the end of the financial year 2024/25 and provided a summary of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) financial position for quarter 1 2025/26. The HRA was a ring-fenced account for providing Council housing and associated services.

The revised Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget approved by Council (July 2024) agreed the use of the HRA Balance up to £1.750m in year, with the acceptance this would take the HRA Balance below its minimum adopted level of £2.1m to £1.350m, to be replenished in future years. Expenditure was being maintained within this parameter with ongoing analysis on future spending plans and projections to gain assurance on this position to financial year end. The year end outturn on the Housing Revenue Account was per the final agreed adjusted budget, resulting in a deficit of £1.336m, reducing the HRA Balance to £1.764m.

The review of the year to date figures up to the end of quarter 1 for the Housing Revenue Account showed that it was trending materially in line with the budget profile up to that point in the financial year. Therefore, there were no material revenue items or concerns to bring to the attention of members. As was normal at that point in the financial year, housing capital spend was low, as the procurement of contracts and assessment of required major works got underway.

The team were congratulated on the 2024/25 outturn position, regaining control and on achieving a budgeted that was better than that re-budgeted for.

The accountant advised the Board that he would arrange a training session for members on HRA finances in due course. A request was made for the finance report to be shown on the monitors in the Council Chamber in future.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Cabinet considers and notes the outturn position for 2024/25 including the implications and proposals relating to the balances and reserves held by the Council.
2. that Cabinet notes the year-to-date Housing Revenue Account position for quarter 1 2025/26.

59 **Review of Anti Social Behaviour Policy**

The Housing Review Board were asked to approve the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, which had recently been reviewed. The management of anti-social behaviour (ASB) was covered under legislation and the Housing Act, as well as being a moral duty of the housing service to support tenants with their right to the peaceful enjoyment of their homes. It was important to have a policy which outlined how reports of ASB were managed, how tenants were supported to resolve disputes and how the council worked in partnership across the district to not only support its tenants, but also the wider community.

It was noted that the proposed policy had been out to consultation, which included three ASB focus groups, the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and a common place survey.

Once approved, a communications plan would be drafted and implemented to ensure the policy, and a key summary of it, was clearly communicated to tenants - balancing both the need to make tenants aware of their responsibilities, alongside what they could expect from the council as their landlord and clarity around definitions of anti-social behaviour.

A request was made for ward members to be informed at the initial stages when an ASB complaint was received. The Director for Housing and Health explained that she was conscious of the officer time and resource that this would involve, but that she would discuss it with the relevant teams. The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities reminded councillors of their strategic role and that officers' role was operational. Councillors would be informed if the ASB complaint was escalated. It was noted that EDDC had a community safety team who dealt with non-EDDC housing ASB claims.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve the updated Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

60 **Review of Electrical Safety Policy**

The Corporate Lead for Housing Property and Assets' report outlined the updates and changes made to the Housing Directorate's Electrical Safety Policy. The changes were in response to changes in legislation and ensured a full and robust policy was in place. The main body of the policy was approved by the Housing Review Board in 2023 and was due for a full review in September 2026.

A request was made to clarify in the policy the portable appliance testing of electrical items, whether this related to tenants' own electrical items or those supplied by EDDC. The Director of Housing and Health advised that this would be added to and clarified in the Electrical Safety Policy.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve the updates and amendments to the Electrical Safety Policy for Housing, including the clarification of portable appliance testing.

61 **Review of Housing Repairs Policy & Awaab's Law**

The Corporate Lead for Property and Assets' report presented a proposed Repair Policy that would replace the existing April 2021 Repairs Policy and the existing Damp and Mould Policy. The current policy was out of date and the introduction of Awaab's law from 27 October 2025 would require a high risk-based approach to repair, which defined timescales for responding to and completing the highest risk repairs. Compliance with the new law would require a fundamental change in the approach to how repairs were managed and the performance tracked, and would have a significant impact. The proposed policy aligned with the new requirements from Awaab's law and other related legislation.

It was noted that there were significant risks associated with the policy that would be managed as best as possible. The cost of the policy requirements was a risk and was dependant on the capital programme. Many of the issues and problems were historic and reflected the age of the Council's properties. In response to a question about disposals it was reported that a key factor was that the Council could not leave a tenant in an unfit property, however it was obligated to do works on a secure tenancy if the tenant did not want to move.

Members welcomed the policy and congratulated officers for their prompt response to the Awaab's Law requirements. They agreed that it was important to set realistic expectations and timings and communicate these to tenants. It was requested that garden maintenance be included in the policy.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Cabinet approve the proposed Repairs Policy.
2. that Cabinet note that some final amendments may be made following further feedback from tenant scrutiny and stakeholders. The policy would be brought back to the Housing Review Board should any material changes be required.

62 Review of Radon Policy

The Compliance Surveyor's report presented a proposed Radon Policy for Housing to meet East Devon District Council's regulatory compliance and health and safety obligations. The proposed policy aligned with the Housing Act 2004 and other related legislation, ensuring legal compliance and that the Council's tenants would be provided with a healthy and safe home to live in as well as a safe environment for employees and contractors to work in.

The Corporate Lead for Housing Property and Assets explained to the Board that tenants were at the centre of the policy and confirmed that radon testing had been budgeted for.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Cabinet approve the proposed Radon Policy.
2. that Cabinet note that some final amendments may be made following further feedback from tenant scrutiny and stakeholders (with a commitment to bring the policy back to the Housing Review Board should any material amendments be required).

63 Quarterly performance report - Quarter 1 Tenancy Services

The Housing Review Board were presented with key performance indicators (KPIs) for quarter 1 of 2025/26 for tenancy services. The Tenancy Services Manager (Regulated Services) gave a presentation which summarised performance actions being taken to improve performance in rentals, estate management and sheltered housing functions within tenancy services.

Some of the areas highlighted were:

- 98.93% rental income collected.
- Rent arrears of 1.34% (high performance and within top quartile).
- Reduction in number of ASB cases reported (although there were 43 open ASB cases).
- Estate inspections and tenancy visits.
- Communities team:
 - 8 Community Hubs per week.
 - 1603 attended in quarter 1.
 - Garden competition.
 - Resident Connect Festival.
 - Community Initiative Fun.

The Tenancy Services Manager and teams were thanked for all their hard work and excellent progress with performance. All of the KPIs were going in the right direction, with exceptional performance in some areas. It was hoped that tenants were seeing improvements on the ground. It was suggested that a positive communications piece be published on this.

64 **Quarterly performance report - Quarter 1 Property & Assets**

The Housing Review Board were presented with key performance indicators (KPIs) for quarter 1 of 2025/26 for property and assets. The Corporate Lead for Property and Assets gave a presentation which summarised performance actions being taken to improve performance in repairs, compliance and planned works functions within property and assets.

Quarter 1 performance headlines were:

- Progress was being made in filling the existing vacancies and right sizing the team for the current and future needs.
- Repairs: Calls and jobs were trending down and percentage of repairs completed within the target timescales was increasing (this was expected to increase with the introduction of the new repairs policy). Reporting alignment between systems was improving.
- There was a significant maintenance survey backlog due to resources constraints. This was leading to additional complaints, disrepair and Ombudsman cases. A new process for tracking and prioritising survey requests had been established.
- Average days to relet a property had stabilised due to void resources focusing on disrepair and extending the life of assets where possible.
- Outstanding compliance remedial works was decreasing, and new contracts were required to complete all the remedial works.
- The requirement for planned works was increasing as the service moved to a 'Whole Property' approach to the delivery of planned works. This would reduce repair costs and minimise disruption for customers. The resource constraints were reflective in the statistics.

The Corporate Lead for Property and Assets also gave some examples of void life extension works, successful planned works, and a case study which established a model for how planned works would be delivered, particularly with regards to tenant engagement.

The Director for Housing and Health thanked the officers for all their hard work. Performance was moving in the right direction and it had been an incredible journey over the last 12 months. She commended all the managers and staff teams working tirelessly to turn performance around. She also commented on the incredible performance in relation to the outturn budget and how the budget was being managed and attributed this to the hard work and judgement of housing teams and finance colleagues. The regulatory judgement of C2 position was fantastic and this was reflected in the tenant satisfaction measure (TSM) improvements.

The Director for Housing and Health went on to thank the Housing Review Board as a committee for all its support. It had scrutinised well, challenged where it was needed and asked officers to take on certain pieces of work and asked them to demonstrate ambition. The HRB had been a great critical friend.

65 **Stock condition survey report**

The Assistant Director of Programmes, Investment and Development's report presented the findings of the comprehensive stock condition survey undertaken by Currie & Brown on behalf of East Devon District Council (EDDC).

The programme surveyed 3,554 residential properties (86%) and assessed an additional 588 properties on a desktop basis. In total, 4,522 assets were surveyed, including community centres and garages. The purpose of the survey was to support strategic asset management, guide future investment planning, ensure continued compliance with the Decent Homes Standard and identify any health and safety risks under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The key outcomes were contained in the report and noted by the Board:

- Decent Homes compliance.
- Damp issues
- Housing, Health and Safety Rating System.
- Community centres.
- Sewerage treatment plants.
- 30-year investment forecast.

The stock condition survey results demonstrated that East Devon District Council's housing stock was largely compliant and fundamentally sound, but required priority investment in some areas as well as long-term strategic investment. This investment, which would be set out in a 30 year Business Plan. It would need to be targeted and sustained to avoid asset degradation and future compliance failures which would impact tenant wellbeing, service delivery and long-term sustainability. The results of the stock condition survey would be used to inform the Asset Management Strategy.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet note the results of the stock condition survey.

66

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan update report

The Assistant Director – Programmes, Investment and Development's report provided the Housing Review Board with an update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and associated strategic documents that underpinned the effective management and investment in East Devon District Council's housing stock to ensure the housing service remained financially viable, sustainable and responsive to tenants' needs. The HRA Business Plan would provide the overall financial framework for the HRA.

The HRA continued to face significant financial pressure in the immediate and longer term. These pressures arose from a range of factors including an historic underinvestment, increased consumer and regulatory standards, general inflation, restricted rent increases, net zero expectations, disrepair claims, complaint resolution, high void and decant costs and other issues. The situation was not unique to East Devon with similar cost pressures being seen amongst other housing providers and stock holding local authorities.

The 2023/24 HRA budget outturn and capital spend far exceeded the planned budget, necessitating the contribution of all HRA earmarked revenue reserves and required £2.5m additional borrowing. The HRA adopted balance reserve was also reduced. A revised budget for 2024/25 was approved by Council in July 2024. Improved budget management, monitoring and controls meant the 2024/25 budget outturn was within budget at year end. This represented a significant improvement on the previous year and reflected significant improvements in financial planning and management of the HRA.

The previous HRA Business Plan had expired and needed updating to reflect current circumstances and the future investment needs of the stock. The purpose of a Business

Plan was to ensure long term financial sustainability over a 30-year period and ensure sufficient resources were available for the management, maintenance, repair and improvement of the stock. Business Plans should also consider maintaining stock levels through acquisitions, development and estate regeneration. The HRA Business Plan looked at development and stock regeneration, as well as considering land and assets that were underutilised. The key element was how this was balanced with investment in existing stock. The conclusion was that any development would need to pay for itself.

In order to support the required level of borrowing for stock maintenance and investment the HRA needed to reduce the revenue expenditure by 15% (£2.6m) in order to retain debt within a manageable capacity. Whilst achievable, the scale of reduction was significant and highly challenging. It was therefore essential that an Efficiency Plan was established to achieve a long-term sustainable position. An ongoing internal review had identified a number of opportunities for improved efficiency and cost reductions. Any savings or efficiencies would be based on the key principle of finding alternative approaches to service delivery to ensure the quality of tenant services were maintained or improved. Other elements of the Efficiency Plan included income maximisation and effective asset management to boost income and tackle poor asset performance.

The report outlined that a formal Business Plan would be published later in the current financial year with formal adoption to align with the 2026/27 budget. The plan would set the financial framework for budget setting and capital investment over the medium term. The Asset Management Strategy would be completed and presented prior to the start of the 2026/27 financial year.

It was noted that a stock transfer was not a viable option at this point in time so had been discounted as an option.

There were a number of assumptions in the Business Plan, which was a long term forecast. There were a number of variables and it was important to review the Business Plan on an annual basis. Assuming the efficiencies and reductions outlined in the report were delivered, modelling suggested a sustainable position was achievable within the overall plan period.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet note the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan position and required efficiency savings.

67 **Build & Buy - A housing investment and delivery plan for East Devon**

The Assistant Director for Programmes, Investment and Development's report provided an overview and introduction to Build and Buy, a housing investment and delivery plan for East Devon. The report was in response to a growing housing need and feedback from the Housing Strategy consultation to increase the supply of affordable homes for residents in East Devon and contribute to the wider housing and community objectives, including estate regeneration.

The purpose of the Build and Buy Plan was to maximise the use of the Council's assets, address housing need and support the Council's strategic objective of having a supported and engaged community that had the right homes in the right places with the appropriate infrastructure. The Plan aimed to deliver an aspirational target of 500 homes over the next five years, with an equal split between homes built on Council owned land and homes acquired through partnerships with private developers. This mixed delivery

approach was intended to accelerate housing supply, make efficient use of public assets, and ensure the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had a range of housing stock to meet local needs. It was noted that the intention was that the majority of homes would be social rented rather than affordable rented. All would be funded through the HRA. A local authority development company was not being proposed.

Key considerations contained in the report were:

- Site development and feasibility.
- Construction type, procurement and delivery models.
- Housing mix and design standards.
- Community and stakeholder engagement.
- Risk assessment.
- Funding implications:
 - Capital investment.
 - Funding sources.
 - Revenue implications.
 - Governance.
- Communications and engagement strategy.
- Regular Portfolio Holder updates.
- Housing Review Board – routine reporting to provide oversight on delivery, risks and track performance against the plan proposals.
- Decision making and delegated authority.

Build and Buy – A Housing Investment and Delivery Plan for East Devon was a bold, ambitious and proactive response to the district's housing challenges. The Board noted that the development process could be lengthy and complex with the potential for lengthy delays, particularly at the planning and pre planning stage. Multiple external factors such as inflation, particularly on build costs and labour, could adversely affect development viability and necessitate a deviation from the plan target. As such, the hugely ambitious target of 500 homes over 5 years should be seen as an aspirational target.

The next steps included:

- Finalising site feasibility prioritisation and engagement plans.
- Establishing delivery partnerships and a pipeline of acquisitions.
- Regular progress reporting to Members, in addition to regular review to monitor delivery, risks, and financial performance.
- Seeking formal approval of the HRA Business Plan which would provide the strategic financial investment framework for financing the plan.

Concern was expressed over the resources that could be required to deliver such an ambitious plan. It was acknowledged that not all of the resource was currently available in-house and this would be built into the plan. It was currently a conceptual piece of work, with broad figures in principle. There would be precise costings and sustainability credentials on site specific schemes, which would be brought to the Board and considered on an individual basis.

The Board were pleased to see ambitions for the future and officers were thanked for presenting the build and buy plan.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that Cabinet recommend that Council endorse the Build and Buy Plan.
2. that Cabinet note that the financing of the Build and Buy Plan was subject to approval of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the 2026/27 budget setting process in due course.

68 **Exclusion of the 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 in the agenda is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing these items in private session (Part B).

69 **Build and Buy Plan: Acquisitions and preliminary site-specific proposals**

The Assistant Director for Programmes, Investment and Development and Development Surveyor's report set out the preliminary site-specific proposals to deliver circa 228 new affordable homes on six sites as part of the Build and Buy Plan, to maximise the use of the Council's Housing Revenue Account assets and deliver new affordable homes for the residents of East Devon. The report also recommended that work commence on establishing a programme of potential affordable housing acquisitions in line with the plan to deliver 500 new affordable homes over five years.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet:

1. note the proposed development sites; with further design feasibility and stakeholder engagement and consultation plans to be prepared.
2. approve that work to establish a pipeline of affordable housing acquisitions is commenced in line with the vision set out in the Build and Buy Plan.
3. approve that any capital and revenue expenditure above existing approved budgets be subject to the approval of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and budget setting process in 2026/27.
4. grant delegated authority to the Director of Housing and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities to progress the RIBA stage 3 on sites 1-4 Honiton and RIBA stage 3 on sites 5 and 6 in Exmouth.

Attendance List

Board members present:

Wang Tian, Independent Community Representative
 Rosemary Dale, Tenant
 Rachel Browne, Tenant
 Councillor Christopher Burhop
 Councillor Sarah Chamberlain (Chair)
 Councillor Melanie Martin
 Councillor Simon Smith (Vice-Chair)
 Rob Robinson, Tenants
 Councillor Tim Dumper
 Councillor Helen Parr

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

J Heath
 S Jackson
 P Arnott
 I Barlow
 R Collins
 P Faithfull
 S Gazzard

M Goodman
P Hayward
N Hookway
G Jung
D Ledger
S Westerman

Officers in attendance:

Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Giles Salter, Solicitor
Darren Hicks, Tenancy Services Manager (Regulated Services)
Tom Butcher, Development Surveyor
Will Dommett, District Ecologist
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Andrew King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulated Services)
Nathan Muggeridge, Corporate Lead for Housing Property and Assets
Liam Reading, Assistant Director - Housing Programmes, Investment and Development
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health
John Taylor, Property and Asset Manager
Emma Congerton, Assistant Director Statutory Housing
Andrew Mitchell, Housing Solutions Service Manager
Rob Ward, Accountant

Councillor apologies:

Councillor Aurora Bailey
Sara Clarke, Independent Community Representative
Councillor Kim Bloxham

Chair

Date:

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting 3 September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Household Support Fund 7

Report summary:

This report provides details on the proposed policy for the Household Support Fund 7 and funding available to support low-income households for the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

1. That Cabinet agree to the proposed policy for Household Support Fund for the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026
2. That Cabinet agree for delegated authority to be given to the Assistant Director for Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities, in the event subsequent changes need to be made to the policy including providing additional groups and/or funding amount to receive a targeted payment. Any required changes will be based on funding available and will consider available data from our social resilience dashboard, and any other relevant factors at the time a decision needs to be made. Any changes will include an updated Equalities Impact Assessment.

Reason for recommendation:

The recommendations allow for the Council to proceed with administration of the Household Support fund, through an open application process and a targeted support element of the fund. The open application process will ensure that low-income households can come to us directly for financial support if they do not meet the criteria set for targeted payments.

Officer: Sharon Church, Benefits and Financial Resilience Manager

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☒ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning

☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact High Impact

[Equalities Impact Assessment](#)

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; As per previous years the Financial Resilience Team continues to work in partnership with Private Sector Housing and Exeter Community Energy Advice to ensure low-income households receive free energy advice and financial help with energy efficiency measures through a referral process. Referrals also continue to help households access other funding available outside of the Household Support Fund.

Links to background information [Household Support Fund: guidance for local councils - GOV.UK](#)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 25th June, 2025, 10.30 am - Democracy in Devon Household Support Fund final.pdf](#)

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

1. Background

- 1.1 On 19 March 2025 the government announced a seventh round of Household Support Fund for the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.
- 1.2 £742 million has been made available for households most in need and as per previous schemes must be administered in line with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) guidance.
- 1.3 Funding is provided directly to Devon County Council (DCC) who then distribute the funding between the Devon districts and city councils. The Devon wide framework established for the first HSF scheme will continue in place for this latest scheme and will continue to allow for slight local variances in delivery to meet local need.
- 1.4 Due to the County Elections in May the agreement on the proposed policy was not decided by DCC Cabinet Members until 25 June 2025.
- 1.5 Previous schemes have all had slightly different approaches including direct applications and targeted schemes. Targeted awards have been based on DWP guidance, the local needs of residents and have considered the economic climate, such as making an award for Pension Age residents who did not receive the Winter Fuel Allowance during the winter of 2024/25.
- 1.6 The DWP guidance encourages authorities to adopt the following principles.
 - use the funding for the period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 to help vulnerable households in the most need with the cost of essentials and wider essentials.

- consider offering some level of preventative support, which has a longer-term sustainable impact alongside the provision of crisis support
- use funding to support households with housing costs where existing housing support does not meet this need.
- use discretion on how to identify and support vulnerable households, taking into account a wide range of information
- work together with District Councils and third parties including, where necessary and appropriate, local charities, community groups and other local services. Examples of how Authorities may wish to collaborate may include:
 - sharing intelligence and data from wider children's social care systems to help identify and support individuals, families and households within the scope of The Fund
 - receiving referrals for support and applications made on behalf of an individual from professionals working with vulnerable individuals such as social workers, keyworkers delivering early help and family support, housing officers, health visitors and housing support officers

1.7 The guidance also encourages support to be focussed on all vulnerable households in most need with the cost of essentials and rather than focusing on one specific group a wide range of data and sources of information at local authorities disposal should be included to provide support to a broad cross range of vulnerable households to prevent escalation of problems.

1.8 Low-income households helped through the fund should include

- families with children of all ages
- pensioners
- unpaid carers
- care leavers
- disabled residents
- single person households
- larger families
- those struggling with one off financial shocks or unforeseen events.

1.9 As with previous funds help with Housing costs may be considered after all other avenues of funding have been explored such as the Homeless Prevention Grant and Discretionary Housing Payments. The fund cannot be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies. In exceptional and genuine emergencies support can be used to help with historic rent arrears built up prior to an existing claim for households already in receipt of universal Credit Housing Costs and Housing Benefit, however it is noted that this is not the primary intent of the fund.

2. Devon County Council's approach on the allocation of HSF7

2.1 DCC has been awarded total funding of £8,926,693 for the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, a decrease of 11.87% from the previous year where funding was £10,129,752.

2.2 Funding must be spent or committed by the 31 March 2026 and cannot be carried over for future use. Funds should be made available for the whole of the period.

2.3 Once all allocation has been spent the fund will close, this may potentially be earlier than 31 March 2026.

- 2.4 DCC will allocate funding to the following organisations
- Free School Meal Holiday Food Vouchers
 - Team Devon district/city council Hardship scheme
 - Citizens Advice Devon Energy & water Relief scheme
 - DCC Early Help
 - Devon Community Foundation

3. East Devon's Funding Allocation

3.1 East Devon District council has been allocated a total of £453,994 to cover the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

3.2 In addition, administrative costs of £54,479 have been allocated.

3.3 HSF5 and HSF6 covered the period 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. Funding received for these schemes was

Scheme	Period	Grant Funding	Admin Funding	Total Funding
HSF5	01.04.24 – 30.09.24	£284,944	£42,741	£327,685
HSF6	01.10.24 – 31.03.25	£428,373	£59,513	£487,886
		£713,317	£102,254	£815,571

3.4 The total amount of £508,473 received for April 25 to March 2026 is £307,098 (37%) less than the total funding of £815,571 received for the period 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

3.5 This decrease is not only due to the reduction of total funding made available by the government, but also due to the rise in the cost of the Free School Meal Holiday Food Vouchers for 2025/26. This cost is 50% of the total fund as opposed to 26% of the fund for 2024/25.

4. Consideration/Priorities

4.1 The DWP advise that funding must be made available throughout the whole of 2025/26. Continuing to run an open application process would ensure that we meet this criteria and will enable those residents who may be financially struggling but do not receive a targeted payment to continue to apply for support.

4.2 For HSF6 targeted support was made available for Pension Age residents who did not receive the Winter Fuel Allowance during the 2024/25 winter. The government has announced that for the Winter Fuel Allowance will be reinstated for all those with an income of £35,000 per year or less for the winter 2025/26, therefore we have not needed to make provision for this in determining our targeted groups. Residents of Pension Age who require extra financial support will be able to apply through the open application process. Support to complete application forms will be provided by the Benefits and Financial Resilience teams.

4.3 The cost of food and energy prices continues to fluctuate which is likely to mean many low-income households are still finding it difficult to make ends meet.

4.4 The economic outlook is still looking uncertain and there are further announcements due regarding disability benefits eligibility and funding expected.

4.5 Although we have an overall reduction of £307,098 the fund is likely to be administered to households in late September/early October, therefore our targeted support will be able to provide support to residents for the colder months of the year.

4.6 The DWP continue to add to the number of households who should be considered for support. It is worth noting that there is no requirement to receive a welfare benefit in order to receive an award.

5. Proposed approach

5.1 To meet the requirement of the fund being available until 31 March 2026 the open application process should remain in place.

5.2 Up to £387,720 will be made available for targeted support.

5.3 We are proposing the following working-age groups in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Reduction with capital of less than £3000. where there is a member of the household who is;

- Disabled or a carer present.
- Previous serving members of the armed forces.
- Care Leaver who are in receipt of Council Tax Relief and other district benefits (such as Discretionary Housing Payments) or
- The weekly household income is less than the amount a household needs to live on as set out in the standard financial statement spending guidelines (SFS).

Will be entitled to receive a one-off targeted payment of £120.

The Standard Financial Statement is a nationally recognised tool developed in partnership with key stakeholders within the debt and financial services sector, to summarise a person's income and outgoings. It provides a single format for financial statements, allowing the debt advice sector and creditors to work together to achieve the right outcomes for people struggling with their finances. Teams within Revenues and Benefits have recently introduced the vulnerable debt toolkit with the SFS an integral part of this work. Further information on the SFS can be found at <https://sfs.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/what-is-the-standard-financial-statement>

5.4 The following table shows the number of households in each of the above groups to receive an award.

Group	Number of households	Amount
Disabled	1570	£120
Carer	456	£120
Armed Forces	9	£120
Care Leaver	7	£120
Households with children under the SFS	624	£120
Households with no children under the SFS	565	£120
Totals	3231	£387,720

6. Resources

6.1 Well established procedures remain in place for administering the HSF and the wider support that the Financial Resilience team provide to residents.

6.2 Continuing to administer the funding in this way will allow us to continue to follow processes already in place thereby allowing us to refer to our partners including those in the voluntary sector to ensure residents receive the wider wrap around support.

6.3 It is also worth noting that the Household Support Fund will be coming to an end on 31 March 2026. A new Crisis Resilience Fund has been announced by the government. The DWP are still working on this new scheme with details expected before the 1 April 2026. This new scheme will be looking to have a focus on preventative work and helping residents to become more resilient rather than only providing emergency support. Members will be updated on the details of this scheme once we have been made aware of them.

7. Summary

7.1 Funding will be administered in accordance with DWP guidance and in line with the Team Devon framework.

7.2 In the event that changes need to be made to the policy we are recommending that delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director for Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities. This will ensure that we can continue to administer the fund and have all funding spent before the scheme is closed on 31 March 2026.

7.3 [The draft policy for HSF7](#)

As per previous funding a report will be provided to the Poverty Panel where we will provide details of the support provided through HSF6 which covered the period 01 October to 31 March 2025.

Financial implications:

The payment and administration of this scheme is being met from external funding to be received by the Council.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are outlined in the body of the report.

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 3 September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release NA

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan - Update Report

Report summary:

This report provides an update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and associated strategic documents that underpin the effective management and investment in East Devon District Council's housing stock to ensure the housing service remains financially viable, sustainable, and responsive to tenant needs.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet;

1: Note the HRA Business Plan position and required efficiency savings.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable the development of a long-term sustainable Business Plan to ensure sufficient investment in the housing stock

Officer: Liam Reading: Assistant Director – Programmes, Investment & Development

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Medium Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Long term business planning includes inherent risk which is mitigated through constant review

Links to background information .

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan - Update Report

Background / Context

1. The HRA continues to face significant financial pressure in the immediate and longer term. These pressures arise from a range of factors including an historic underinvestment, increased consumer and regulatory standards, general inflation, restricted rent increases, net zero expectations, disrepair claims, complaint resolution, high void and decant costs and other issues. This situation is not unique to East Devon with similar cost pressures being seen amongst other housing providers and stock holding local authorities.
2. As members will be aware, the 2023/24 HRA budget outturn and capital spend far exceeded the planned budget. This necessitated the contribution of all HRA earmarked revenue reserves and required £2.5m of additional borrowing. Furthermore, the adopted HRA 'balance reserve' was reduced from an adopted minimum of £3.1m to £1.76m.
3. Shortly after the start of the 2024/25 financial year, it was established that the proposed budget would be insufficient to meet the needs and demands of the housing service and provide the investment required to ensure decent and regulatory compliant homes. A revised budget was approved by Council in July 2024.
4. Improved budget management, monitoring and controls meant the 2024/25 Budget outturn was within budget at year end. This represents a significant improvement on the previous year and reflects significant improvements in financial planning and management of the HRA.

Business Plan Overview

5. The previous HRA Business Plan has expired and requires updating to reflect current circumstances and the future investment needs of the stock. The purpose of a Business Plan is to ensure long term financial sustainability over a 30-year period and ensure sufficient resources are available for the management, maintenance, repair and improvement of the stock. Business plans should also consider maintaining stock levels through acquisitions, development and estate regeneration.

6. The HRA Business Plan will provide the overall financial framework for the HRA. Operational management and delivery details are set out in accompanying documents such as the Asset Management Plan and Housing Investment and Delivery Plan etc.

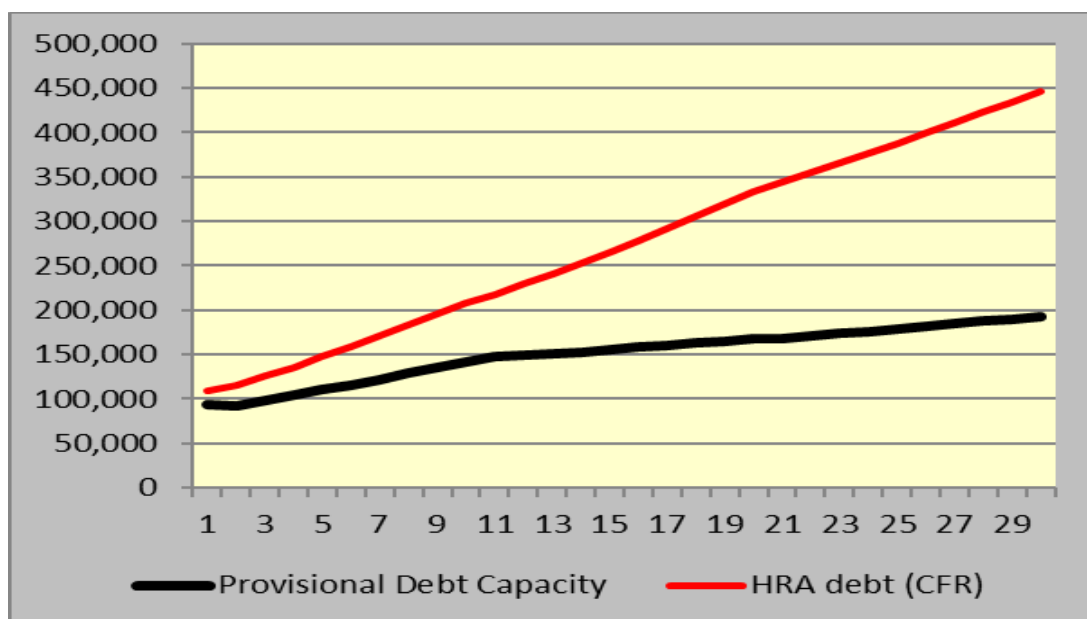
Business Plan & Stock Options Review

7. The Council commissioned Savills to undertake a Business Plan Review and develop a bespoke financial Model for East Devons HRA stock. The key components of the model include;
 - **Income Forecasts:**
Primarily from tenant rents and service charges, including projections based on rent policies and potential rent increases.
 - **Expenditure Forecasts – Revenue**
Routine maintenance and repairs, housing management and staffing costs.
 - **Capital Programme:**
Investment plans for maintaining existing stock and building new homes. This includes investment in major improvements such as roofs, kitchens, bathrooms etc and other compliance elements.
 - **Debt Management:**
How loans for capital investment will be repaid over time. Includes interest and principal repayment plans.
 - **Risk Management:**
Assessing uncertainties such as policy changes, inflation, or economic downturns.

Business Plan Modelling: Base Position

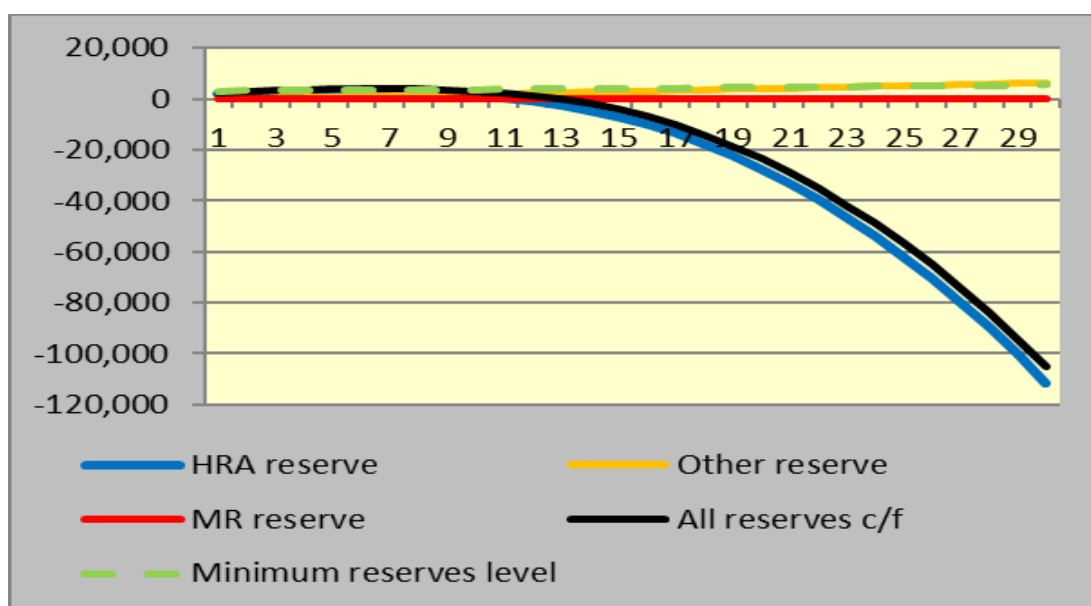
8. The modelling process establishes a base position, reflecting the Council's current financial position and the current approved budget 2025/26. This base position is projected forward, taking account of various factors including the investment requirements of the stock and other assumptions around inflation, borrowing cost and annual rent increases etc.
9. The level of investment that has been assumed for business planning purposes has been informed by the stock condition survey. It should be noted that this level of investment is estimated and has been used to guide the process. An indicative level of investment of £67,439 per property or £281m in total has been assumed over 30 years. This aligns with comparable average stock investment levels, as advised by Savills, and is considered to be a reasonable assumption.
10. In simple terms, the base model establishes the viability of delivering the required level of investment in the stock, whilst continuing to operate on the current revenue budget basis. The model shows the current HRA base position as being highly unsustainable. The level of borrowing/debt becomes significantly above prudential debt capacity i.e. our revenue would be insufficient to service the debt. This would result in the revenue account reaching a critical point within around 10 years.

11. The graph below illustrates how debt, arising from stock investment, is above capacity (red line), and escalates significantly above capacity (black line), over the 30-year business plan period.



Graph 1 – Debt Projection

12. The graph below shows how income does not support the proposed level debt/borrowing. This would result in the revenue / reserve position turning negative in around 10 years i.e. the HRA would be unable to service the debt.



Graph 2 -Revenue Projection

Business Plan: Achieving a sustainable position.

13. In order to support the required level of borrowing for stock maintenance and investment, the HRA needs to reduce revenue expenditure by 15%, or in cash terms by around £2.6m. Whilst achievable, this scale of reduction is significant and highly challenging. It is therefore essential that an Efficiency Plan is established to achieve a long term sustainable position.
14. The following outlines a broad approach to the required savings and efficiencies. It is considered realistic to phase these efficiencies/reductions over a 5 year period with a 2.5%

reduction in revenue expenditure in each of the next 4 years, followed by a 5% reduction in year 5. Reductions would formally commence in 26/27 and continue through a potential transition to a new authority under Local Government Reorganisation. It is assumed that any new authority may result in a merger of other HRA's, resulting in significant efficiencies.

Year	Revenue Saving Target %	Notes
2025/26	0	Transitional year
2026/27	2.5%	Minimum reduction
2027/28	2.5%	Minimum Reduction
2028/29	2.5%	Minimum Reduction – Possible year 1 of new authority
2029/30	2.5%	Minimum Reduction – Possible year 2 of new authority
2030/31	5%	Minimum Reduction – Possible year 3 of a new authority
Total	15%	

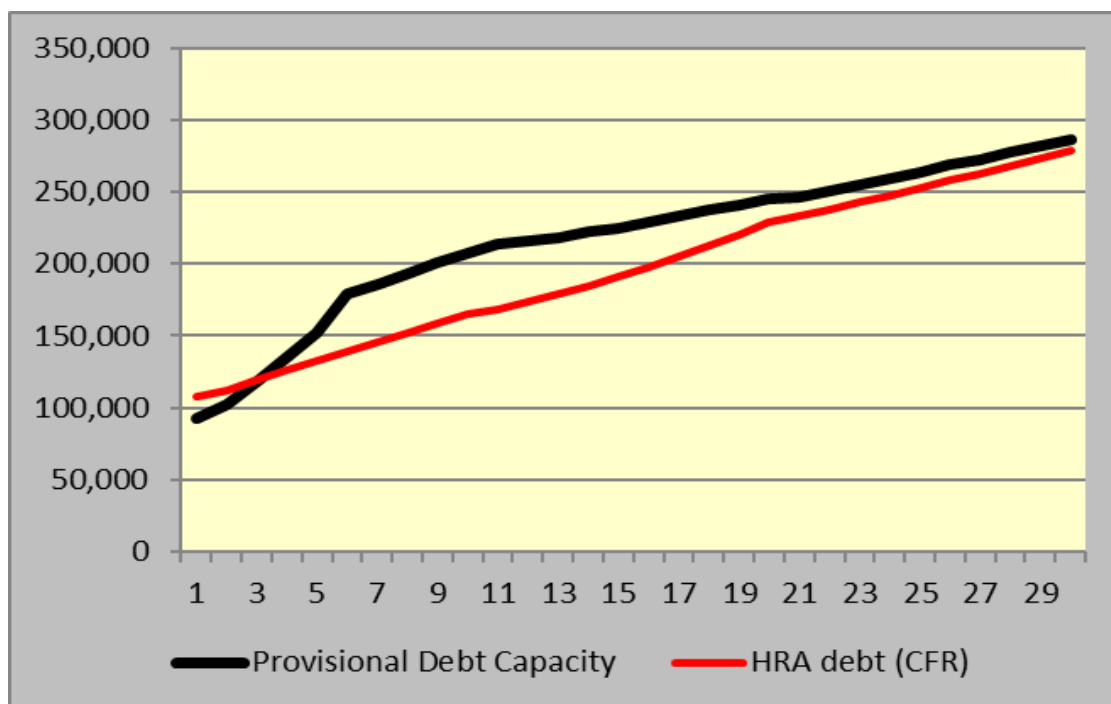
15. The proposed reductions will be split across both Management & Supervision (*M&S – Total current budget £10.25m*) and Repairs & Maintenance (*R&M - Total Current Budget £7.14m*) i.e. the main constituent elements of revenue expenditure. In financial terms the reductions would approximately be as follows.

Budget	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total
Total Reductions	£434,492	£434,491	£434,492	£434,491	£868,963	£2,607,000

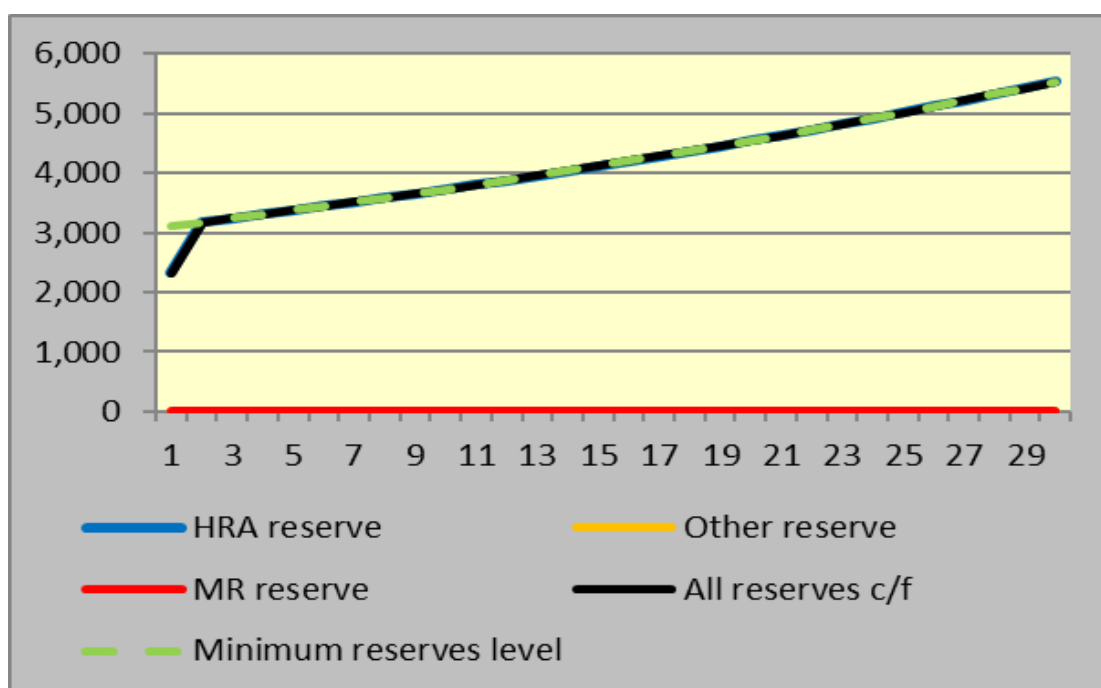
16. If LGR does not proceed as anticipated, the Efficiency Plan will need further review and alternative arrangements developed to ensure the overall 15 % reduction in revenue expenditure is achieved.
17. The balance of reductions between S&M and R&M may change over the life of the Efficiency Plan i.e. greater efficiencies achieved in one would reduce the requirement in the other. Overall however, the target revenue reduction would remain at 15%.

Business Plan – A Sustainable Position

18. Assuming the above efficiencies and reductions are delivered, modelling suggest a sustainable position is achievable within the overall plan period. Debt transitions to within capacity early in the plan period with marginal headroom for a small level of additional borrowing.



Graph 4 above – Debt projection/capacity (2025 – 2055)



Graph 3 above – Revenue Projection (2025 – 2055)

Efficiency Plan – Implications

19. As highlighted, a long-term sustainable position requires a 15% reduction in revenue expenditure. The delivery of these efficiencies and budget reductions are currently being established through an HRA Efficiency Plan. An ongoing internal review has identified a number of opportunities for improved efficiency and cost reductions. This plan will be critical in achieving the required targets and will be kept under constant review.

20. It should be highlighted that it is considered inappropriate to seek redundancies prior to LGR.
21. Any saving or efficiencies will be based upon the principle of finding alternative approaches to service delivery to ensure the quality of tenant services are maintained or improved. This may include the introduction of new technologies, AI integration and working practices that increase efficiency whilst reducing resources / expenditure. Work to date has established significant opportunities in this respect.
22. Other elements of the Efficiency Plan include income maximisation and effective asset management to boost income and tackle poor asset performance.
23. A failure to deliver the required savings will place the long-term sustainability of the HRA at risk. There are limited options for an HRA facing financial issues. In this scenario the following may need to be considered.
 - **Rent flexibility**
Seeking regulatory/government approval to increase rents above CPI + 1
 - **Asset disposals**
Disposing of an increased number of assets to reduce debt
 - **Reduced investment**
Reducing investment in the stock to a minimum only standard
 - **Government financial support**
Not currently available but potentially available in the future
 - **Alternative Management model.**
Outsourcing management to achieve efficiencies

Development & Regeneration Aspirations

24. Maintaining stock levels and responding to the needs of our communities and regenerating our estates are key consideration and a priority for the future of the HRA. The Business Plan model incorporates an ability to include our development and estate regeneration aspirations. Modelling suggests that development activity makes a positive contribution to the revenue position, assuming a certain level of Homes England grant and other sources of capital funding.
25. Our development and regeneration aspirations are set out in a separate report but in summary, have the potential to deliver up to 500 new homes. These ambitions are outlined in the Housing Investment and Delivery Plan (The Build & Buy Plan).

Asset Management

26. Effective Asset Management is critical in achieving long term sustainability for the HRA. The Asset Management Plan, which is under development, will provide a clear strategy to target poor asset performance allowing investment to be targeted effectively. Poor performing assets, which are detrimental to the overall financial health and sustainability of the HRA, will be tackled and potentially disposed of. The Asset Management Plan will be presented to HRB in due course. In the meantime, the principles of effective asset management are embedded in our current approach.

Risk Management & Monitoring

27. It is important to highlight that the Business Plan modelling is a snapshot of our current position and forecast over the long term. Within these forecasts are numerous assumptions around income and costs etc. These include rent increases, inflation, interest rates, RTB sales and many other assumptions. Whilst the forecast and assumptions are based on the best available data and advice, these assumptions may change. This presents an inherent and unavoidable risk. For example, if any of the assumptions change, either positively or negatively, these could have a significant impact on the long-term plan. For that reason, the Business Plan will be kept under constant review, with key assumptions updated to reflect any changes and risk monitored and reported..

Tenant Engagement

28. The interest of our tenants is at the heart of our approach. Our long-term plans for investment in the stock and the provision high quality homes and excellent customer service is highly important. As such we are committed to engaging and communication our plans. We will present our stock investment and longer-term strategic plans to members of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel during the coming summer.

Next Steps.

29. A formal Business Plan will be published later in the current financial year with formal adoption to align with the 2026/27 budget. The plan will set the financial framework for budget setting and capital investment over the medium term.
30. The Asset Management Strategy will be completed and presented to prior to the commencement of the 2026/27 financial year.
31. The Build and Buy Plan, A 5 Year Investment and Development Strategy is presented in a separate report. The financing of the plan will be subject to formal Council approval of the HRA Business Plan.

Financial implications:

The above report lays out the financial position. The affordability of stock investment and the financial sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) relies on the delivery of annual cumulative savings of £434k each year for the next 4 years and then the sum increases based on efficiencies that should be obtained through LGR. This will need to be carefully monitored, along with the costs and income projections in the model to ensure the viability of the HRA.

Legal implications:

This is an important report that appraises members of the financial position as far as the Housing Revenue account is concerned.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan –Q&A

1. Financial Sustainability and Pressures

Q: What are the main financial pressures currently facing the HRA?

A: The HRA is under significant pressure due to historical underinvestment, increased regulatory

standards, inflation, limited rent increases, net zero expectations, disrepair claims, void costs, and more. These are not unique to East Devon but are being felt nationally across housing authorities.

Q: Why was additional borrowing required in 2023/24?

A: Due to budget overspend, the council needed to use all earmarked HRA reserves and borrow an additional £2.5 million. The HRA balance reserve was also reduced to £1.76 million from a recommended £3.1 million.

Q: Is the current HRA Business Plan financially sustainable?

A: No. The base model indicates the current plan is highly unsustainable, with debt projected to exceed prudential borrowing limits within 10 years if no action is taken.

2. Efficiency Plan and Budget Reductions

Q: What is the proposed solution to restore sustainability?

A: A 15% reduction in revenue expenditure (approx. £2.6m) is required. This will be phased over five years starting in 2026/27, with annual reductions of 2.5% for four years, and 5% in the fifth.

Q: Where will these savings come from?

A: Reductions will be split between Management & Supervision (M&S) and Repairs & Maintenance (R&M), with £1.54m targeted from M&S and £1.07m from R&M over the five-year period.

Q: How will this affect staffing?

A: No redundancies are planned before Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). However, staff reductions will occur through natural wastage and a recruitment freeze on non-essential roles.

Q: What if the 15% savings target is not achieved?

A: This would risk the HRA's long-term viability. Alternatives like rent flexibility, asset disposals, reduced investment, government support, or outsourcing may need to be considered.

3. Stock Investment and Development

Q: How much investment is needed for the current housing stock?

A: Approximately £281 million over 30 years (£67,439 per property) has been assumed for modelling purposes based on stock condition surveys and benchmarking by Savills.

Q: Will development and regeneration help the financial position?

A: Possibly. Development activity, assuming grant support, is projected to potentially improve the HRA's revenue position and help maintain housing stock levels.

Q: What are the development goals?

A: The Housing Investment and Delivery Plan aims to deliver up to 500 new homes. This supports both housing needs and financial resilience.

4. Stock Transfer (LSVT) Considerations

Q: Is a Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer (LSVT) being considered?

A: Savills conducted a theoretical appraisal, but the current stock valuation is negative £74 million, with an £87 million debt write-off needed. The resulting valuation of -£161 million makes LSVT financially unviable at this time.

5. Risk Management

Q: What are the key risks to the Business Plan?

A: Risks include assumptions about rent increases, inflation, interest rates, and RTB sales. Any changes in these could significantly affect the plan.

Q: How will risks be monitored?

A: The plan will be under continuous review. Adjustments to assumptions and financial modelling will be made as new data becomes available with risks monitored and reported..

6. Tenant Engagement and Service Quality

Q: How will tenant interests be safeguarded during cost-cutting?

A: All savings will be guided by the principle of maintaining or improving tenant service quality. This includes exploring new technologies, AI, and alternative delivery models.

Q: What engagement is planned with tenants?

A: The council will consult and communicate the investment and strategic plans with tenant panels during the summer and continue engagement through established channels.

7. Next Steps

Q: When will the full updated Business Plan be adopted?

A: The formal HRA Business Plan will be published and adopted, subject to Council approval, to align with the 2026/27 budget.

Q: What other strategic documents are forthcoming?

A: The Asset Management Strategy and the Build & Buy Plan (5-Year Investment Strategy) are key accompanying documents and will be submitted separately.

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 3 September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Report summary:

That Cabinet receives a summary of the Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) including a separate link to the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy website & mapping and consider recommendations for sign off for public consultation.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

1. That Cabinet agrees as the Supporting Authority that the draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy be made available for public consultation;
2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Nature and Climate to make or approve amendments to the consultation materials prior to public consultation.
3. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Nature and Climate to approve the final version of the Devon Local Nature Strategy following the public consultation.

Reason for recommendation:

The draft Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) addresses requirements set out in the Environment Act 2021. The LNRS has been drafted by Devon County Council as Responsible Authority in collaboration with a wide range of partners including East Devon DC. East Devon DC is a Supporting Authority in this process and officers have been involved. The Strategy needs to be finalised by December in order for Devon to get further funding. Devon CC officers who have been leading the development of the LNRS supported by relevant East Devon DC officers now consider that it is ready to go out for public consultation for wider discussion. There are considered to be no risks associated with this consultation.

Officer: Sarah Jennings, DCC Ecologist: Sarah.Jennings@devon.gov.uk; Will Dommett, District Ecologist, Will.Dommett@eastdevon.gov.uk; James Chubb, Countryside Manager, James.Chubb@eastdevon.gov.uk; Charlie Plowden, Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology, Charlie.Plowden@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement

- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☒ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☒ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; The failure to agree as a Supporting Authority to the public consultation will delay the final production of the Strategy for all local authorities in Devon.

Links to background information Environment Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)
 The Environment Regulations 2023 (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) (legislation.gov.uk)

[Defra LNRS Supporting Authority Factsheet](#)

Update to the Natural Environment section of [planning practice guidance](#) on 19/02/25

[Devon LNRS additional information](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

1. The Role of the Strategy

- 1.1 England is considered to be one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world following historic losses and ongoing declines. The Government has made legally binding commitments to end these declines and for nature to recover. Part of this commitment includes a statutory requirement through Sections 104 to 106 of the Environment Act 2021 for the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) for identified areas across the Country. Devon is one of 48 such areas.
- 1.2 All public authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must have 'regard' to relevant local nature recovery strategies in this process. The LNRSs are new spatial strategies that will inform nature recovery at a strategic local level, by mapping habitats, features and key species to identify opportunities and priorities to boost ecological connectivity, diversity and abundance. They will support the delivery of biodiversity net gain and provide a focus for the strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Online resources aim to help everyone to play a role in nature recovery.
- 1.3 Devon County Council (DCC) was appointed as the Responsible Authority for Devon LNRS under section 105 of the Environment Act 2021. Responsible Authorities are responsible for preparing, publishing, reviewing and republishing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy following the process set out in The Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023.

- 1.4 LNRSs must be produced in collaboration with Supporting Authorities and all other relevant stakeholders. A Supporting Authorities Officer Group was set up and has met regularly throughout the preparation of the LNRS. East Devon District Council is a Supporting Authority for the LNRS, along with other local authorities and Natural England.
- 1.5 Co-benefits to nature recovery include:
- Climate Change adaptation and mitigation.
 - Water quality.
 - Natural Capital and ecosystem services.
 - Wellbeing.
- 1.6 The draft LNRS comprises a website and interactive mapping. These formats will enable the material and GIS-linked data to be accessible and useful to a wide range of audiences.

2.0 Progress with the Strategy and preparation for public consultation

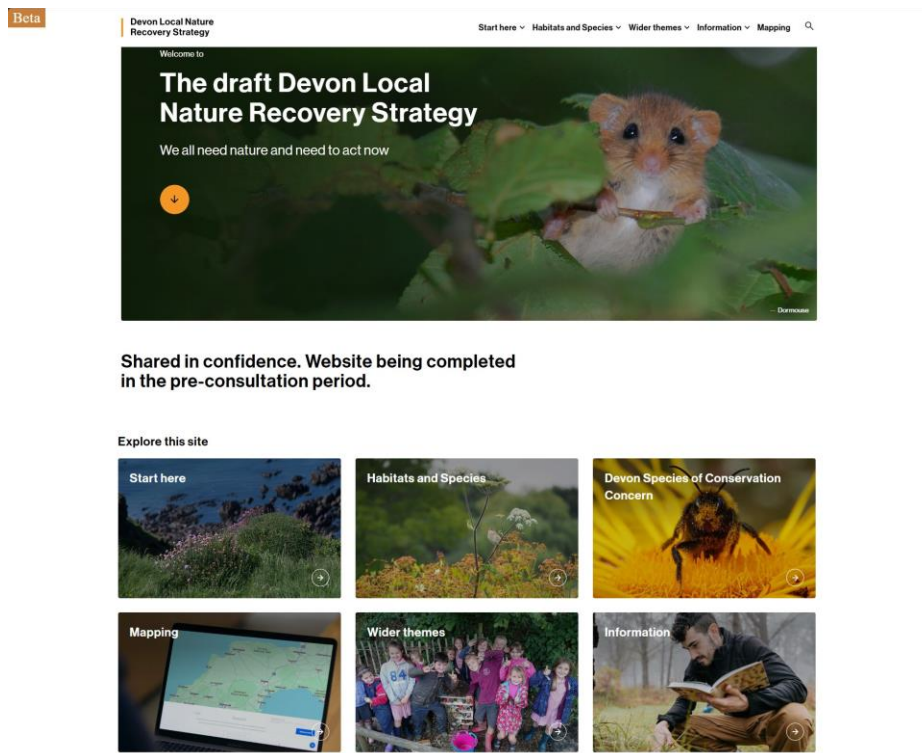
- 2.1 Devon CC's Ecology Team has led the development of the LNRS under the umbrella of the Devon Local Nature Partnership. Funding has been used to engage a team of wildlife experts to pull together the information required for the LNRS and to liaise with relevant partners. Devon CC has also engaged a web designer, copy writer and other consultants to work on mapping, water quality, natural flood management etc.
- 2.2 The Assistant Director – Countryside, Environment & Ecology, District Ecologist, and the Countryside Manager have worked with the Devon CC LNRS team to develop the draft LNRS. The draft pre-consultation LNRS material is confidential and not for the public realm until signed off by all Supporting Authorities for public consultation. Devon CC have advised that it is confidential because all Supporting Authorities (District Councils) need to sign it off for public consultation and so until all Supporting Authorities have done that it should not go into the public domain. This is because another Supporting Authority may request that something sensitive is changed within the LNRS.

3.0 Background details

- 3.1 LNRSs are statutory strategies and must include:
- A **description** of the county's wildlife, including opportunities and pressures.
 - **Priorities** for habitats and species (to prevent extinctions and increase abundance, following the Lawton principles of Better, Bigger, More, Joined up).
 - **Actions** needed to achieve the priorities.
 - Actions for nature restoration that **will help to meet other priorities** such as carbon sequestration, flood control, better water quality, health and wellbeing.
 - **Maps** showing (a) designated sites and irreplaceable habitats; (b) places where we most need to focus action.
- 3.2 They must be user friendly. They must be produced in collaboration.
- 3.3 They set out **opportunities** and will influence funding (Environmental Land Management schemes, BNG, HLF, etc.). They are not about new designations or restrictions. However, Local Planning Authorities must have regard for them.
- 3.4 They are part of a 'nested suite' of nature strategies at a range of scales. The LNRS sets out priorities at the county level and what we need to do to help meet relevant national

targets. In turn it informs nature strategies at the sub county level which will also have their own local priorities (Protected Landscapes, local authorities, community groups etc.).

- 3.5 Statutory 'Supporting Authorities' must be involved (Local Authorities and Natural England) and be given a 28-day formal consultation period prior to public consultation and post public consultation.
- 3.6 They are funded by DEFRA and each has a Natural England lead officer.
- 3.7 They should be finalised in 2025.
- 3.8 More details can be found in the Environment Act 2021 and Defra LNRS guidance documents, see links above.
- 3.9 For information shown below are screenshots of the draft LNRS which help to show what the format and content will look like and how it can be used.




The home page of the Devon LNRS

It has tiles to explore and navigate to the rest of the website.

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍



Start here

This page is being edited and restructured by our copywriter. We will have a menu on the rhs to move between sections.

We need Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

TO DRAFT – We need this new plan because nature is under huge pressure. xxxxx couple of reality check sentences about the state of nature and then be positive – huge ops –

Ref land use framework? Lots of demands on Devon's land – food, energy, timber, housing, shops, business and industrial sites, transport infrastructure, recreation areas, quarries etc – wildlife needs to be integrated within these land uses and in some cases (rare habitats) needs to be prioritised over other needs – give example – restoring wildlife and providing for all our other needs is possible and we need to get better at it....

ref national targets – 30x30 / nature recovery network / climate / connecting people and nature

– as a society we need to be better-organised and more focused if we want to give nature the space it needs and a chance to recover.

They are for everyone to use

Everyone can do something for wildlife, either directly (farmers, gardeners, developers and planners, parks and green space managers/contractors, volunteers) or indirectly (funders, educators, policy makers, voters).

A few examples are listed under 'How to use the Devon LNRS' below.

The Start here tab provides background of what the LNRS is, who it's for and how to use it, including a few examples of different sectors.





Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍

Did you know

IMPORTANT: The LNRS mapping is for guidance only and, given the size of Devon, has not been checked at field level. Land management decisions must be based on knowledge of soils, habitat and species surveys, and knowledge of past management.

A few examples of how some different sectors can use the Devon LNRS are given below:

	Farming	+
	Forestry and arboriculture	+
	Greenspace management (tourism, landscaping, parks, gardening)	+
	Communities	+

Example habitat page, showing habitat snapshot, and lower down the page, the priority and actions for the habitat. Please note the side menu which allows easily navigate the page: 1. About 2. What we need to do and where 3. Inspiration and 4. Find out more.

What we need to do and where includes the priorities and actions and links to the mapping viewer and explanation of relevant mapping layers.

Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍


Home ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Habitats ▾ Ancient and veteran trees

Ancient and veteran trees

The dead and decaying wood in and from these trees is one of the most wildlife-rich and important habitats in Devon.

Other important microhabitats include small rot holes, loose bark and sap runs.

What we need to do and where →



Arington Court, Chery/Darwell

Snapshot for ancient and veteran trees

What wildlife-rich looks like: Dead branches, decaying wood, holes, cavities, splits, sap runs and loose bark. Ancient trees with wide and hollow trunks. Features support a wealth of wildlife, particularly moths, beetles, flies, fungi, lichens, nesting birds and roosting bats. A range of flowering plants, trees and shrubs are close by and provide nectar and pollen for the moths, beetles and flies.	Focus Species: Birds: Lesser spotted woodpeckers, pied flycatchers, spotted flycatchers. Insects: Dartmoor ancient oak wood moths (especially beautiful bark moth and silver-streaked beauty), blue ground beetle, six-spotted longhorn beetle, apple loabag, veteran tree flies (<i>Mesita britannica</i> and <i>Rhyssalus clonophora</i>). Lichens and fungi: Veteran tree lichens (fungi to be added).	UK significance: UK priority habitat: Yes Statutory irreplaceable habitats: Ancient and veteran trees
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Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Start here ▾ Habitats and Species ▾ Wider themes ▾ Information ▾ Mapping 🔍

🔍 Lush and historic value

2. What we need to do and where

Priority

Better (healthy and wildlife-rich) and more ancient and veteran trees, with existing veteran trees forming the core of a future veteran tree network that's growing across Devon.

See **Find out more** below for detailed guidance and sources of funding and advice.

Actions for ancient and veteran trees

Follow best practice guidance to maximise the wildlife value of ancient and veteran trees in woodlands and open habitats, including their microhabitats

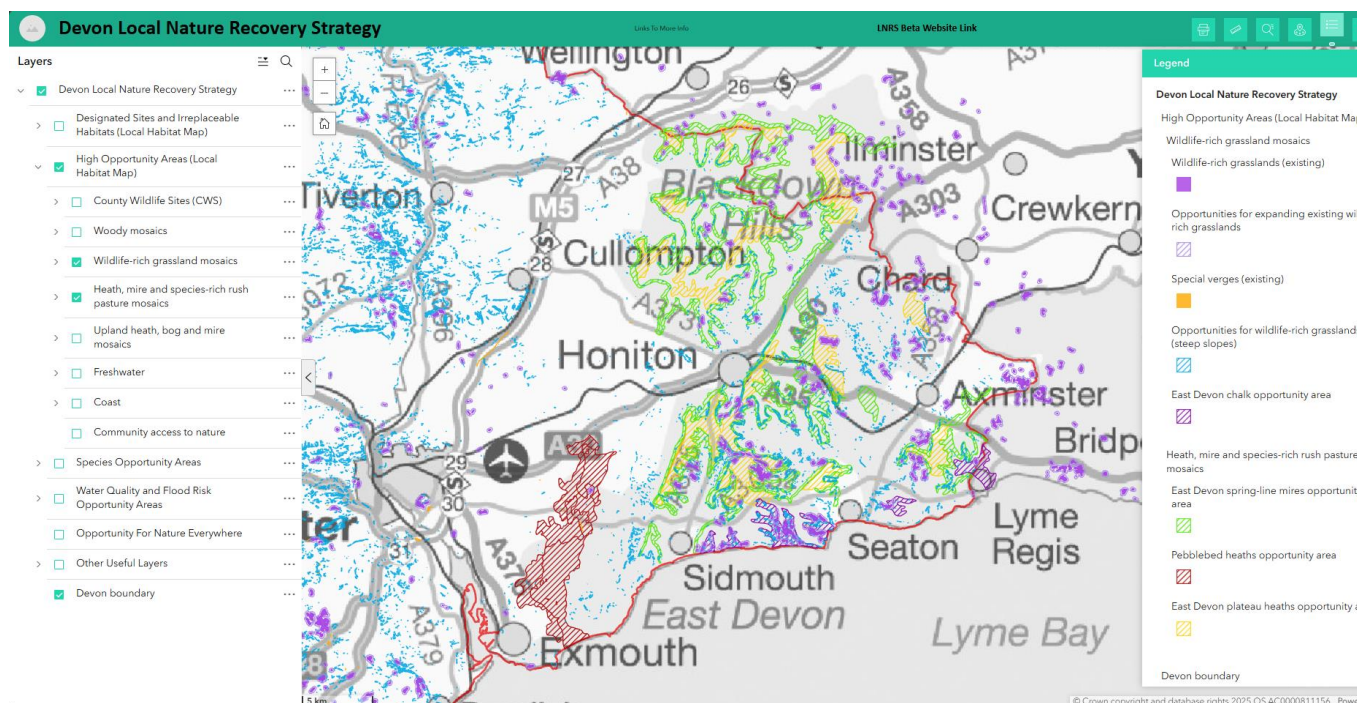
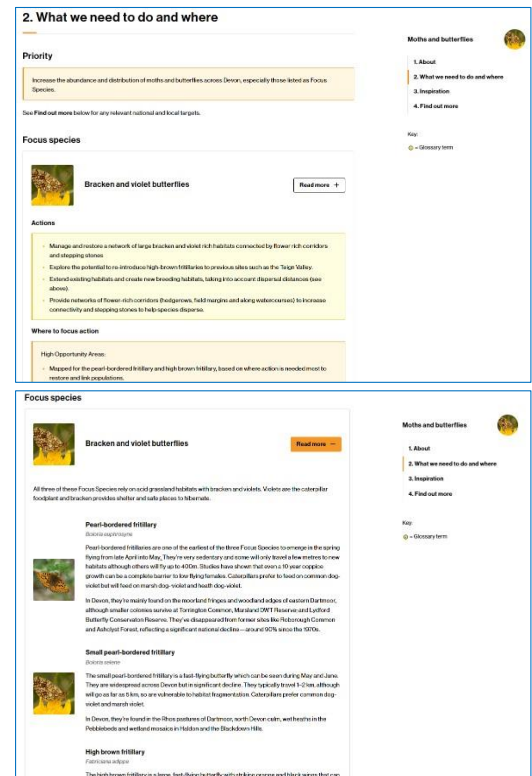
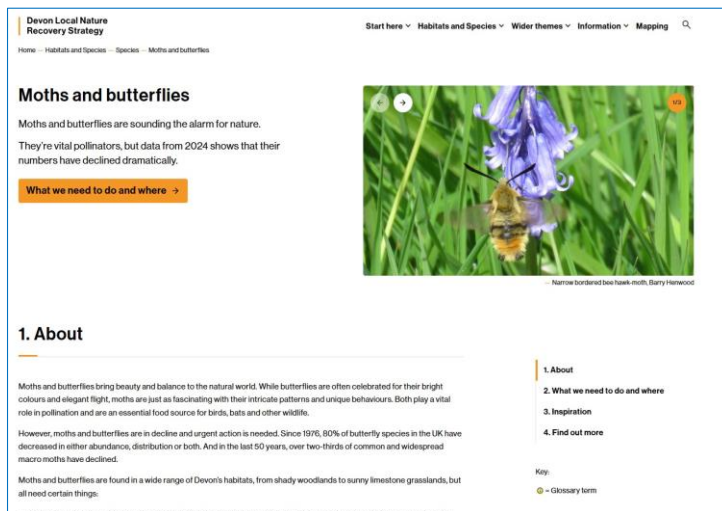
- Leave standing and fallen deadwood, collapsed trees and branches (even small ones), other than where there's a clear safety issue and no alternatives. Pile up deadwood and fallen branches rather than chipping or burning them.
- Protect the root zone through sensitive management (consider impacts from vehicles, ploughing and stocking rates) and during infrastructure projects. Consider brush piling (especially fallen deadwood) and bramble zones to prevent compaction and increase habitat.
- Carry out works at times that are least likely to affect wildlife. For example, take care during breeding and hibernation seasons.
- Avoid carrying out works in woodlands that will cause sudden changes in light levels or humidity as these can reduce the wildlife value of veteran trees, including by affecting bat roosts.
- Carry out sensitive thinning of woodlands around existing veteran trees to give them more space and exposure to light.

Ancient and veteran trees

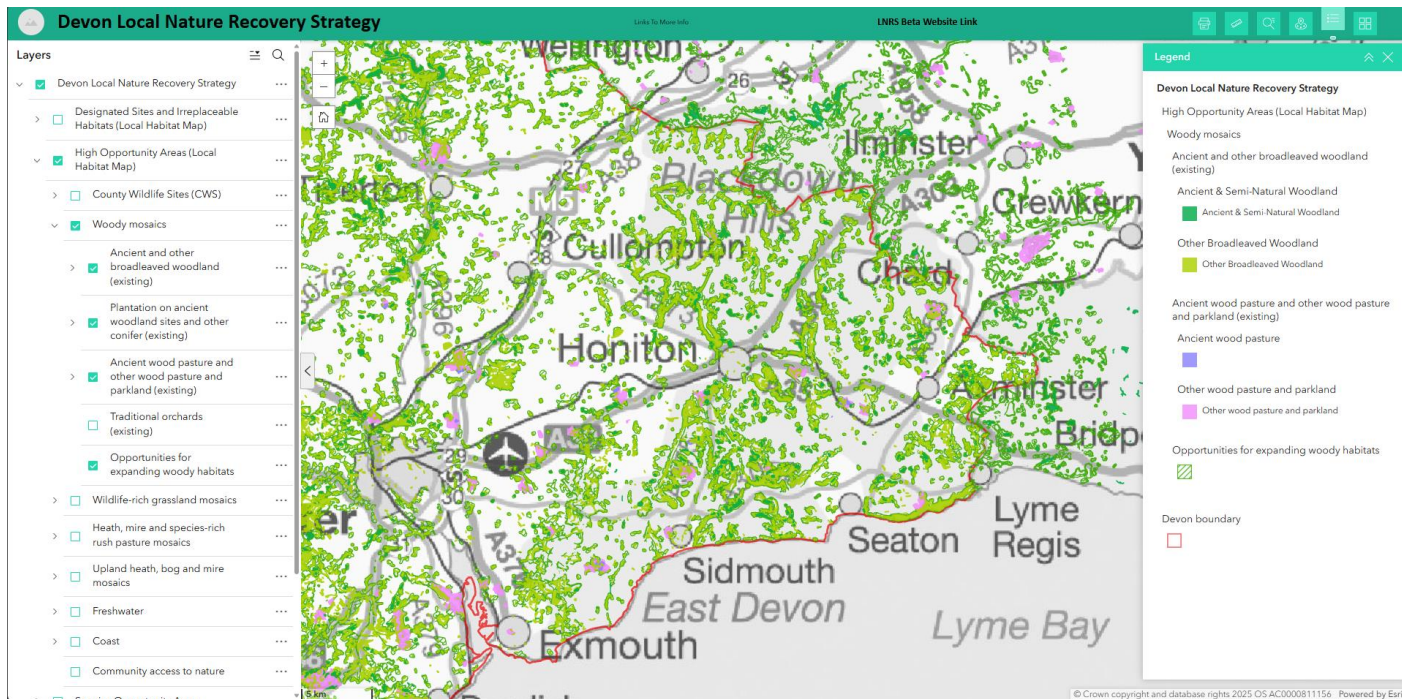
- About
- What we need to do and where**
- Inspiration
- Find out more

Key:
 📖 – Glossary term

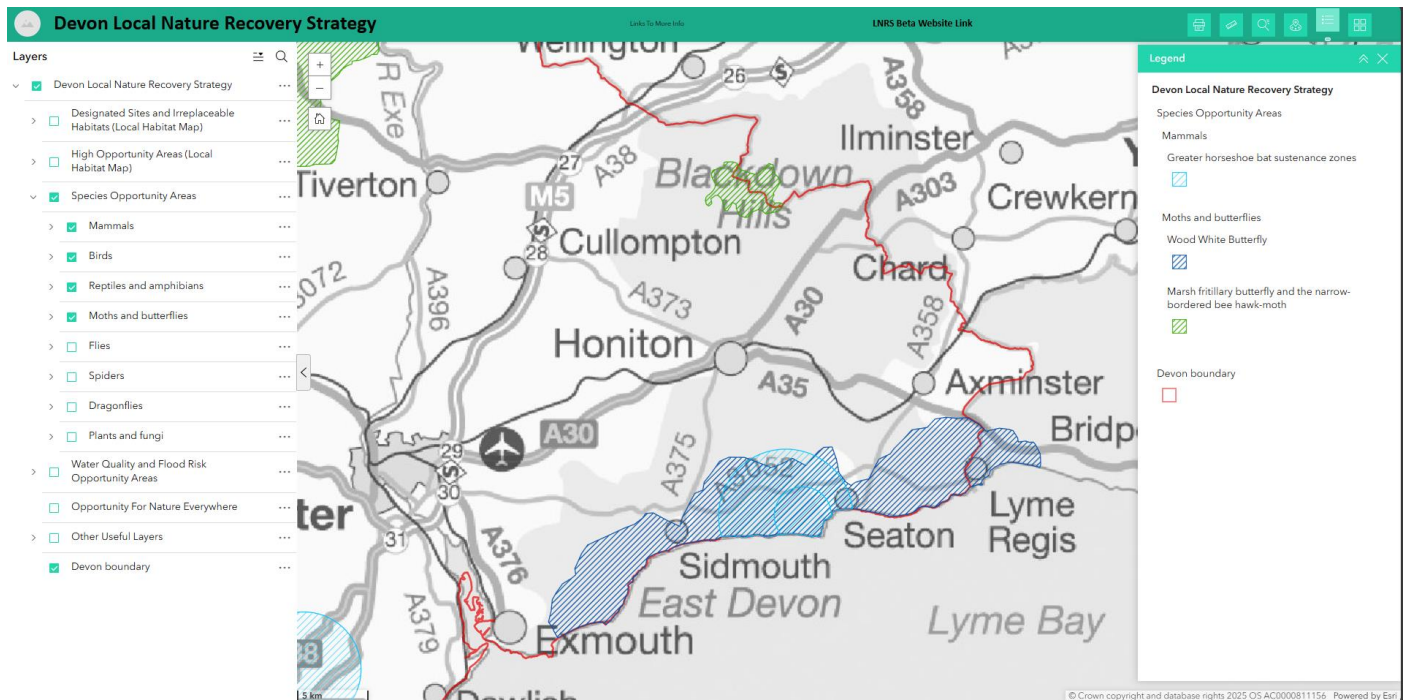
Example species page, has a call-to-action box to take you directly to what you need to do so and where, lower down the page, the priority and actions including focus species groups and individual focus species. If you wish to read more about the species, you can click on the read more box.



Devon LNRS mapping showing the High Opportunity Areas (HOA) for Wildlife –rich grassland mosaics: Wildlife-rich grasslands (existing) Opportunities for expanding existing wildlife-rich grasslands, Special verges (existing), Opportunities for wildlife-rich grasslands (steep slopes), East Devon chalk opportunity area Heath, mire and species-rich rush pasture mosaics: East Devon spring-line mires opportunity area, Pebblebed heaths opportunity area, East Devon plateau heaths opportunity area.



Devon LNRS mapping showing the High Opportunity Areas (HOA) for Woody mosaics: Ancient and other broadleaved woodland (existing), Ancient wood pasture and other wood pasture and parkland (existing) and Opportunities for expanding woody habitats



Example mapping of Species Opportunity Areas – these are not mapped within the LNRS Local Habitat Map but do feature actions within the LNR

4.0 Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the planning system

- 4.1 All public authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must 'have regard' to relevant local nature recovery strategies in this process. Local Planning Authorities should consider how LNRS priorities, actions and mapping are reflected in Local Plans and development management decisions. LNRSs have been given a statutory link to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Simplistically, BNG proposals will be assessed as having a 'high strategic significance' score in the statutory metric if they are located in an area mapped for action in the LNRS Local Habitat Map, and the proposal is consistent with said actions.
- 4.2 The government has made it clear that LNRSs are not intended to act as a barrier to development or place new restrictions on developing land or making land use changes. LNRSs provide guidance and an evidence base to inform Local Plans and decision making. Planning decisions at both the plan making and planning application stage need to consider all material considerations and the LNRS will be one consideration amongst many.

5.0 Next steps

- 5.1 It is expected that, subject to approval being given by all the Supporting Authorities, Devon CC (as Responsible Authority) will publish the consultation draft Devon LNRS for a public consultation in late September / October 2025. Following the public consultation and any amendments being made to the draft LNRS, there will be a further formal 28-day period when the Supporting Authorities will be consulted before the strategy is finalised.
- 5.2 The post consultation, final LNRS, is to be approved as set out in Recommendation 3 within the report as a final sign off by East Devon DC as one of the Supporting Authorities. Defra has provided guidance that all LNRS must be finalised by December 2025. Once adopted it will enable East Devon DC Officers to produce its own Local Nature Recovery Plan that aligns with the Devon LNRS but at a more granular level. Once the final LNRS has been approved by the Supporting Authorities, Devon CC must then notify the Secretary of State of its intention to publish the strategy. When the Secretary of State has given approval Devon CC can then publish the strategy and make hard copies available. Thereafter there will be a duty for the Responsible Authority to undertake a review of the final LNRS following notification from the Secretary of State if there is a need to do so.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implication resulting from the report

Legal implications:

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

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting 3rd September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Update

Report summary:

This report provides an update in relation to proposals for both Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution. It includes information regarding the passage of key legislation, proposals for the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority and further details around the various options for local government reorganisation and the associated timeline for implementation. The report seeks a delegation to the Chief Executive to continue to develop proposals for the configuration and coverage of future principal authorities in consultation with the Deputy Leader, recognising that the Leader of the Council now has a lead role for Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution at the County Council. It also provides notification of the appointment of specialist support on behalf of the Councils developing the 1/4/5 model to help ensure that a credible and persuasive full proposal comes forward. Finally, the report recommends that both Cabinet and Council receive a report detailing the full proposal prior to submission by the deadline of the 28th November.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet;

Grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council, Corporate and External Engagement to continue to develop proposals for the configuration and coverage of future principal authorities.

Notes the appointment of specialist support on behalf of the constituent Councils progressing the 1/4/5 model of local government reorganisation

Receives a further report detailing the full proposal for the 1/4/5 model of local government reorganisation in Devon.

Reason for recommendation:

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

To recognise the change in administration at the County Council and the lead role that the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council, Corporate and External Engagement now plays in relation to Local Government Reorganisation for the District Council.

Officer: Andy Wood, Director of Place, email andy.wood@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

☐ Assets and Economy

- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

If choosing High or Medium level outline the equality considerations here, which should include any particular adverse impact on people with protected characteristics and actions to mitigate these. Link to an equalities impact assessment form using the [equalities form template](#).

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: High Risk; The future shape and form of local government structures will be a key determinant of how funds and powers flow from central government which will ultimately impact how services are delivered to residents.

Links to background information [Devon County Council - Interim Plan.pdf \(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Extraordinary Meeting of the Council, 14/08/2025 18:00 \(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 05/02/2025 18:00](#)

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

1. Background and context

1.1 The English Devolution White Paper was published in December 2024 and set out the government's commitment to end the current two-tier structure of local government. Since this time Member briefings have been held and updates shared as further details have become available. This is alongside keeping the Member Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution site on the intranet updated to ensure access to a library of information. This report provides a further update including regarding the passage of key legislation, proposals for the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority and further details around the various options for local government reorganisation and the associated timeline for implementation.

1.2 Devon local authorities submitted their interim plans for local government reorganisation on or before March 21st, 2025. In total six interim plan submissions were made as follows;

- Interim Plan submitted by 7 of the 8 Devon district councils (East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, North Devon District Council, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council) and Torbay Council
- Devon County Council Interim Plan
- Exeter City Council Interim Plan
- North Devon District Council Interim Plan
- Plymouth City Council Interim Plan

- Torbay Council Interim Plan

1.3 The next stage is to work towards the submission of formal proposals by the deadline of the 28th November. Each council can only make one formal proposal for unitary local government, and a proposal can either be submitted individually by a council or jointly with other councils that were invited.

1.4 To meet the terms of the invitation, the proposal must be for the whole of the Devon area and provide the information requested in the invitation. The Secretary of State can decide to take forward proposals that are submitted by areas with or without modification. If councils within an area cannot agree on a single proposal and want to submit separate proposals, the government's preference is for these to be submitted together, as a single submission for the area, which includes all proposals being put forward by councils, and is supported by a shared evidence base used by all proposals

2. Interim Plan Options

2.1 Several different options have been put forward within the Interim Plan submissions aimed at replacing the current two-tier system of county and district councils with a single-tier unitary model. The proposals are all based on government guidelines that unitary authorities should aim for a population 500,000 people or more, be based on the existing district areas as the key building blocks and be financially resilient and deliver effective services. The number of options is symptomatic of the challenge in determining the optimum model for an area of 2,600 sq miles and a combined population in excess of 1.25m people.

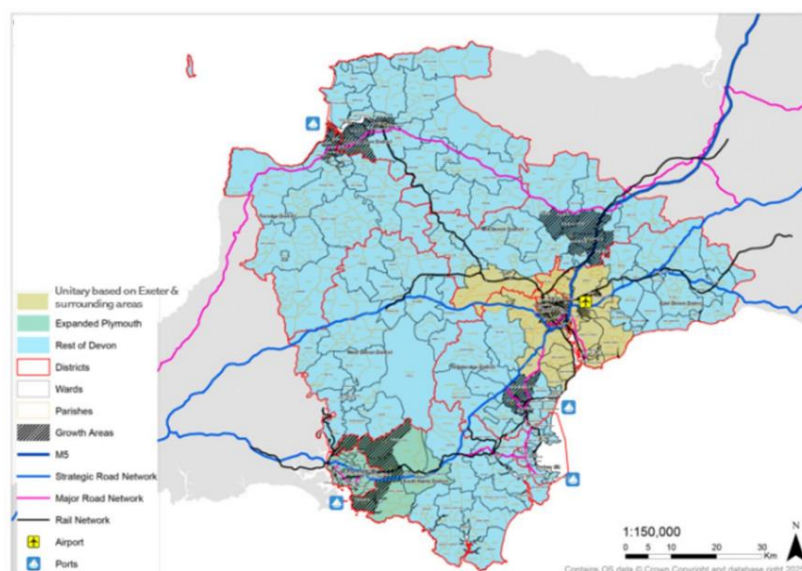
2.2 The main options are summarised at Appendix A. The government provided feedback on these plans on May 15th 2025 (see Appendix B).

3. Exeter City Council preferred geography

3.1 Exeter City Council's interim plan submission stopped short of identifying a preferred geography for the proposed unitary authorities. An extraordinary meeting of Exeter City Council held on the 14th August has now helped to provide further clarity in this respect. The associated report proposed a three-unitary model for Devon that would consist of:

- An urban unitary council for the city of Exeter and the surrounding parishes. This new council would have an initial population of about 256,401, projected to rise to 294,079 by 2040.
- An urban unitary council for the city of Plymouth and adjacent parishes, with a population of approximately 301,000, growing to 318,612 by 2040.
- A rural and coastal unitary council for the remainder of Devon, serving a population of around 675,179, projected to increase to 765,834 by 2040.

3.2 This proposal is set out in the map below;



3.3 This proposed geography was supported nearly unanimously (with just one abstention) at the Council meeting. Alongside the existing City Council administrative area, the proposed boundary for the unitary council encompassed the following parishes;

15 Parishes from within Teignbridge District Council	28 Parishes from within East Devon District Council		6 Parishes from within Mid Devon District Council
Dawlish Town Ashcombe Mamhead Starcross Kenton Chudleigh Town Powderham Exminster Kenn Dunchideock Shillingford St George Ide Holcombe Burnell Whitestone Tedburn St Mary	Exmouth Woodbury Lypstone Otterton East Budleigh Budleigh Salterton Colaton Raleigh Bicton Upton Pyne Brampford Speke Stoke Cannon Nether Exe Rewe Huxham	Poltimore Broadclyst Clyst Hydon Clyst St Lawrence Whimble Cranbrook Rockbeare West Hill Aylesbeare Farringdon Clyst Honiton Sowton Clyst St Mary Clyst St George	Cheriton Bishop Hittisleigh Colebrook Credton Town Credton Hamlets Newton St Cyres

3.4 The report highlights several key reasons underpinning the proposals:

- **Economic Benefits:** A new unitary council based on Exeter and its surrounding area is intended to unlock economic benefits, deliver much-needed housing and infrastructure, and create a resilient economic hub. This model would also support the economies of Devon's distinctive market towns and rural/coastal communities.
- **Improved Service Delivery:** The shift to a single tier of local government would allow services to be better designed around the specific needs of urban, rural, and coastal communities. The proposal emphasizes a place-based approach to service delivery, particularly for critical services like adult social care, children's services, and SEND services, arguing that a more localized focus is a "prevention superpower".
- **Financial Resilience:** An initial assessment by Pixel Financial Management suggests that a unitary council for Exeter and the surrounding area would have sufficient financial scale and resources to be resilient. The report notes that the new unitary authority for the "Rest of Devon" would be one of the largest in the country in terms of funding, making it capable of withstanding financial shocks.

3.4 The report also acknowledges some potential risks and areas for further work:

- The financial viability, particularly the costs of delivering services like Adult Social Care and Children's Services, still needs to be fully assessed.
- The proposal involves breaking down existing district council boundaries, which adds complexity to the financial analysis.
- The government's criteria for reorganisation, which states that existing districts should be the "building blocks" for proposals, is a potential risk, but the report argues that the proposal's justification mitigates this.
- The council plans to undertake a program of public and stakeholder engagement to gather feedback on the proposed geography and build a detailed final proposal.

4. English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

4.1 The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, introduced to Parliament in July 2025, represents a significant shift in the UK government's approach to local governance. Building on the 2024 English Devolution White Paper, the Bill's primary objective is to widen and deepen devolution across England, creating a simpler and more consistent framework for transferring power from Whitehall to local leaders. This is intended to stimulate economic growth and empower communities to have greater control over their local areas.

4.2 A key provision of the Bill is the establishment of a new category of local government, the "Strategic Authority" (SA). These authorities, which include Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Combined County Authorities (CCAs), are designed to be the primary recipients of new devolved powers. The Bill creates three tiers of SAs—Foundation, Mayoral, and Established Mayoral—each with a defined set of powers. The legislation streamlines the process for creating and expanding these authorities, and crucially, gives the Secretary of State the power to compel their formation, even without local consensus.

4.3 Strategic Authorities will be given "areas of competence," including:

Transport and local infrastructure: With powers to regulate micromobility vehicles, create a "Key Route Network" of major local roads, and act as a local transport authority.

Skills and employment support: Devolution of the Adult Skills Fund, giving local leaders more control over adult education.

Housing and strategic planning: Including new powers for mayors to direct planning applications of strategic importance and to introduce a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy.

Economic development and regeneration: With the ability to establish Mayoral Development Corporations.

Environment and net zero: To ensure local actions align with national climate goals.

Health, wellbeing, and public service reform: Giving SAs a legal duty to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities.

Public safety: Allowing for the consolidation of Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority functions under a mayor.

4.4 Beyond the creation of Strategic Authorities, the Bill introduces several other major reforms. It requires all local authorities to transition from a committee system to a leader and cabinet model and prevents the creation of any new local authority mayors. It also seeks to overhaul the local audit system by establishing a single Local Audit Office (LAO) to oversee all audit functions.

4.5 The legislation also contains measures to empower local communities directly. It strengthens the Community Right to Buy, making it easier for community groups to acquire and protect local assets. Additionally, the Bill places a new duty on local authorities to ensure effective "neighbourhood governance," a measure that could formalise the role of town and parish councils in local decision-making.

4.6 The Bill, therefore, is a comprehensive piece of legislation that seeks to not only deepen devolution in England but also to fundamentally restructure local government, enhance community rights, and reform key public services like audit and planning.

5. South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority

5.1 A letter dated July 25, 2025, from the Leaders of all Councils in Devon to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, expresses a joint interest in future devolution opportunities. The letter proposes the creation of a South West Peninsula Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA). The proposed MSA would encompass a population of in excess of 1.2 million people and a diverse economy worth over £25 billion annually. While the ongoing local government reorganisation may change constituent authorities, the letter makes it clear that the leaders believe the time is right for a more comprehensive devolution agreement. In itself this

recognises that introducing a Mayoral Strategic Authority is now a precursor to securing significant funding.

5.2 The letter outlines the benefits of a coordinated approach, including:

- Maximising environmental assets and research capacity to position the UK as a leader in environmental intelligence and clean marine innovation.
- Leveraging a significant tourism economy (worth over £2 billion annually) and its support for nearly 33,000 jobs through coordinated investment.
- Addressing specific housing pressures with a strategic approach to affordability and availability.
- Creating an integrated transport network that connects rural and coastal communities with urban centres.
- Developing coordinated skills provision to meet the needs of key growth sectors and address productivity challenges.
- Supporting the vital national security role of Devonport dockyard, which is receiving a £4.4 billion investment.

5.3 The Leaders state their commitment to working at pace including a desire to discuss the proposals further at Ministerial level. It is also highlighted that whilst Cornwall Council has declined to participate at this time, the door will be left open for them to join in the future.

6. Public survey

6.1 A key part of developing the full proposals for local government reorganisation is undertaking extensive engagement with key stakeholders, not least local residents. A public survey was undertaken during July and August which was consistent across the Devon Districts. This will provide a powerful means of understanding the needs and desires of members of the public across a large part of Devon.

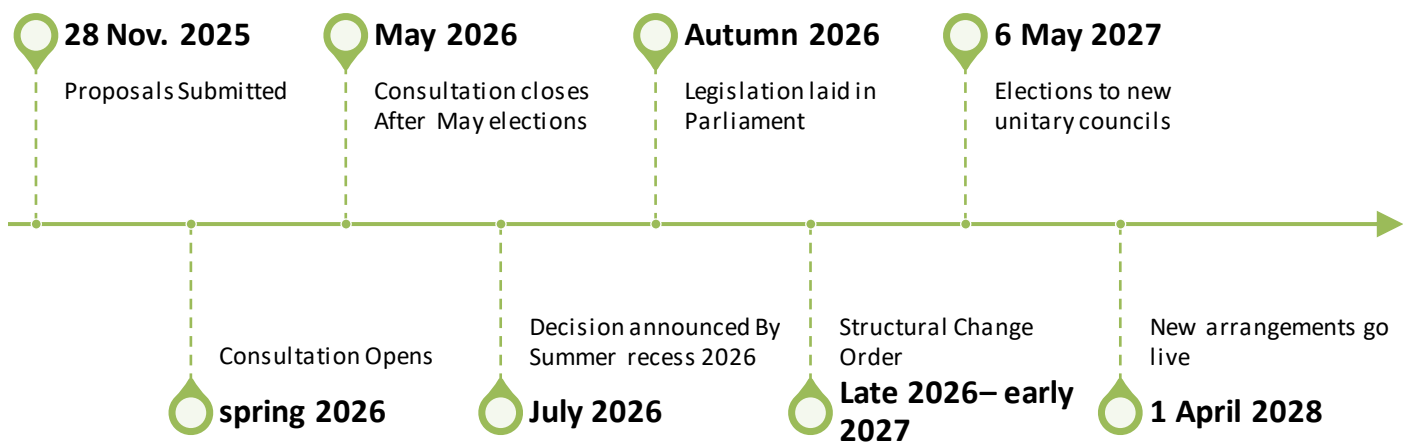
6.2 Initial analysis of the results for East Devon are contained at Appendix C. It will be important that the key messages and sentiment captured in the survey help to shape the development of the full proposal. This will be alongside engagement with key stakeholders in the public service, business, education and environment sectors.

7. Programme and next steps

7.1 This report highlights the complex landscape in terms of the differing LGR proposals currently. The key date remains the 28th November deadline for full proposals. This will prompt further clarity including the County Council determining their preferred option.

7.2 In line with previous resolutions, Cabinet and Council will consider the full proposal for the 1-4-5 model of local government prior to this being submitted to central government. It is a specific recommendation of this report that a delegation is given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council, Corporate and External Engagement to continue to develop proposals for the configuration and coverage of future principal authorities. This is an evolution of the relevant resolution from the full Council meeting on the 9th January and reflect the fact that the Leader of the Council now has a lead role for Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution at the County Council.

7.3 Beyond the 28th November the timeline is expected to be as follows;



We will continue to hold briefings and provide regular updates to both Members of the District Council and Parish and Town Councils as the proposals develop and key milestones are reached.

7.4 It should be noted that correspondence received from the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution on the 24th July (Appendix D) confirmed the government's intent to issue section 24 notices under the 2007 Local Government Act at the same time that Structural Change Orders are made in late 2026/early 2027. These will have the effect of limiting the Council's financial decision making autonomy. From this point written consent from the successor council will be required for land disposals worth more than £100,000, entering contracts of more than £1,000,000 for capital and entering contracts of more than £100,000 for non-capital (whole life costs).

8. Appointment of Specialist Support

8.1. It is essential that the full proposal is developed in a way that is both evidenced based and meets the criteria set out by central government. This is a complex undertaking that needs to be presented in the best and most persuasive way possible. It is also important to draw on the knowledge and experience gained from other successful examples of local government reorganisation.

8.2. In order to support the development of the full proposal to the required standard and timescales, consultants KPMG have been appointed through a procurement framework. This organisation brings considerable expertise having been deeply involved in local government reorganisation in Cumbria. They are also advising other District Councils in current two-tier areas.

8.3 The appointment is on behalf of the eight authorities that are supporting the 1/4/5 proposals. This Council is leading this appointment because of the role of the Director of Place in providing programme support and coordination on behalf of the constituent authorities. The overall budget for the commission is up to £145k which will be met equally between the partners. Capacity funding of circa £35k has been provided to each authority in Devon to help meet the costs of developing proposals for local government reorganisation. The District Council's share of the cost of the commission will therefore be met from this capacity funding.

9. Conclusion

9.1 This report provides an update in relation to proposals for both local government reorganisation and devolution. For the former the landscape remains complex and it is unlikely that all Councils will align behind a single proposal. Whilst further clarity has been forthcoming, not least in terms of the geographical extent of the proposed Exeter unitary, this also raises significant concerns about the sub-division of the District and particularly the coherence of a very large rural and coastal authority. That said, proposals to establish a Peninsular Mayoral Strategic Authority have secured universal support and will hopefully now be progressed at pace.

9.2 The key focus now is on meeting the deadline of the 28th November and ensuring a credible and persuasive proposal is submitted for the 1/4/5 model of local government reorganisation. Alongside our partner authorities, this will be considered by Cabinet and Council prior to submission. The further clarity regarding the expected timeline beyond the 28th November is also helpful. In particular confirmation of the intent to issue s.24 notices now forms an important backdrop to the Mid Term Financial Plan and the need to set a balanced budget for the remaining period that the Council will exist.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report other than costs associated with the employment of consultancy support which is being met from external funding.

Legal implications:

The Secretary of State ("SoS") has the power to invite local authorities to invite proposals for a single tier of Local Government under Section 2 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Once a decision is made, implementation is through a Structural Change Order. The Order will address the transfer of powers, property, assets and staff as well as any boundary and electoral changes necessary to give effect to the reorganisation. Whilst the SoS may not implement a proposal without consulting with all principal councils within the relevant local government area (unless they have been involved in making the proposal), the consent of the councils affected is not required.

Appendix A

The '1-4-5' Plan

This proposal, submitted by Devon's district councils (with the exception of Exeter City) and Torbay, is for a two-unitary model for the majority of the county, alongside Plymouth City Council at its existing boundaries. The two new authorities would be configured as follows;

- **A new "South Devon" unitary council:** This would combine the existing South Hams, Teignbridge, and West Devon district council areas with the Torbay unitary authority.
- **A new "North and East Devon" unitary council:** This would bring together the East, Mid, North Devon, Torridge, and Exeter City Council areas.

The total number of unitary councils under this plan would be three.

Devon County Council

Devon County Council's interim plan for local government reorganisation outlines a preliminary appraisal of five potential options and one baseline scenario for creating unitary authorities in Devon. The plan acknowledges there is no single preferred proposal yet, and it is a foundational document for further analysis and public engagement before a final submission in November 2025. The key drivers for reform are financial pressures, as Devon's councils face a combined budget gap of £180 million by 2028/29, and the need for greater integration of public services like social care, housing, and health.

The five options presented use existing district council boundaries as building blocks:

- **Two-unitary models:** Three different two-unitary models are proposed, each with different geographical splits, such as a North/South divide, a Southwest/Northeast divide, and a model where Plymouth remains a unitary and the rest of Devon (including Torbay) forms a single unitary.
- **Three-unitary models:** Two different three-unitary models are presented. One creates unitary authorities for Plymouth, "Greater Exeter" (Exeter, East Devon, and Mid Devon), and the remaining part of Devon. The other creates units for Plymouth, North East Devon, and South West Devon.
- **Baseline scenario:** A single unitary council for the entire area of Devon, including Plymouth and Torbay, is considered as a baseline, but not a primary option under consideration at this stage.

The plan emphasises that the final decision will be evidence-based, co-designed with partners and residents, and will enhance services, democratic accountability, and local leadership

Exeter City Council

Exeter City Council's interim plan proposes that Exeter become a unitary authority. The rationale for this approach is that a unitary Exeter would be better positioned to coordinate public services, drive economic growth and regeneration, and strengthen community leadership and identity. The plan emphasises an evidence-based approach and the need for a structure that is financially resilient and capable of delivering high-quality, accessible services. The interim plan stopped short of identifying a preferred geography for the new unitary council.

Plymouth City Council's "Plymouth Growth Area" proposal

This plan, similar to Exeter's, proposed a boundary extension for Plymouth to encompass 13 parishes from the South Hams district. This is to create an authority with a population of over 300,000 to increase financial viability and better serve its functional economic area.

Torbay Council

The interim plan submission outlines four options for local government reorganisation in Torbay. A single unitary authority for all of Devon is discounted, as public opinion and councillors oppose it due to concerns about efficiency and retaining a sense of place.

The three remaining options, presented in order of preference, are:

- **Option 1: Torbay Council** – Torbay remains a unitary authority, maintaining its current boundaries. The council highlights its successful Children's Services and integrated health and social care model as reasons to retain its current structure.
- **Option 2: Torbay and South Devon Council** – This option proposes a new unitary authority combining Torbay with parts of South Hams and Teignbridge. This new entity would serve a population of around 292,000.
- **Option 3: South Devon Council** – This is the largest of the preferred options, proposing a unitary authority encompassing Torbay, South Hams, West Devon, and Teignbridge. It would have a population of approximately 430,000

The latter option aligns with the South Devon Council component of the 1/4/5 submission.

North Devon District Council

North Devon District Council supported the 1-4-5 proposal but also put forward proposals for a northern Devon authority to reflect the character and distinctiveness of the area.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

15 May 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

INTERIM PLAN FEEDBACK: DEVON, PLYMOUTH AND TORBAY

To the Chief Executives of:

Devon County Council
East Devon District Council
Exeter City Council
Mid Devon District Council
North Devon District Council
South Hams District Council
Teignbridge District Council
Torridge District Council
West Devon Borough Council
Plymouth City Council
Torbay Council

Overview:

Thank you for submitting your interim plans. The amount of work from all councils is clear to see across the range of options being considered. For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.

Our aim for the feedback on interim plans is to support areas to develop final proposal(s). This stage is not a decision-making point, and our feedback does not seek to approve or reject any option being considered.

The feedback provided relates to the following interim plans submitted by Devon, Plymouth and Torbay councils:

- Interim Plan submitted by 7 of the 8 Devon district councils (East Devon District Council, Mid Devon District Council, North Devon District Council, South Hams District Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council) and Torbay Council
- Devon County Council Interim Plan
- Exeter City Council Interim Plan

- North Devon District Council Interim Plan
- Plymouth City Council Interim Plan
- Torbay Council Interim Plan

We have provided feedback on behalf of central government. It takes the form of:

1. A summary of the main feedback points,
2. Our response to the specific barriers and challenges raised in your plans,
3. An annex with more detailed feedback against each of the interim plan asks.

We reference the guidance criteria included in the invitation letter throughout, a copy can be found at [Letter: Devon, Plymouth and Torbay – GOV.UK.](#)

Our central message is to build on your initial work and ensure that the final proposal(s) address the criteria and are supported by data and evidence. We recommend that final proposal(s) should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.

We welcome the work that has been undertaken across proposals to develop local government reorganisation plans for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. This feedback does not seek to approve or discount any option or proposal, but provide some feedback designed to assist in the development of final proposal(s). We will assess final proposal(s) against the guidance criteria provided in the invitation letter and have tailored this feedback to identify where additional information may be helpful in enabling that assessment. Please note that this feedback is not exhaustive and should not preclude the inclusion of additional materials or evidence in the final proposal(s). In addition, your named area lead, Christian Denison, will be able to provide support and help address any further questions or queries.

Summary of Feedback:

We have summarised the key elements of the feedback below, with further detail provided in the annex.

1. We welcome the steps some councils have taken to come together to prepare proposals (as per criterion 4).
 - a. **Effective collaboration between all councils across the invitation area will be crucial; we would encourage you to continue to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing. This will support the development of a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposal(s).**
 - b. **It would be helpful if final proposal(s) use the same assumptions and data sets.**
 - c. **It would be helpful if your final proposal(s) set out how the data and evidence supports all the outcomes you have included, and how well they meet the assessment criteria in the invitation letter.**

- d. **You may wish to consider an options appraisal that will help demonstrate why your proposed approach in the round best meets the assessment criteria in the invitation letter compared to any alternatives.**
2. The final proposal(s) must specify the area for any new unitary council(s). If boundary change is part of your final proposal, then you should be clear on the boundary proposed and the justification.
3. The criteria ask that a proposal should seek to achieve for the whole area concerned, the establishment of a single tier of local government (see criterion 1). **For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.**
4. We recognise that plans are at an early stage and further analysis is planned in the run up to submitting the final proposal(s). **Further detail and evidence on the costs, efficiency savings and outcomes that are expected to be achieved would be welcomed.**
5. In some of the options you are considering populations that would be above or below 500,000. As set out in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more. This is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation. **All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.**
6. The criteria asks that consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children’s services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety (see criterion 3). **For any options where there is disaggregation, further detail will be helpful on how the different options might impact on these services and how risks can be mitigated.**
7. With reference to the current Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), further information would be helpful on the implications of the proposed local government reorganisation options for the governance arrangements in the Devon and Torbay CCA. It would also be helpful to outline how each option would interact with the CCA and best benefit the local community.

Response to specific barriers and challenges raised

Please see below our response to the specific barriers and challenges that were raised in your interim plans:

1. Reaching agreement in Devon and information sharing between councils

We note concerns raised about information sharing, and welcome commitments to collaborate across all councils, and commitment to share information. Data sharing is crucial to support the development of a robust and consistent evidence base to underpin final proposal(s).

2. Boundary changes and population size

We note your concerns on the 500,000 population figure and possible boundary changes. As explained above, in the Statutory Invitation guidance and in the English Devolution White Paper, we outlined a population size of 500,000 or more, this is a guiding principle, not a hard target – we understand that there should be flexibility, especially given our ambition to build out devolution and take account of housing growth, alongside local government reorganisation. All proposals, whether they are at the guided level, above it, or below it, should set out the rationale for the proposed approach clearly.

In relation to potential boundary changes, as the invitation letter sets out boundary changes are possible, but “existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered”.

The final proposal must specify the area for any new unitary council(s). If a boundary change is part of your final proposal, then you should be clear on the boundary proposed, which could be identified by a parish or ward boundary, or if creating new boundaries by attaching a map.

Proposals should be developed having regard to the statutory guidance which sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed (including that listed above).

If a decision is taken to implement a proposal, boundary change can be achieved alongside structural change. Alternatively, you could make a proposal for unitary local government using existing district building blocks and consider requesting a Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR) later. Such reviews have been used for minor amendments to a boundary where both councils have requested a review – such as the recent Sheffield/Barnsley boundary adjustment for a new housing estate. PABRs are the responsibility of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England who will consider such requests case-by-case.

3. Impact on National Park Authorities

We note your concerns about the potential impact of local government reorganisation on the delivery functions of the National Park Authority, and we

would welcome further details on potential issues to understand what support may be needed.

4. Proposal Development Contributions

You asked about the provision of funding to enable ongoing analysis and testing of proposals. £7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding shortly.

5. MHCLG and Government capacity

We note your concerns around central Government support for areas through the reorganisation process. You also asked for a single point of contact in central government to enable timely decision making and ongoing support. Christian Denison has been appointed as your MHCLG point person and is ready to engage with the whole area on issues you wish to discuss further.

6. National funding reforms

We note your concerns on the implication of funding reforms. Government recently consulted on funding reforms and confirmed that some transitional protections will be in place to support areas to their new allocations.

Further details on funding reform proposal(s) and transition measures will be consulted on after the Spending Review in June.

We will not be able to provide further clarification on future allocations in the meantime but are open to discussing assumptions further if we can assist in financial planning.

7. Transitional costs and financial frameworks

You have sought clarity on transitional costs and future funding frameworks and have sought guidance on the treatment of debt and assets. In terms of transitional costs, as per the invitation letter, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects. In relation to debt, as per the invitation letter, the default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils.

8. Elections

We note your concerns about the potential impact of the elections in May on timelines for local government re-organisation. We would be happy to arrange a meeting to discuss the feedback with all councils at a suitable time, though our working assumption is that elections will take place as planned.

9. NHS Settlement Locally

We note your concerns that the level of funding within the NHS locally will impact on local government. In the development of your final proposal(s), it would be helpful to evidence the impact on health and care service delivery in local government, including identified risks (along with a plan for mitigating those risks) and a consideration of workforce challenges.

10. Consultation

We note the interim plan sets out a range of engagement with stakeholders. Expectations on engagement and consultation are set out in the invitation letter.

Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. The Secretary of State may not implement a proposal unless she has consulted with other councils affected by it and any other appropriate person. We are happy to engage further on these consultation requirements and the likely process for areas undergoing reorganisation in due course.

11. Legislative Framework & Consultation

You asked for confirmation of likely consultation arrangements, and guidance on the powers and responsibilities of new structures. Expectations on consultation and legislation are set out in the invitation letter. We are happy to engage further on the consultation requirements in statute and on the legislative arrangements for new councils.

12. Service Integration

You asked for support in developing robust service integration plans. We recognise that areas going through local government reorganisation will want advice and guidance on practical transition issues. The current sector support offer is outlined on the LGA's website. As the local government reorganisation programme evolves, we recognise the need to address more niche and complex matters. We are collaborating with the LGA and sector bodies to develop this. We encourage you to continue working with the LGA and sector bodies to identify and outline your future support needs, so these can be considered in the development of the long-term support offer. We would also encourage you to consider partnership options for joint working across the new unitaries for the delivery of social care services.

13. Rural and Coastal Needs

We note your concerns on the unique needs of Devon's large rural and coastal areas. Any proposal(s) will need to balance the needs of different areas and consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

14. Role of cities and major urban centres in unitary authorities.

You asked for clarity on the approach to specific issues faced by small cities in the context of local government reorganisation. Your proposal(s) should clearly set out the challenges faced and how the proposal(s) address these. Any proposal(s) will need to balance the needs of different areas and consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

15. Guidance and template for November business case

You asked about a template or guidance on the structure of the final proposal. We will support you to develop your final proposal(s). You can also draw on the support of the LGA. The current sector support offer is outlined on the LGA's website. As the local government reorganisation programme progresses, we recognise the need to address more niche and complex matters. We are collaborating with the LGA and sector bodies to develop the offer. We encourage you to continue working with the LGA and sector bodies to identify and outline your future support needs, so these can be considered in the development of the long-term support offer.

16. Continuing Authority

You asked for Government to confirm that Plymouth City Council would be a continuing authority in relation to your preferred option. You should set out in your final proposal how implementation would work and the assumptions underpinning this. Decision on the appropriate implementation and transition arrangements will be considered following final decisions on the proposal to be implemented.

17. Transitional Flexibilities

You asked for clarification over any transactional flexibilities regarding council tax harmonisation. Restructured councils often inherit different council tax levels from their predecessors. There is an established flexible system in legislation for the harmonisation of council tax levels over seven years.

18. Devon County Council's Safety Valve

You asked for clarification on the treatment of Devon County Council's Safety Valve agreement and residual Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block deficit.

The government has provided a £1 billion increase to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision funding in 2025-26. This is an important step in realising the government's vision to reform England's SEND provision to improve outcomes and return the system to financial sustainability. The government will work closely with parents, teachers and local authorities to take forward this work.

We recognise the impacts that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits are having on councils' finances and will work with the sector on a way forward.

The government intends to set out plans for reforming the SEND system in further detail this year. This will include details of how the government will support local authorities to deal with their historic and accruing deficits and any transition period from the current SEND system to the reformed system. This will inform any decision to remove the DSG Statutory Override.

19. Assets and Liabilities

You asked for further information regarding assets owned and managed by individual councils, as well as any liabilities that may exist. The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils. There is existing legislation that makes provisions for the transfer of assets and liabilities in the context of local government reorganisation, namely. The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transfer of Functions, Property, Rights and Liabilities) Regulations 2008.

20. Children's Services and SEND

You have noted your concern that as part of a larger unitary authority, the challenges currently being experienced by Devon County Council in relation to SEND will have a detrimental impact on children and young people in Torbay. In your final proposal(s) it would be helpful to see analysis, including potential benefits, risks and mitigations for the impact of local government reorganisation on SEND services.

ANNEX: Detailed feedback on criteria for interim plan

Ask – Interim Plan Criteria	Feedback
<p>Identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>1 c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement and</p> <p>2 a-f) - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks and</p> <p>3 a-c) Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens</p>	<p>We welcome the initial thinking on the options for local government reorganisation in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, and recognise that this is subject to further work. In your final proposal(s) we would welcome further detail that addresses the criteria in the invitation letter, and we note that this work has started.</p> <p>You may wish to consider an options appraisal against the criteria set out in the letter to provide a rationale for the preferred model against alternatives.</p> <p>For the final proposal(s), each council can submit a single proposal for which there must be a clear single option and geography and as set out in the guidance we expect this to be for the area as a whole; that is, the whole of the area to which the 5 February invitation was issued, not partial coverage.</p> <p>Where there are proposed boundary changes, the proposal should provide strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for the change.</p> <p>Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs, including future housing growth plans. All proposals should set out the rationale for the proposed approach</p> <p>Given the financial pressures you identify it would be helpful to understand how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity.</p> <p>We recognise that the options outlined in the interim plans are subject to further development. In final proposal(s) it would be helpful to include a high-level financial assessment which covers transition costs and overall forecast operating costs of the new unitary councils.</p> <p>We will assess final proposals against the criteria set out in the invitation letter. Referencing criteria 1 and 2, you may wish to consider the following bullets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level breakdowns for where any efficiency savings will be made, with clarity of assumptions on how estimates have been reached and the

	<p>data sources used, including differences in assumptions between proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how efficiency savings have been considered alongside a sense of place and local identity. • information on the counterfactual against which efficiency savings are estimated, with values provided for current levels of spending • a clear statement of what assumptions have been made, and if the impacts of inflation are taken into account • a summary covering sources of uncertainty or risks with modelling, as well as predicted magnitude and impact of any unquantifiable costs or benefits • quantified impacts, where possible, on service provision as well as wider impacts <p>We recognise that the interim plans acknowledge further work is needed on the financial assessment. The bullets below indicate where further information would be helpful across all options. As per criteria 1 and 2 it would be helpful to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional data and evidence to set out how your final proposal(s) would enable financially viable councils, including identifying which option best delivers value for money for council taxpayers • further detail on potential finances of new unitaries, for example, funding, operational budgets, potential budget surpluses/shortfalls, total borrowing (General Fund), and debt servicing costs (interest and MRP); and what options may be available for rationalisation of potentially saleable assets • clarity on the underlying assumptions underpinning any modelling e.g. assumptions of future funding, demographic growth and pressures, interest costs, Council Tax, savings earmarked in existing councils' MTFs • financial sustainability both through the period to the creation of new unitary councils as well as afterwards <p>We welcome the information provided in the plans on the potential impact and opportunities for service delivery from reorganisation. We would welcome further details on how services can be maintained where there is disaggregation, such as social care, children's services, SEND, homelessness, and for wider public services, including public safety.</p>
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	<p>Under criterion 3c) you may wish to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how each option would deliver high-quality and sustainable public services or efficiency saving opportunities • what are the potential impacts of disaggregating services? • what would the different options mean for local services provision, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do different options have a different impact on SEND services and distribution of funding and sufficiency planning to ensure children can access appropriate support, and how will services be maintained? • what is the impact on adults and children's care services? Is there a differential impact on the number of care users and infrastructure to support them among the different options? • what partnership options have you considered for joint working across the new unitaries for the delivery of social care services? • do different options have variable impacts as you transition to the new unitaries, and how will risks to safeguarding be managed? • do different options have variable impacts on schools, support and funding allocation, and sufficiency of places, and how will impacts on school be managed? • what impact will there be on highway services across the area under the different approaches suggested? • what are the implications for public health, including consideration of socio-demographic challenges and health inequalities within any new boundaries and their implications for current and future health service needs. What are the implications for how residents access services and service delivery for populations most at risk? <p>We welcome the desire to maximise the opportunity for public service reform, and it would be helpful for you to provide more details on your plans so we can explore how best to support your efforts.</p>
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<p>Include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>2d)Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p>	<p>We welcome the indicative views, where provided, on the potential costs and the type of activity that this will fund.</p> <p>As per criterion 2, the final proposal(s) should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within this it would be helpful to provide more detailed analysis on expected transition and/or disaggregation costs and potential efficiencies of proposals. This could include clarity on methodology, assumptions, data used, what year these may apply and why these are appropriate • detail on the potential service transformation opportunities and invest-to-save projects from unitarisation across a range of services -e.g. consolidation of waste collection and disposal services, and whether different options provide different opportunities for back-office efficiency savings • where it has not been possible to monetise or quantify impacts, you may wish to provide an estimated magnitude and likelihood of impact • summarise any sources of risks, uncertainty and key dependencies related to the modelling and analysis • detail on the estimated financial sustainability of proposed reorganisation and how debt could be managed locally <p>We welcome the joint work you have done to date and recommend that all options and proposals should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference (linked to criterion 1c).</p>
<p>Include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will</p>	<p>As per criterion 6 in the invitation letter, we welcome the early view where that has been provided of councillor numbers, which we will be sharing with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.</p>

<p>balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p> <p>6) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</p>	<p>New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.</p> <p>Additional details on how the community will be engaged, specifically how the governance, participation and local voice will be addressed to strengthen local engagement and democratic decision-making would be helpful.</p> <p>In final proposal(s) we would welcome detail on your plans for neighbourhood-based governance, the impact on parish councils, and the role of formal neighbourhood partnerships and area committees.</p>
<p>Include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.</p> <p>Relevant Criteria:</p> <p>5) New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.</p> <p>a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.</p>	<p>We note the general consensus for an MCA on a Devon or South West peninsula footprint.</p> <p>With reference to the current Devon and Torbay CCA, further information would be helpful on the implications of the proposed Local Government Reorganisation options for the governance arrangements in the Devon and Torbay CCA. It would also be beneficial to outline how each option would interact with the Devon and Torbay CCA and best benefit the local community. If final proposals envisage different devolution structures, it would be helpful for final proposals to clearly set out how these could work.</p>
<p>Include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local</p>	<p>We welcome your interim update against criterion 6, and the engagement undertaken so far and your plans for the future.</p> <p>It is for you to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way with residents, voluntary sector, local community groups,</p>

<p>engagement to help shape your developing proposals.</p> <p>Relevant criteria: 6a&b) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Boards, Parish councils, public sector providers such as health, police and fire, and local businesses to inform your proposals.</p> <p>For any option for two or more unitary councils, you may wish to engage in particular with those who may be affected by disaggregation of services.</p> <p>It would be helpful to see detail that demonstrates how local ideas and views have been incorporated into the final proposal(s).</p>
<p>Set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.</p> <p>Relevant criteria: Linked to 2d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p>	<p>We welcome the indicative cost as set out in some plans. We would welcome further detail in your final proposal(s) over the level of cost and the extent to which the costs are for delivery of the unitary structures or for transformation activity that delivers benefits.</p> <p>£7.6 million will be made available in the form of local government reorganisation proposal development contributions, to be split across the 21 areas. Further information will be provided on this funding shortly.</p>
<p>Set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.</p> <p>Relevant criteria:</p>	<p>We welcome plans to work together on the development of final proposal(s) (see criterion 4). Effective collaboration between all councils will be crucial; areas will need to build strong relationships and agree ways of working, including around effective data sharing.</p> <p>This will enable you to develop a robust shared evidence base to underpin final proposal(s) (see criterion 1c).</p> <p>In particular, as for the final proposal(s), as each council can submit a single proposal that must be a clear single option and geography for the area as a whole.</p>

4 a-c) Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views	We recommend that final proposal(s) should use the same assumptions and data sets or be clear where and why there is a difference.
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Local government reorganisation survey key themes of responses

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10. What do you like about the area where you live, work, study or represent in East Devon?

A summary of the free text responses shows the key themes:

1. Natural Environment and Scenery

- Strong appreciation for the coast, countryside, green spaces, and scenic beauty.
- Value placed on the mix of rural and coastal landscapes, wildlife, and outdoor recreational opportunities.

2. Community and Quality of Life

- Positive views on the friendliness, community spirit, low crime rates, and peaceful atmosphere.
- Enjoyment of local events, cultural activities, and the area's distinctive character.

3. Accessibility and Location

- Liking the proximity to transport links (A30, M5, rail, airport) and access to both rural and urban amenities.
- Benefit of being close to Exeter and other towns while maintaining a quieter, less urban environment.

11. What would you like to be improved in this area?

A summary of the free text responses shows the key themes:

1. Infrastructure and Transport

- Widespread concern over poor road conditions, potholes, and lack of coordination in roadworks.
- Calls for better public transport — more frequent, reliable bus and train services, including evening and rural connections.

2. Managing Development and Protecting the Environment

- Strong opposition to overdevelopment, with requests to protect green spaces, rural character, and AONB areas.
- Concerns about water quality, sewage discharges, and the need for sustainable infrastructure before further housing growth.

3. Local Services and Facilities

- Desire for improved access to healthcare, dentistry, and policing.
- Requests for more community amenities — public toilets, leisure facilities, youth provision, and revitalised high streets.

12. What are your hopes and dreams for your local area?

1. Protecting Rural Character and Environment

- Strong desire to preserve green spaces, countryside, and village identities, avoiding overdevelopment and urban sprawl.
- Commitment to safeguarding biodiversity, improving water quality, and adapting to climate change through sustainable planning.

2. Balanced Development and Infrastructure

- Support for housing that meets genuine local needs, paired with timely investment in infrastructure such as roads, healthcare, schools, and public transport.
- Calls for regeneration of town centres, better job opportunities, and more cultural, leisure, and youth facilities.

3. Community, Identity, and Quality of Life

- Maintaining strong community spirit, safety, and local decision-making that reflects residents' needs.
- Ensuring the area remains welcoming, well-maintained, and a pleasant place to live for all generations.

13. What are the biggest challenges in your local area?

A summary of the free text responses shows the key themes:

1. Overdevelopment and Strain on Infrastructure

- Widespread concern about excessive or poorly planned housing developments, particularly on greenfield or sensitive sites, without matching investment in roads, schools, healthcare, drainage, and other essential services.
- Perceived loss of local character and risk to biodiversity, green spaces, and rural landscapes from urban sprawl and large-scale projects.

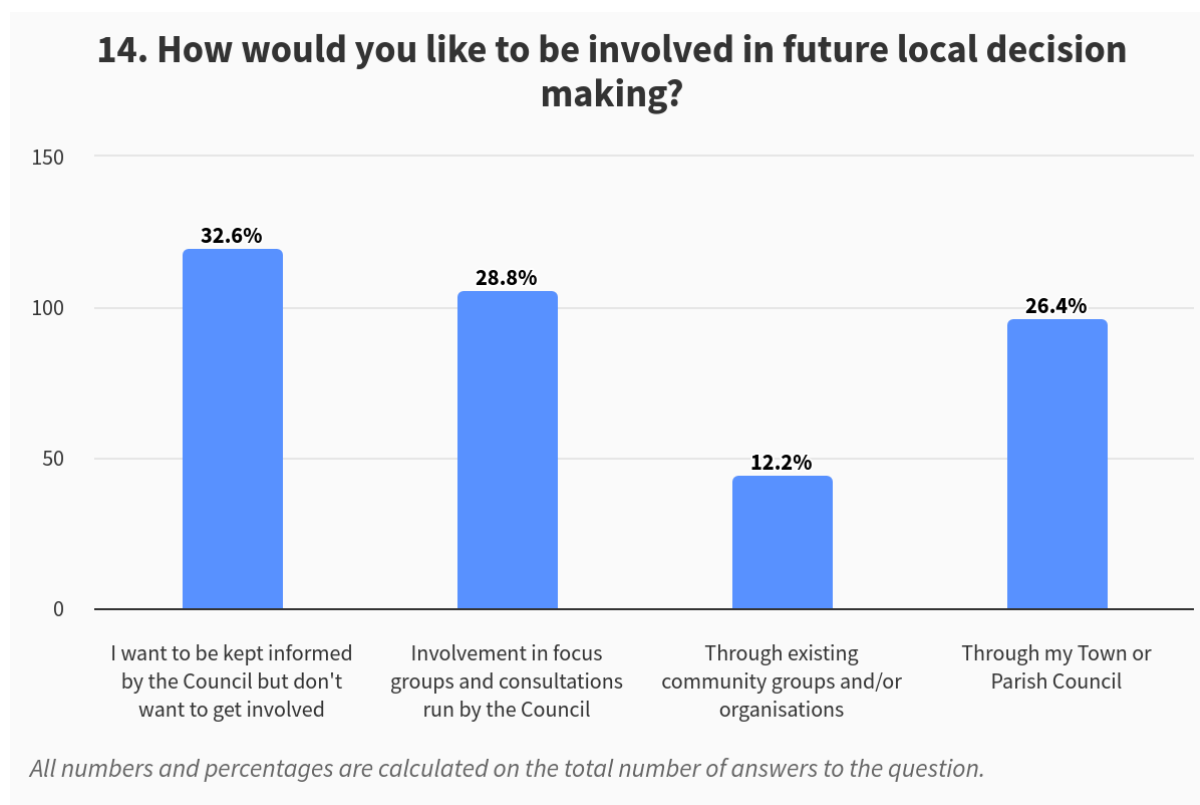
2. Transport, Roads, and Connectivity

- Poor public transport provision — infrequent, unreliable, and lacking coverage in rural areas, with limited evening or weekend services.
- Deteriorating road conditions, congestion, unsafe traffic speeds, and parking challenges across towns and villages.

3. Local Services, Community Wellbeing, and Environment

- Insufficient healthcare access (especially NHS dentistry and GP appointments), lack of facilities for young people, and decline of high streets and local amenities.
- Concerns over environmental issues, including sewage pollution, climate change resilience, and loss of community cohesion due to social and economic pressures.

14. How would you like to be involved in future local decision making?



15. How do you hope that Local Government Reorganisation will impact you and/or your community? (Please rank in order of importance with top being the most important)

A summary of the priority ranking:

Top priorities (most often ranked 1st–3rd):

- **Good understanding of the issues facing the local area** (pink) – consistently ranked highest.
- **Efficient services which offer value for money** (turquoise) – strong priority across the top rankings.
- **Clear, open and honest decision making** (orange) – also frequently placed in top positions.

Mid-level priorities:

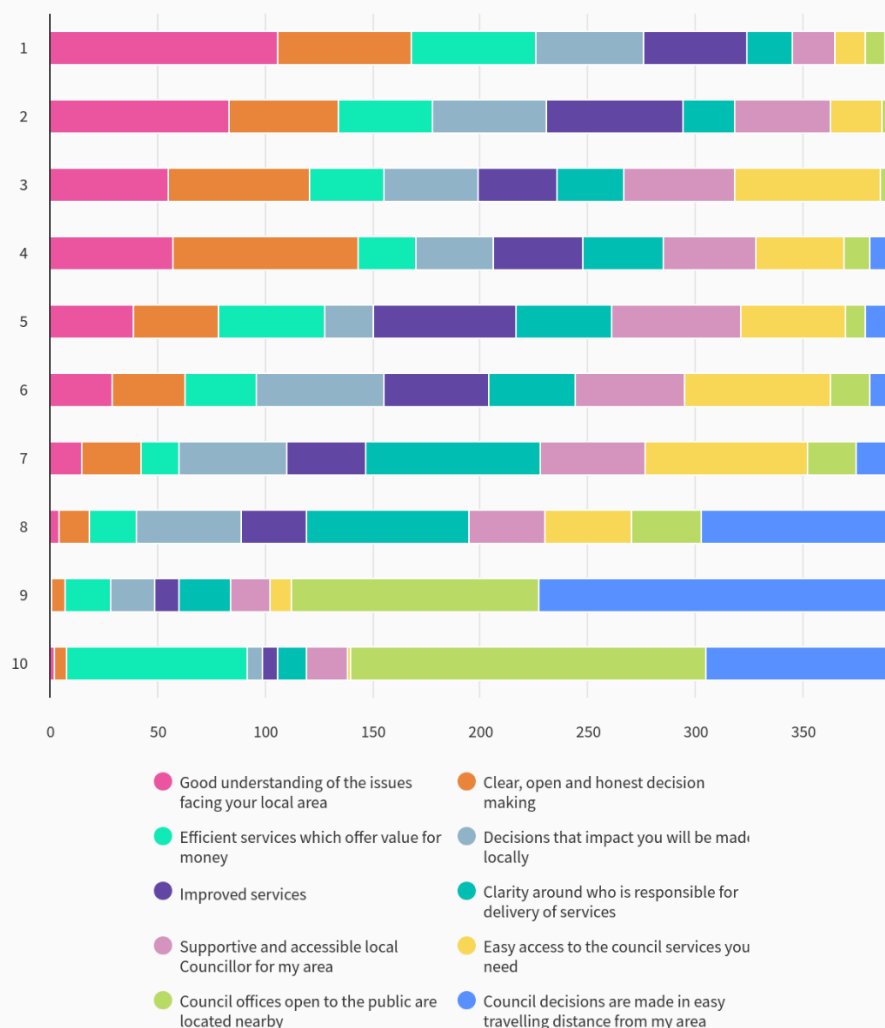
- **Decisions that impact you will be made locally** (light blue) and **Improved services** (purple) – generally mid-range rankings.
- **Supportive and accessible local Councillor for my area** (light pink) and **Clarity around who is responsible for delivery of services** (teal) – moderate importance.

Lower priorities (most often ranked near the bottom):

- **Easy access to the council services you need** (yellow).
- **Council offices open to the public are located nearby** (green).
- **Council decisions are made in easy travelling distance from my area** (blue) – heavily concentrated in the lowest rankings.

Overall: Respondents care most about **local understanding, transparency, and service efficiency**, while the physical proximity of council offices or meetings is much less important.

15. How do you hope that Local Government Reorganisation will impact you and/or your community? (Please rank in order of importance with top being the most important)



All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

16. What should be the top priorities when shaping the future model of local government for Devon? (Please rank in order of importance with the top being the most important)

A summary of the priority ranking:

Top priorities (most often ranked 1st–3rd):

- **Keeping children safe from harm** (purple) – the most consistently top-ranked priority.
- **Care and support for older people and vulnerable adults** (pink) – frequently placed near the top.

- **Protecting the environment and keeping it clean** (orange) – strong presence in higher rankings.
- **Safe and well-maintained roads, pavements, lights, parking and cycle paths** (green) – often prioritised in early rankings.

Mid-level priorities:

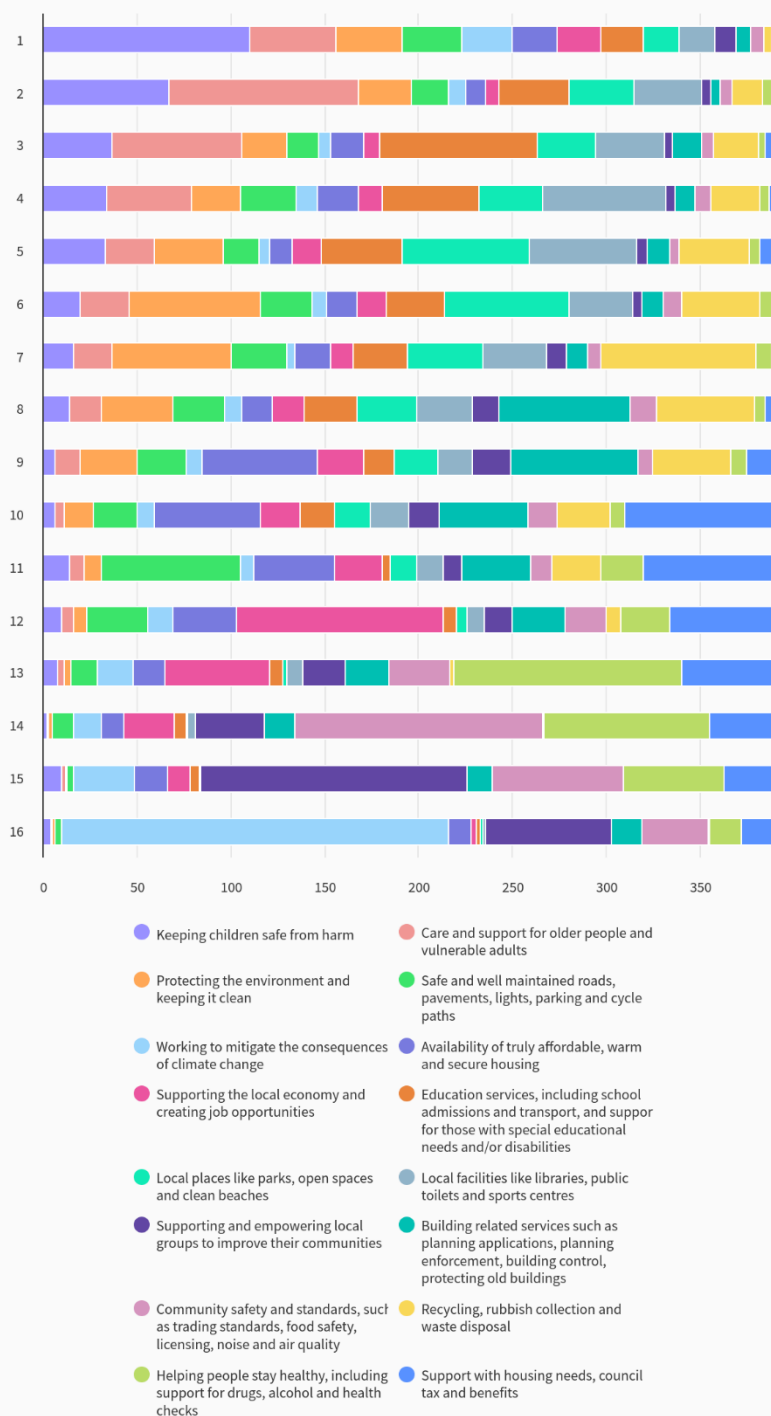
- **Availability of affordable, warm and secure housing** (dark blue) and **Supporting the local economy and creating job opportunities** (red) – generally in the middle range.
- **Education services** (orange-red) and **Local places like parks, open spaces and clean beaches** (teal) – steady mid-tier positioning.

Lower priorities:

- **Working to mitigate the consequences of climate change** (light blue) – most frequently ranked in the lowest positions overall.
- **Building-related services** (green), and **Community safety and standards** (light pink) – commonly lower ranked.
- **Recycling, rubbish collection and waste disposal** (yellow) and **Support with housing needs, council tax and benefits** (blue) – most often placed towards the bottom.

Overall: Respondents see **protecting vulnerable people, environmental cleanliness, and safe infrastructure** as the most important priorities, while **climate change mitigation, specific facilities, and some support services** are seen as least important.

16. What should be the top priorities when shaping the future model of local government for Devon? (Please rank in order of importance with the top being the most important)



All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

17. Do you have any further comments?

A summary of the free text responses shows the key themes:

1. Opposition to Exeter-led Unitary Authority / Support for Localised Decision-Making

- Strong concerns that merging East Devon with Exeter and other districts will reduce rural influence, prioritise city needs, and erode local identity.
- Preference for keeping decision-making and service delivery as local as possible, empowering town and parish councils instead of centralising power.

2. Desire for Evidence and Clarity on Proposals

- Calls for clear financial information, including costs of reorganisation, projected savings, and how those savings would be reinvested.
- Requests for a stronger explanation of why the proposed “1-4-5 Plan” is the best option compared to other possible models.

3. Expectations for Council Priorities and Services

- Calls for better infrastructure, public transport, policing, waste management, and support for rural communities without cutting services.
- Requests to focus on statutory duties, cost efficiency, and tangible improvements rather than perceived political agendas or non-core initiatives.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Financial decisions before local government reorganisation

1. This explanatory note is for all councils who were invited on 5 February 2025 to submit proposals for unitary local government under section 2 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act).
2. The Government recognises that councils are continuing to deliver essential services and that statutory duties such as those relating to the Best Value Duty and setting a balanced budget remain unchanged. However, given reorganisation is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve, it is essential that decisions regarding ongoing service delivery and the medium term financial strategy of existing councils do not compromise the future sustainability of new councils.
3. In the invitation issued on 5 February 2025, councils were asked to set out in their interim plans any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area. Regardless of whether voluntary arrangements are now in place, it is essential that all involved are cognisant that decisions taken now by existing councils could fetter the future decisions of new councils and act accordingly.
4. Examples of those decisions include but are not limited to the sale and purchase of significant assets, transfer of local assets, entering into new contracts for service delivery including IT procurement, major organisational restructures and changes to staff terms and conditions, establishing companies, undertaking job evaluation, permanent appointments to senior positions, changes to unplanned borrowing and the spending of reserves, and major changes to arrangements such as the local council tax support scheme and council tax exemption scheme.
5. We continue to encourage local communication on decisions and for councils to actively take steps at appropriate times to align services with neighbouring councils to smooth the transition to service delivery in any new unitary. The expectation is that councils continue to operate in accordance with their agreed medium term financial plans and planned actions for the period and defer the

implementation of any significant changes to service delivery other than where this would cause a gap or cessation of a key service. Decisions that are necessary to ensure service delivery should not be delayed.

6. In previous rounds of local government reorganisation, directions have been issued under section 24 of the 2007 Act to those councils being reorganised to ensure new agreements will be in the best interests of the new council(s) or the residents of the area, and do not undermine or diminish the benefits or savings anticipated as a result of unitarisation, or which may have an effect on the financial position of the new council/s.
7. The Government intends again to issue directions under section 24 of the 2007 Act, once Structural Changes Orders have been made, to specify a person to give consent for all relevant matters and how that power is to be exercised. We anticipate that these directions will follow the precedents previously set, namely that written consent from the successor council will be required for land disposals worth more than £100,000, entering contracts of more than £1,000,000 for capital and entering contracts of more than £100,000 for non-capital (whole life costs).
8. In the meantime, the Government expects councillors and statutory officers to be mindful of their responsibilities. Councils should maintain strong accounting and governance disciplines, prepare their accounts on a timely basis, and work closely with their auditors to rebuild assurance where accounts have been disclaimed and to ensure that all assets, liabilities and key risks are correctly identified and reported. We expect all councils in an area to work together in sharing information and making decisions that are in the best interests of the whole area.

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting 3 September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Naming of East Devon's Second New Community

Report summary:

East Devon District Council has engaged with local people, community groups and businesses to help choose a name for the new community planned near Westpoint.

This report provides an overview of the engagement approach taken and seeks endorsement of the name for the new community.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Notes the outcome of the recent public engagement exercise
- 2) Supports Marlcombe as the choice of name for the new community

Reason for recommendation:

To support the emerging identity of the second new community in East Devon.

Officer: Andy Wood, Director of Place - andy.wood@eastdevon.gov.uk 07740 024918,

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☒ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

[Link to Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

Report in full

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The key strategic proposal contained in the Local Plan review is to bring forward a second new community. This is alongside the ongoing development of Cranbrook. The relevant Local Plan policy sets out an ambitious vision for the creation of an exemplar new place for land between Exeter Airport, Crealy Theme Park & Resort, Farringdon and Westpoint. This new place is envisioned to be a self-sufficient community where new facilities, from green space and sports pitches to schools and employment opportunities, are delivered in step with the development of new homes.
- 1.2. It is essential that this new place has a strong sense of identity and purpose from the outset. Choosing a name is a very important first step in helping to define the character of this new town. This report sets out the results of a public engagement exercise that set out four potential options, each drawing on a different theme to help ensure that the new town is rooted in the locality and the history of the area whilst firmly looking to the future.

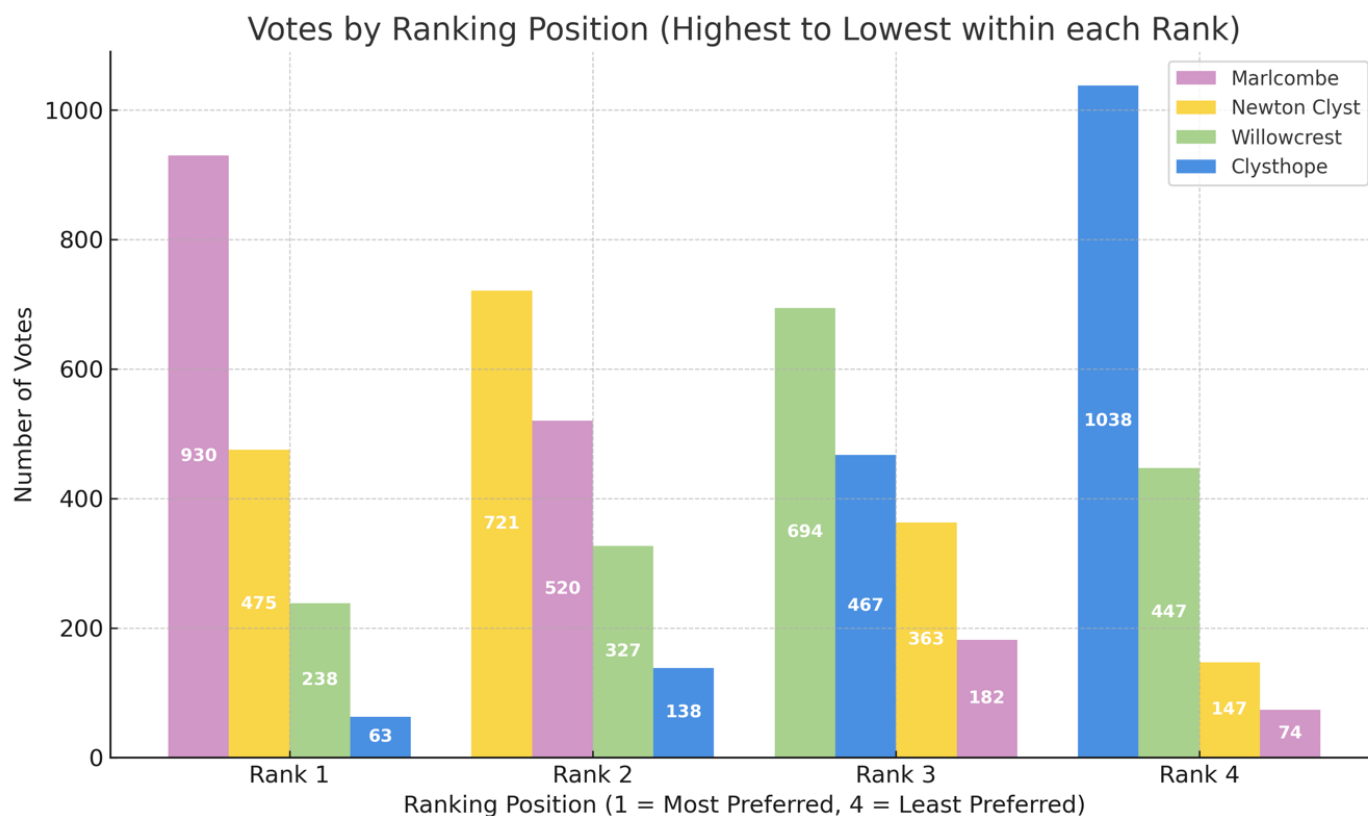
2. The Naming Process and Public Consultation

- 2.1. The Council has engaged residents, businesses, and stakeholders in the naming process. Following earlier public engagement on the masterplan and site layout, the council created a shortlist of four potential names. A public consultation was launched in July 2025, inviting people to rank these four names in order of preference. The consultation closed on Tuesday 26 August 2025.
- 2.2. The consultation included four shortlisted names, each with a specific rationale tied to local history, geography, and forward-looking aspirations. The shortlisted names are:
 - **Newton Clyst** (The Local Option): This name is presented as a straightforward and geographically relevant choice. "Newton" means "new town" in Old English, while "Clyst" links the community to the River Clyst, which flows through the area and connects it to existing villages like Newton Poppleford.
 - **Marlcombe** (The Historic Option): This name is a nod to the area's history. "Marlcombe" appeared on 17th-century Tithe Maps for a portion of the site, but the name later fell out of use. Choosing this name would restore an authentic, original place name.
 - **Willowcrest** (The Nature Option): This descriptive name reflects the landscape. "Willow" refers to the type of trees that thrive in the area, and "crest" describes the site's topography on rising ground. This name is meant to highlight the natural setting of the new town.
 - **Clysthope** (The Future-Focused Option): This option combines the local geographical tie to the River Clyst with a forward-looking element. The word "hope" suggests a place being built for the future and represents opportunity for new residents.

2.3. This report precedes further reports coming to the October meetings of Strategic Planning Committee and Cabinet regarding the masterplan for the second new community and the delivery vehicle respectively. Together these will important further steps in ensuring that the ambitious vision for a new place can be realised that build from the most important foundation for any placemaking strategy – a name.

3.Public Engagement

3.1 In total over 1600 votes were received during the consultation period. The relative preferences are set out below;



3.2 Marlcombe received over 50% of first preference votes and is therefore the automatic majority choice.

3.3 Accordingly it is recommended that Marlcombe is selected as the name.

4.Conclusion

4.1 The public consultation on the four shortlisted names marks a significant step in the development of East Devon's second new community. The results of the public consultation have informed the final decision, ensuring the chosen name has a strong local connection and community support. The name will serve as the foundation for developing the new town's identity and the creation of an exemplar place.

Financial implications:

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

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications requiring comment

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Forward Plan of Key Decisions - For the 4-month period: 1 October 2025 to 31 January 2026

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

12.1.1 Key decisions: A "key decision" means an executive decision which is likely:

- (a) to result in the Council incurring expenditure or the making of savings of £100,000 or more; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Council's area:
 - (i) In accordance with section 38 of the Local Government Act 2000, in determining the meaning of "significant" regard shall be had to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State
 - (ii) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

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

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

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

Obtaining documents

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

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

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Towards Zero Carbon Development in the West End: Interconnector Project Final Investment Decision (Parts 2)	Director of Place	Full Business Case			26 November 2025 Part 2	Part B
Use of Climate Change Budget to support Green Loans to Householders	Assistant Director Environmental Health					Part A
Air Quality/Contaminated Land Strategies	Assistant Director Environmental Health					Part A
Anti-Poverty Strategy	Asst Director Revenues, Benefits, CSC, Fraud & Compliance	Outcomes from consultation		Poverty Working Panel	29 October 2025	Part A
Place and Prosperity Fund acquisition	Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation	None	Business case/Appraisal of proposal	Place and Prosperity Investment Board		Part B
Formation of an Exmouth Town and Seafront Subgroup	Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation	Steering Group ToR		Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group		Part A

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Council Depots Review	Project Manager Place, Assets & Commercialisation					Part B (commercially sensitive)
Exmouth Town Hall	Assistant Director Place Assets & Leisure				1 October 2025	Part B (commercially sensitive)
Site Acquisition opportunity	Assistant Director Place Assets & Leisure				1 October 2025	Part B (commercially sensitive)
Hayne Lane Masterplan	Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation	Hayne Lane Masterplan	No	Asset Management Forum		Part A
Strategic Development Review – Exeter Science Park Limited	Director of Place		No			Part B
Public Toilets Review	Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation					Part A
Housing Strategy	Director Housing and Health			Overview Committee	1 October 2025	Part A
Harepath Road, Seaton	Assistant Director Place Assets &	None	N	AMF (Part B)	1 October 2025	Part B

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Dog Control Enforcement Policy	Assistant Director Environmental Health			Overview Committee		Part A
Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy	Assistant Director Environmental Health					Part A
Community Grant funding	Asst Director Revenues, Benefits, CSC, Fraud & Compliance				29 October 2025	Part A
Climate Change Strategy	Assistant Director Environmental Health				Winter 2025/26	Part A
Public Space Protection Orders	Assistant Director Environmental Health				Winter 2025	Part A
Asset acquisition in Exmouth	Project Manager Estates					Part B
Recycling & Waste LATCo governance and financial proposal – further detail	Assistant Director StreetScene				1 October 2025	Part B

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Update re Management Funding for Clyst Meadows Country Park	Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure			Strategic Planning Committee	26 November 2025	Part A
EDDC Local Nature Recovery Plan	Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure				26 November 2025	Part A
Exmouth BMP Update	Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure				26 November 2025	Part A
Supported Housing Services	Assistant Director Statutory Housing Services				26 November 2025	Part A
Procurement of CBRE through the Crown Commercial Services Framework to undertake work in relation to the second new community	Delivery Manager					Part A
Colyford Road and Fosse Way Viability Assessment	Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation	Colyford Road and Fosse Way Viability Assessment	No	Asset Management Forum		Part A *possibly some Part B commercially sensitive

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Cloakham Lawns Employment Site Viability Assessment	Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation	Colyford Road and Fosse Way Viability Assessment	No	Asset Management Forum		Part A *possibly some Part B commercially sensitive
Exmouth Town and Seafront Placemaking Plan Adoption	Assistant Director Place Assets & Commercialisation	Placemaking Plan and appendices	Yes some Strategic Outline Business Cases (SOBC)	Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group		Part A *possibly some Part B commercially sensitive
Delivery Vehicle for Second New Community	Director for Place					
Percy Wakley Woods Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace	Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure				26 November 2025	Part A

Key Officer/Portfolio Holder Decisions

Sale of Workshop Site, Exmouth	Estates Surveyor					Part B Portfolio Holder Assets & Economy Decision
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Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Individual property: external and internal repairs and refurbishment	Assistant Director Housing					Part B Officer Decision
Individual property: external and internal repairs and refurbishment	Assistant Director Housing					Part B Officer Decision
Individual property: external and internal repairs and refurbishment	Assistant Director Housing					Part B Officer Decision
Procurement Support from Devon County Council – renew 5- year SLA	Director of Finance					Officer Executive Decision
Household Support Fund – Determining groups for targeted support	Assistant Director Customer Services, Revenues & Benefits		As per Cabinet recommendation at their meeting 30 October 2024			Officer key decision

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Sewerage Treatment Plant Replacement Programme 2025/26	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Bathroom Adaptations to 20 properties	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Bathroom Adaptations to properties ED0322-24	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Structural Repairs & Refurbishment – 33, 35 & 37 Underleys, Beer	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Refurbishment of Flats, Langford Avenue, Honiton	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Refurbishment of 4no. Blocks of Flats, Arcot Park, Sidmouth	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Refurbishment & Extension of 1 School Lane, Newton Poppleford	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Internal Adaptations to various properties	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
LAD 1 Completion – Heating & Fabric Upgrades	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Upgrade of Peazen Flats, Beer	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision
Internal Adaptations Q2-25	Planned Works & Climate Change Manager					Appointment of contractor. Request for Officer Executive Decision

Officer Decisions to enter into Contract

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Sidmouth and East Beach BMP – Approval to enter design and construction contracts	Assistant Director StreetScene	Date
Recycling and Waste: - MRF/Baling Plant Refurbishment/Site Compliance - vehicle refurbishment programme	Assistant Director StreetScene	
Seaton Wetlands southern expansion and habitat creation project – HLF bid over £100K	Countryside Manager	EOI by January/Feb 2025 TBC
East Devon National Landscape HLF Open Programmes bid for Landscape Connections project	East Devon NL Manager	EOI Dec 2024

Key Decision	Portfolio (Lead Officer)	Documents to be considered before Cabinet take decision	Whether other documents will be considered before decision taken [Y/N]	Other meetings where matter is to be debated / considered	Date of Cabinet meeting	Part A = Public meeting Part B = private meeting [with reasons]
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Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 3 September 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Build & Buy - A Housing Investment & Delivery Plan for East Devon

Report summary:

The report is a response to a growing housing need and feedback from the Housing Strategy consultation. The report provides an overview and introduction to 'Build and Buy' A Housing Investment & Delivery Plan for East Devon.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☐ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet;

- 1) Endorse the Build & Buy Plan
- 2) Note that the financing of the plan is subject to the approval of the HRA Business Plan and the 2026/27 budget setting process in due course.

Reason for recommendation:

To increase the supply of affordable homes for residents of east Devon and contribute to wider housing and community objectives, including estate regeneration.

Officer: Liam Reading – Assistant Director Programmes, Investment & Development

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance

- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low

Climate change Medium Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; Risk table is included on page 4 of this report, and financial implications from point 13 onwards.

Links to background information None

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

Build & Buy: A Housing Investment & Development Plan for East Devon

Introduction

1. This report outlines the Council's vision for new housing through '***Build and Buy – A Housing Investment & Delivery Plan for East Devon.***
2. The purpose of the plan is to maximise the use of our assets, address housing need and support the Council's strategic objective of having a supported and engaged community that have the right homes in the right places and with the appropriate infrastructure.
3. The Plan aims to deliver **500 new homes over the next five years**, with an equal split between homes developed on Council owned land and homes acquired through partnerships with private developers.
 - **250 homes** will be delivered through direct development on the Council's existing landholdings.
 - **250 homes** will be purchased from developers as part of Section 106 agreements, joint ventures, or off-the-shelf acquisitions.
4. This mixed delivery approach is intended to accelerate housing supply, make efficient use of public assets, and ensure the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has a range of housing stock to meet local needs.

Key Considerations

Site and Development Feasibility

5. Council owned land will be subject to detailed design proposals and local engagement prior to the submission of Planning. Consideration of local need, house types, location and local infrastructure will be included.
6. Delivery of homes will be phased to manage risk and delivery over the 5 year period.

Construction Type, Procurement and Delivery Models

7. The form of construction may vary depending on site specific requirements, but could include traditional build or Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)
8. Procurement and delivery is likely to be a mix of design & build contracts, partnerships with housing associations and developer-led schemes. The use of Framework Agreements where appropriate will streamline procurement and ensure value for money.

Housing Mix and Design Standards

9. The plan proposes to deliver a range of 2, 3 and 4 Bedroom, general needs homes, to create a range of house types
10. Where possible, housing standards for internal elements such as kitchens, bathrooms, heating etc across developments and acquisitions will be standardised to aid long term management and maintenance efficiency.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

11. Residents, local councillors, and partner organisations will be engaged throughout the planning and delivery stages to ensure communities are informed and involved. Detailed engagement plans will be prepared on a scheme by scheme basis.
12. This Plan is based on a clearly identified housing need and responds to the challenges outlined in the Councils Draft Housing Strategy. Responses to our consultation on the Housing Strategy showed that the availability of affordable homes for local people was a clear priority.

Risk Assessment

Risk Category	Description	Mitigation Measures
Planning	Potential delays or refusals at planning stage	Early pre-application engagement with planning officers
Cost Inflation	Fluctuations in construction costs or house prices	Build in contingencies and phased procurement to adjust to market conditions
Delivery Delays	Construction or supply chain delays	Use of established contractors; realistic programming and risk-sharing

Financial Risk	Cost overruns or underperformance of acquisitions	Robust financial modelling, cost controls, and regular reviews
Reputational Risk	Public opposition or perceived lack of transparency	Clear communication strategy and ongoing engagement with communities

Financial Implications:

Capital Investment

13. A significant financial investment will be required to realise the plan vision. This is estimated to be up to £100million over 5 years. The aspiration will be for all new homes to be self-financing i.e. with income covering the cost of borrowing and without negatively impact the Housing Revenue Account.
14. Site by site financial viability will be undertaken to determine the affordability of any proposed development or acquisition. However, there will be a need for further sources of funding to cross subsidise as detailed below.
15. The funding requirement of the plan will form part of a new HRA Business Plan which will be brought to Members for approval in due course and will align with the budget setting process for 2026/27.

Funding Sources

16. The Build and Buy Plan will require a significant capital investment by the Council. This will be met from a range of sources including;
 - Prudential Borrowing
 - Capital receipts from land & assets
 - Government grants (e.g Homes England)
 - S106 commuted sum
 - Right to Buy Receipts

Revenue Implications

17. New homes will generate rental income that will be used to service prudential borrowing. As indicated above, the intention will be for all projects to be self-financing. Where necessary for financial viability, alternative tenures such as shared ownership or market housing may be considered, but only if they enable the wider delivery of affordable housing.

Governance

18. Strong governance is essential to ensure the effective delivery of the Housing Investment and Delivery Plan and to maintain transparency, accountability, and oversight. Effective governance will be achieved through the following;

Communications and Engagement Strategy:

19. Development projects will include detailed communication and engagement strategies, appropriate to the location and scale of development. The intention will be to provide a clear overview for when and how actions will be undertaken and to manage expectations.

Regular Portfolio Holder Updates

20. Regular project updates will be provided to the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities, with further reporting determined by the scale of project and to be set out in a communication strategy.

Housing Review Board (HRB)

21. Progress on the plan will be routinely reported to the Housing Review Board to provide oversight on delivery, risks and track performance against the plan proposals.

Decision Making & Delegated Authority

22. Strategic decisions will be subject to existing Council standing orders. In order to ensure smooth delivery, delegated authority may be sought on a project by project basis to enable the timely delivery of homes. In such circumstances delegated authority will be sought at the point of project approval.

Conclusion and Next Steps

23. Build and Buy – A Housing Investment and Delivery Plan for East Devon is a bold, ambitious and proactive response to the District's housing challenges. It should be noted that the development process can be lengthy and complex with the potential for lengthy delays, particularly at the planning and pre planning stage. Multiple external factors such as inflation, particularly on build costs and labour, may adversely affect development viability and necessitate a deviation from the plan target. As such, the hugely ambitious target of 500 homes over 5 years should be seen as an aspirational target.
24. The next steps will include:
 - Finalising site feasibility prioritisation and engagement plans
 - Establishing delivery partnerships and a pipeline of acquisitions
 - Regular progress reporting to Members, in addition to regular review to monitor delivery, risks, and financial performance.
 - Seeking formal approval of the HRA Business Plan which will provide the strategic financial investment framework for financing the plan.

Financial implications:

The financial implications are significant with the increase of debt proposed at £100m. The principle being debt costs will be met from available rental income from the new properties after assumed external funding. Each scheme that is proposed will require these details to be confirmed before approval is given.

Legal implications:

As is indicated in the report, strategic decisions will be subject to existing Council standing orders. In order to ensure smooth delivery, delegated authority may be required on a project by project basis to enable the timely delivery of homes.

Build & Buy

A Housing Investment and Delivery Plan for East Devon






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Foreword

As the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes & Communities, I am proud to present Build and Buy – A Housing Investment and Delivery Plan for East Devon, setting out a very ambitious roadmap to deliver 500 new homes over the next five years.

Safe, secure, and affordable housing is the foundation of a thriving community. It supports health, education, employment, and wellbeing and is at the heart of what makes our area a place where people want to live, work, and grow. This plan represents our commitment to meeting the needs of our residents, addressing local housing pressures, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

We are responding to the challenges faced by many households: rising housing costs, growing demand, and the urgent need for more sustainable and adaptable homes. Through a mix of council-led development, partnerships with housing associations, and maximising the use of our land and assets, we are determined to deliver a diverse range of homes that are high-quality, energy-efficient, and tailored to the needs of families, older residents, young people, and key workers alike.

Delivering 500 homes over five years is a significant ambition. It requires strong leadership, collaboration across sectors, and continued engagement with our communities. This plan reflects our shared ambition: to build not just homes, but places people are proud to call home.



Councillor Dan Ledger

Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes & Communities

Introduction

Build and Buy – A Housing Investment and Delivery Plan represents a significant step forward for the Council. Outlining our ambition to deliver 500 new homes for local people over the next 5 years.

The plan and ambition is embedded in the Councils Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and reflects the priorities and housing need outlined in our Housing and Homelessness strategies, our Local Plan and the Councils Strategic Plan for supported and engaged communities.

This plan establishes the vision and roots to delivery. It will take ambition, challenging decisions and determination to provide homes for local residents, it can only be achieved through strong collaboration with Developers, Government, County, Town and Parish Councils, and a range of partner organisations.

The plan is set in the backdrop of Local Government Reorganisation. As such it will act as a live vision document that will evolve and adapt with organisational change.

The Council play critical role in the affordable housing market, as both local planning authority and as a stock holding authority. But it has the scope to do more, through direct delivery, strategic acquisitions, effective partnerships and a proactive approach. The Council can increase supply and deliver homes that meet real local need.

1. Background

It has been widely reported that the housing market and particularly the affordable housing sector, across the Country is under acute pressure.

East Devon is no different, with affordability and access to homes being a key area of pressure. The Report of the Devon Housing Commission (2024) identifies an acute shortage of affordable housing across Devon, which is an impediment to economic growth. The report recommends increasing the range of housing

options available, emphasising homes suitable for young people struggling to enter the housing market and the elderly who lack access to accessible and adaptable housing, to reduce affordability pressure and improve health outcomes.

The District comprises a multitude of settlement areas from its existing principal Towns of Exmouth and Honiton to rural & coastal communities. More than half of the district is designated as National Landscape, with 30 Conservation Areas and home to the "Jurassic Coast" World Heritage site. These environmental constraints make East Devon a beautiful place to live and work but the delivery of new homes very challenging.

New development has been focussed on the district's new town at Cranbrook, and the West End of the district, which continue to deliver a good proportion of affordable housing. However delivery of new affordable homes across the wider district has been lower, which creates a challenge for the Council as a housing authority in ensuring there is sufficient supply of affordable homes, particularly in those primary settlements where need is greatest and established community networks exist. The plan will seek to address that by focusing on the areas of the greatest need.

Affordability generally across East Devon is also a significant challenge for residents wishing to purchase a home. The average house price in East Devon, as at April 2025 was £346,629¹, over 10x the average salary.²

The demand for affordable homes continues to rise as has been demonstrated through the 2022 Local Housing Needs assessment. This assessment looked at historic supply and estimated the need for 2,784 new social and affordable rent properties and 5,227 shared ownership properties be delivered through the new local plan.

¹ <https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/browse?from=2024-04-01&location=http%3A%2F%2Flandregistry.data.gov.uk%2Fid%2Fregion%2F-east-devon&to=2025-04-01&lang=en>

²

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/dataset/placeofworkbylocalauthorityshetable7> - Mean £33,500

The Councils own Housing waiting list, illustrates a ‘live’ picture of need. Devon Home Choice (the housing allocation system for Devon) indicates that there are 2344³ households registered on the portal for an affordable home.

2. Historic Delivery

In 2024-25 there were 225 new affordable homes delivered through the planning process, as s.106 dwellings or delivered as part of affordable housing providers development pipeline. Despite this excellent level of new delivery, the total need vastly outweighs supply.

3. Housing Types & Tenures

As a Council we provide homes to meet a range of local housing needs. Any new properties acquired or developed under the plan will contribute to our ability to meet these broad range of needs including, Temporary Accommodation, Supported Housing, long term settled accommodation and older persons housing.

Whilst our primary objective is to provide rented accommodation, we recognise the need and demand for affordable home ownership. Varying models exist and can often help to improve site viability. Our plans may therefore include an element of affordable home ownership on some sites.

4. The Plan: BUILD 250 Homes

A key asset of the Council is its land and existing housing stock, including redundant or underutilised garage sites. The plan proposes direct housing delivery through developing our land and assets to provide well-designed, tenure-diverse communities with homes that are energy efficient and cost effective and respond directly to local housing needs.

³ East Devon Housing Register as at 02.06.25 – Bands A-D. This increases to 4515 with Band E (no housing need) included.

A significant amount of work has already been undertaken to establish our capacity to develop on council owned assets. This has identified an array of opportunities for small, medium and larger scale estate regeneration.

To deliver our ambition of developing up to 250 new homes we will;

- ❖ Continue to review our portfolio and identify additional opportunities for development, including estate regeneration projects.
- ❖ Establish a delivery programme outlining housing numbers and a delivery timeline.
- ❖ Progress with feasibility work to analyse each site, putting forward a delivery recommendation to the Council with a detailed assessment including costs and risk factors.
- ❖ Engage and consult with local communities where development is being proposed, so schemes can be informed and shaped by local communities

The delivery mechanism for each site may vary depending on site specific factors. This may include in house procurement of a Design and Build contract, a Joint Venture or Development Agreement in partnership with a Registered Housing Provider or private sector developer, or other similar mechanism.

Given the nature of development it is expected that, subject to approval, new homes will begin to become available from the 2027/28 financial year.

5. The Plan: BUY 250 Homes

The Council has purchased 18 new homes through Housing Revenue Account (HRA) over the last 2 years on an opportunity led approach. This includes homes in Honiton, Exmouth, Axminster and Cranbrook.

The vision of this plan is for the HRA to actively re-enter the affordable housing market with a view to acquiring 250+ homes across the next 5 years.

This is envisioned as being through the following range of options:

➤ **Section 106 Allocations**

Purchasing Affordable Homes directly from developers. Early engagement with developers at the planning stage can also help to maximise affordable homes on pipeline schemes.

➤ **Off-the-Shelf Purchases**

Purchasing completed units directly from developers and agents. Provides a fast track approach to meeting urgent need and can be an opportunity where developers have excess stock.

➤ **Additionality/Package Deals**

Collaborative deals with SMEs or housing associations to unlock sites that might not otherwise proceed. Pursuing consortium purchases with partner housing providers.

➤ **Previous Right to Buy Homes**

The HRA have a right of first refusal on homes previously sold through right to buy. Where it is strategically sensible, Ex Council properties will be bought back i.e. single dwellings in a block, part of a development site or regeneration area, or where an acquisition is required to meet a specific local housing need.

To deliver our ambition of buying up to 250 new homes we will;

- ❖ Review all live and forth coming planning applications to identify a pipeline of potential s.106 acquisitions
- ❖ Engage with developers, land agents and promoters to establish strategic relationships for current and future acquisitions.
- ❖ Engage with Registered Providers to identify opportunities for delivery through partnerships.

6. Sustainability and Net Zero

The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and are a signatory to the Devon Climate Declaration. We have set out an ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040.

The Council's Housing portfolio forms a major part of what are termed scope 3 carbon emissions, those being emissions the Council is indirectly responsible for i.e. from tenants occupying Council property.

Accordingly, the ‘building and buying’ of new homes will need to carefully consider the future demands of those homes and how they contribute positively and negatively to the Council’s ambition to achieve net zero by 2040.

The primary approach will be to reduce the amount of fuel needed for new homes, minimise energy consumption and maximise renewable energy generation. Collectively these measures reduce demand and carbon emissions are reduced accordingly.

The aspiration will be for any new homes to be net zero ready. Methods of achieving net zero will be considered on a case by case basis to determine the most appropriate and cost effective method.

7. Conclusion

The plan is ambitious and will require strong collaboration across the Authority and with wider partners.

Through strong strategic leadership, this plan provides an opportunity to deliver much needed new affordable housing for residents across East Devon to live work and grow.

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

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