



Agenda for Cabinet Wednesday, 4th February, 2026, 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, 27 January 2026

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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 - 8)
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Declarations of interest
Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)
- 4 Public speaking
Information on [public speaking is available online](#)
- 5 Matters of urgency
Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online
- 6 Confidential/exempt item(s)
To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the Press) have been excluded. There are three items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.
- 7 Minutes of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held on 8 December 2025 (Pages 9 - 13)
- 8 Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 12 January 2026 (Pages 14 - 17)
- 9 Minutes of the joint budget meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee held on 14 January 2026 (Pages 18 - 25)
- 10 Minutes of Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum held on 13 January 2026 (Pages 26 - 29)

11 Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 22 January 2026 (Pages 30 - 39)

Key Matters for Decision

12 Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2026/27 (Pages 40 - 46)

Matters for Decision

13 **Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026/27** (Pages 47 - 51)

14 **Appointment of Specialist Support in Relation to Local Government Reorganisation** (Pages 52 - 53)

15 **Annual programme of Committee meetings 2026/2027** (Pages 54 - 61)

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

Part B Matters for Decision

17 Exmouth Town Hall (Pages 62 - 74)

18 Cranbrook Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Campus - Neighbourhood Health Centre - Section 2 (Pages 75 - 80)

19 Focussed Programme of Community Asset Transfers (Pages 81 - 100)

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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 7 January 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.01 pm and ended at 7.15 pm

127 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings from Cabinet held on 26 November 2025 and 3 December 2025 were agreed.

128 Declarations of interest

Min 138. Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.
Councillor Nick Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest, has been given a dispensation as a Devon County Councillor.

Min 138. Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.
Councillor Paul Arnott, Affects Non-registerable Interest, has been given a dispensation as a Devon County Councillor involved in LGR.

Min 138. Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.
Councillor Paul Hayward, Affects Non-registerable Interest, has been given a dispensation as a Devon County Councillor.

Min 138. Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.
Councillor Richard Jefferies, Affects Non-registerable Interest, has been given a dispensation as a Devon County Councillor.

129 Public speaking

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

130 Matters of urgency

There were none.

131 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one item dealt with in this way recorded at Minute 141.

132 Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 13 November 2025

The minutes were discussed confidentially in Part B of the meeting, they are recorded at Minute 141.

133 Minutes of Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 12 November 2025

Members noted the minutes of the Recycling and Waste Partnership Board held on 12 November 2025.

134 **Minutes of Poverty Working Panel held on 24 November 2025**

Members noted the Minutes of the Poverty Working Panel held on 24 November 2025.

135 **Minutes of Arts and Culture Forum held on 26 November 2025**

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of the Arts and Culture Forum held on 26 November 2025.

Minute 8 East Devon Cultural Strategy progress and budget request (this was discussed under Minute 137 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026/27)

**Minute 9 Thelma Hulbert Gallery update,
RESOLVED THAT CABINET**

Note and support a funding bid to the Arts Council to support the Thelma Hulbert Gallery to:

- Enrich the Exhibition Programme by delivering an ambitious engagement programme that benefits the wider East Devon community — including local schools and our expanding Youth Network.
- Develop the Youth Network into a region-wide platform that extends beyond the gallery, engaging young people who may not otherwise have access to creative opportunities — such as those with school-related anxiety and young people leaving care.
- Reframe opportunities for young people by introducing live projects and creative briefs designed to build skills, confidence, and pathways into the creative industries.
- Expand internship opportunities through partnerships with Exeter College and support for care leavers.
- Continue to focus on the climate emergency by developing Climate Conversations into a Climate Symposium – a day to carve out space and time to inspire creatives to protect and enhance the natural environment through their creative practice, share expertise and network in a participatory, supportive and solutions focused event of interactive workshops and talks.

136 **Council Tax Base 2026/2027**

The Assistant Director for Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services presented the report which set out the tax base for 2026/2027 and included the breakdown for each parish, expressed in terms of Band D equivalent properties on which the council tax would be based. This was an important component in the Council's budget setting process for 2026/2027.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Agreed the approval of the tax base for 2026/2027 at 65,733.46 Band D equivalent properties.
2. Agreed the amount for each parish as detailed under section 3 of the report.

REASON:

The calculation of the tax base was prescribed in regulations and was a legal requirement. The council tax base was defined as the number of Band D equivalent

properties in a local authority's area. The tax base was necessary to calculate council tax for a given area.

137 **Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026/27**

The Director of Finance and Portfolio Holder Finance presented the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2026/27 for initial approval by the Cabinet before consideration by a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Housing Review Board. Recommendations from these meetings would be presented back to Cabinet on 4 February 2026 when members would finalise budget proposals to recommend to Council.

Members noted Minute 8, and the recommendation of the Arts and Culture Forum held on 26 November 2025.

Minute 8 East Devon Cultural Strategy progress and budget request

that Cabinet approve the request of an internal budget of £37,500 to continue the successful delivery of the Cultural Strategy in 2026/27 as part of the budget-setting process.

RESOLVED:

That the draft revenue and capital estimates including the associated fees and charges schedule are initially approved before forwarding to a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Housing Review Board for consideration. Cabinet would then consider recommendations from these Committees before making their final recommendation to Council on the 4 February 2026.

REASON:

There was a requirement to set a balanced budget and a Council Tax for 2026/27.

138 **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation**

The Director of Place updated members following the submission of the full proposal for the 4-5-1 model of local government reorganisation in Devon to the Secretary of State in November 2025. This included a summary of the other proposals that were submitted alongside this model. He went on to consider the next stages in terms of the consultation and decision-making process and the transition to implementation planning. Finally, the update provided in relation to devolution proposals and the strategic importance of moving to a Mayoral model.

RESOLVED that Cabinet;

- Notes the next steps in relation to proposals for local government reorganisation and the potential establishment of a mayoral strategic authority.
- Further to the letter of 25 July 2025 signed by this and the other ten Devon councils jointly expressing an interest in future Devon devolution opportunities, agrees to liaise with the other Devon Districts, the County Council and Plymouth City and Torbay Councils with the intention of reinvigorating the Team Devon partnership.
- Receives further reports as the proposals evolve and key stages are reached.

REASON:

To ensure that Cabinet was fully informed of the progression of proposals relating to both local government reorganisation and devolution.

139 **Forward Plan**

Members noted the contents of the forward plan for key decisions for the period 1st January 2026 to 30th April 2026.

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

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set page 7 Cabinet 29 October 2025 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).

141 **Minutes of Housing Review Board held on 13 November 2025**

Cllr Aurora Bailey and Cllr Brian Bailey left the meeting before the start of this item.

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of the Housing Review Board held on 13 November 2025.

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
G Jung	Portfolio Holder Environment - Operations
D Ledger	Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes & Communities
J Loudoun	Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder Corporate, Council & External Engagement
T Olive	Portfolio Holder Place, Infrastructure & Strategic Planning
R Jefferies	Portfolio Holder Environment - Nature & Climate

Also present (for some or all the meeting)

Councillor Aurora Bailey
Councillor Brian Bailey
Councillor Christopher Burhop
Councillor Roy Collins
Councillor Peter Faithfull
Councillor Mike Goodman

Also present:

Officers:

Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Libby Jarrett, Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Customer Access, Fraud
& Compliance
Andrew King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulated Services)
Tom Winters, Interim Economic Development Manager
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

Chair

Date:

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held at Conference Room, Younghayes Centre, Cranbrook on 8 December 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 10.55 am

39 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 October 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

40 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

41 Public speaking

There were no members of the public present.

42 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

43 Confidential/exempt items

There were no confidential or exempt items.

44 Briefing Note: Devon County Council London Road footway/cycleway improvements

Chris Burridge-Barney, Devon County Council's Transportation Planning Officer presented the briefing note on Phase 1 of the London Road footway/cycleway improvements and gave a brief update, accompanied by engineering design plans, illustrating the proposed locations of the 3.5m wide shared footway and cycleway paths, designed in accordance with the government's Cycle Infrastructure Design Guidance. It was noted that segregated paths would not be included in the scheme, as the additional width needed for the 5m wide path would significantly increase third party land requirements and would increase the need to remove hedgerows and trees.

Before construction, the scheme will undergo independent Road Safety Audits to review safety for all users and refine design. Stakeholder feedback, including measures to prevent vehicle access to paths, would be considered and further engagement with EDDC, Cranbrook Town Council and affected landowners will be planned, along with a wider public consultation on the proposals.

The group discussed the proposed improvements, and it was requested that Rockbeare Parish Council should be included in all further engagement. It was noted that since the design plans had been developed an agreement had been reached for the redevelopment of Tillhouse Cottage, including securing a path to the front of the site and

the expansion areas fronting London Road would have segregated cycle route due to sufficient land either side to allow this.

Councillor Blakey noted the proposal for a T-junction at Ingrams, despite the town council's preference for a mini roundabout and asked whether DCC supported the use of mini roundabouts on London Road. The Transportation Planning Officer explained this would depend on anticipated traffic volumes, with larger developments typically requiring a roundabout. The Cranbrook Town Council Clerk raised concerns about traffic issues during specific times of the day at the Station Road T-junction and the Cranbrook New Community Manager confirmed there would be an opportunity to improve this junction as part of the Bluehayes development.

In response to a query on funding and stakeholder liaison timescales, the Transportation Planning Officer advised that the design stage would take up most of the next financial year, with construction planned for 2028/29, and confirmed he was happy to engage with stakeholders throughout this period. Funding will come from secured CIL and S106 contributions, with further S106 monies expected to help progress and prioritise future sections.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

45

Mechanism for the allocation and spending of Category 4 Infrastructure Payments

The Group received an update from the Cranbrook New Community Manager on the mechanism and preferences in areas relating to the allocation and spending of category 4 infrastructure contributions that the Group had previously considered.

The Cranbrook New Community Manager referred to the list of infrastructure projects worth over £30m and stated that because funding was not anticipated to begin being received until the 2028/29 financial year, the council would need to seek to use forward funding agreements on a case-by-case basis to maintain financial stability for all parties. The Group noted that a paper was being prepared for submission to Homes England to seek a forward funding package for the category 4 items and other infrastructure needs for Cranbrook.

Feedback on the draft process highlighted several key areas for improvement:

- Clarity on information required: The need to clearly specify the exact information required from Devon County Council was emphasised.
- Decision-Making Criteria: A request for transparency regarding the criteria used for allocating funds.
- Funding Round Duration: It was suggested that funding rounds remain open for a minimum of 8 weeks, rather than the proposed 6 weeks. This extension to 8 weeks should also apply to any potential extra rounds for urgent projects.

Regarding the timeline for discussion and agreement, it was confirmed that the proposed criteria could be presented at the February meeting and the Strategic Planning Committee in March 2026 for approval followed by Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the document setting out a mechanism and principles for the allocation and spend of category 4 infrastructure contributions be endorsed subject to the funding rounds to be

open for a minimum period of 8 weeks and a detailed criteria for Category 4 infrastructure bids to be reported to the Placemaking Group prior to reporting of this matter to Strategic Planning Committee and Cabinet.

46 **Health Provision at Cranbrook**

The Cranbrook New Community Manager presented the paper received from NHS Devon ICB updating the Group about the short-term and long-term plans for the existing primary care (GP) provision currently delivered at the Cranbrook Medical Practice.

Despite an expansion in 2021 the surgery is still too small for the population of Cranbrook residents and the NHS Devon ICB decided there was an immediate need to explore a short-term solution and would look at using the car park to provide a temporary modular solution however this would result in there being no residual parking on the site. The next meeting with the stakeholders and Cranbrook Town Council will take place on 6 January 2026 to progress this option.

The construction of a larger premises is planned for the long-term solution which would include a wellbeing service. NHS Devon have produced a programme of works aimed at securing funding and discussions are ongoing about the delivery options. Discussions are also ongoing with NHS England and EDDC regarding identifying appropriate funding of £400k to progress the Short Form Business Case for the long-term solution.

The Town Council Clerk noted the project was based on a population of 20,000 and questioned whether the figure should be near to 22,000. The Cranbrook New Community Manager acknowledged the figure was indeed higher and explained this was the figure provided by NHS Devon ICB.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

47 **Community Governance Review**

The Group received a verbal update on the progress with the Community Governance Review which looked at the current parish governance arrangements for Cranbrook and surrounding area.

It was noted that a report will be presented to Council on Wednesday, 10 December, setting out recommendations to include the following five areas within the Cranbrook parish:

- Treasbeare Expansion Area,
- Bluehayes Expansion Area (sections not already within Cranbrook parish),
- Properties on the northern side of London Road currently within Rockbeare parish
- Grange Expansion Area
- Cobdens (sections not already within Cranbrook parish)

A further public consultation will take place in the early 2026 with the outcomes reported back to Full Council in June 2026.

Councillor Gent stated that this represented the most logical solution for Cranbrook.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

48 **Forward Plan**

The Group received the forward plan.

RESOLVED:

The forward plan be noted subject to receiving a report on the criteria for category 4 infrastructure payments, and a general update on the expansion areas on 2 February 2026 and to move the Town Centre delivery plan and programme governance to 13 April 2026.

49 **Implementation Plan**

The Group received an Implementation Plan outlining the list of projects scheduled for delivery.

The Group noted positive progress: an architecturally-led multi-disciplinary design team has been appointed to develop plans for the leisure centre and associated car park. An outline planning application for the leisure centre, county facilities and car parking is expected to be submitted in August 2026. This application is anticipated to include the blue light land located to the west of the site.

The blue light land is intended for Fire Brigade use, however, if not required, it may be repurposed for workshop or small business units.

The Group also received an update on Cranbox which included:

- Weekly time is dedicated to support the transfer of TC2 land to the council. A meeting is hoped to take place this week between all parties to resolve outstanding matters and enable completion.
- The Preconstruction Services Agreement Contract has been awarded, and EDDC now has an employed agent. Progress to the next stage depends on the TC2 land transfer.
- A licence needs to be arranged for the strip of land located between TC2 boundaries and the existing Tillhouse Road.
- A meeting with the Town Council is scheduled next week to discuss the Cranbox transfer.
- Consideration of the planning application is ongoing.

RESOLVED:

That the Implementation Plan be noted.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

K Blakey (EDDC)

T Olive (EDDC)

V Wright (CTC)

H Gent (DCC)

Officers in attendance:

Thea Billeter, Cranbrook New Community Manager
Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Services
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer, EDDC
Nicola Wison, Principal Planning Officer, DCC
Chris Burrige-Barney, Transportation Planning Officer, DCC
Janine Gardner, Clerk to Cranbrook Town Council
Alexandra Robinson, Deputy Clerk to Cranbrook Town Council

Councillor apologies:

K Bloxham
S Hawkins

Officer apologies:

A Wood

Chair

Date:

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 12 January 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 5.57 pm

29 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 October 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

30 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

31 Public speaking

No members of the public had registered to speak.

32 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

33 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential or exempt items.

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

There was one item to consider which was dealt with at minute 35.

35 Call In request: Cabinet decision 3 December 2025 - In perpetuity funding for management of Clyst Meadows SANG - Cabinet minute 118

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, a valid call-in request had been received in respect of a Cabinet decision taken on 3 December 2025: In perpetuity funding for the management of Clyst Meadows SANG.

On 3 December 2025 it was resolved that Cabinet:

1. Approves the creation of an investment fund of £1.1m, funding from CIL, to secure the in perpetuity funding for the management of Clyst Meadows.
2. Delegates the authority to the Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management, Finance Director, Place Director and Director of Governance, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, to set up and arrange for the management of this fund.

A call-in request was received on 9 December 2025, signed by five Councillors, including the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Mike Goodman, and Cllrs Ian Barlow, Colin Brown, Brian Bailey and Aurora Bailey.

The call-in was requested on the following grounds:

- The Cabinet debate was split, with two members voting for and two against the proposal, and the Chair using a casting vote to approve the decision.
- Concerns were raised that spending this money does not represent good value for EDDC.
- The item was initially considered by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) working group, where a request for £2m was rejected. The revised request of £1.1m is still considered an expensive way to use capital sums to finance a park.
- There are other more urgent infrastructure projects that could benefit from this funding.

The Green Infrastructure Project Manager, Paul Osborne, provided a brief summary of the costs of maintaining the SANG in perpetuity and the investment options available. There was concern that there may not be sufficient CIL monies available to meet future costs and Officers had therefore recommended the approach as set out in the report to Cabinet on 3 December 2025. The recommended fund, CCLA Investment Management, was used by 245 local authorities nationally and had a fund value of approximately £1bn.

It was noted that further infrastructure projects, funded by CIL monies and including SANG delivery, would be brought forward and a Strategic SANG Delivery Strategy 2026 – 2040 was in course of preparation jointly with Teignbridge District Council and Exeter City Council. A report would be brought to the Overview Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee in the spring. Currently £2.1m CIL remained unallocated, which would be reduced to £1m should the Cabinet decision stand.

Officers' recommendation remained that the in perpetuity funding remained the best option, carrying the lowest risk for the Council.

The Chair briefly outlined the previous decisions made by Cabinet and the CIL working group with respect to this matter.

Discussion, questions and Councillors' views expressed included the following points:

- It was vital to guarantee funding for the SANG for 80 years and to ensure that Natural England procedures are followed;
- A reduction in development would see a corresponding reduction in CIL receipts;
- The proposed investment of £1.1m could be better spent on more important infrastructure and the costs of maintaining the SANG could be funded, as are other projects, through annual CIL drawdown;
- Concern was expressed that investing in commercial property was risky and that the initial cost of investing in the proposed fund was expensive. Alternative investment funds were available and there was no guarantee of the returns shown in the financial modelling;
- The CCLA fund was well known to local authorities and had a good track record;
- It was emphasised that the Clyst Meadows SANG project would proceed and the only issue in question was the method of providing future funding;
- Noted that the financial modelling was only as good as the estimated figures used;
- It was difficult to balance the arguments for the alternative methods of funding the project and the view was expressed that the Committee should agree with Officers' recommendations;
- Concern was expressed that there could be huge changes over the lifetime of the proposed investment which meant a high level of uncertainty regarding relying on a steady performance over 80 years;

- Concern was expressed that SANGS are being treated individually with their own ring-fenced additional pot of money. Managing multiple SANGS on the same basis could enable money to be moved between projects;
- Not spending the proposed £1.1m now would not have a significant impact on the need for funding for currently identified infrastructure projects;
- The view was expressed that the matter would be best discussed by full Council to obtain a wider number of Councillors' views;
- The view was expressed that the decision should be referred back to Cabinet to reconsider.

It was proposed and seconded that the decision not be referred back to Cabinet and that therefore the decision made by Cabinet on 3 December 2025 should stand.

RESOLVED

That the decision made by Cabinet on 3 December 2025 with regard to the in perpetuity funding for the management of Clyst Meadows SANG stands.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

K Blakey
P Fernley
M Goodman (Chair)
Y Levine
D Mackinder (Vice-Chair)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

C Burhop
R Collins
G Jung
T Olive

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Services
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Paul Osborne, Green Infrastructure Project Officer
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

Councillor apologies:

I Barlow
J Brown
A Bruce
B Collins
O Davey

A Hall
M Hall
V Johns
J Whibley

Chair

Date:

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

Joint budget meeting of Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee held on 14 January 2026

Minutes 42 - 46 Draft Directorate Plans 2026 - 2028

1. That Cabinet approves the Directorate Plans for 2026 – 2028 for the Place, Housing & Health, Finance and Governance Directorates.

Minute 47 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026 - 2027

1. That the Play Park Consolidation Study at a cost of £20,000 be included in the budget.
2. That the Cultural Strategy Delivery at a cost of £37,500 and the Tourism Strategy Delivery at a cost of £30,000 be included in the budget.
3. That the CVC service by Devon Communities Together - £63,000 be included in the budget.
4. That the amounts of £118,000 and £34,000 to cover Streetscene operational staff pressures be included in the budget.
5. That the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2026 – 2027, including the associated fees and charges schedule, be approved.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the joint budget meeting of Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 14 January 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 2.15 pm

36 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous joint meetings held 10 December 2024 and 15 January 2025 were agreed.

37 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

38 Public speaking

No members of the public had registered to speak.

39 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

40 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential/exempt items.

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

There were none.

42 Draft Directorate Plans 2026- 2028

The Chief Executive introduced this item and advised that Directorate Plans were being presented for a two year period, or until Local Government Reorganisation [LGR] whichever was soonest. The Plans would be kept under review alongside the resource provision and budget. The Council was ambitious in its plans for the next two years and had considered its priorities carefully.

With regard to reporting and monitoring, it was agreed to update the Plans as to how and where this would be undertaken.

43 Place

The Director of Place presented the Directorate Plan for 2026 – 2028 and summarised the composition of the Directorate which brought together 4 key service areas and

included 7 Portfolio areas. The Director highlighted challenging areas of risk and time-bound projects which had to be delivered, and which stretched both capacity and capability across several Directorates.

Questions, clarification and responses included the following points:

- Regarding cutting back on the de-carbonisation of swimming pool heating, the Director of Place would provide further information regarding the likely impact of this;
- Work had been undertaken in the summer of 2025 regarding the vacancy level in Streetscene and how this could be reduced. There was uncertainty for all staff around LGR, however, particular issues for Streetscene staff were around pay and conditions and recruitment processes;
- Work was on-going regarding the funding mix for the Cranbrook Leisure Centre, various Beach Management Schemes and the District Heating Scheme;
- Regarding the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, it was proposed to run Councillor workshops going forwards to update members;
- The Playing Pitch Strategy was in need of updating which is currently underway and progressing well;
- The Tree, Hedge and Woodland Strategy had recently been adopted and it was vital to work with partners to ensure delivery;
- Regarding targets for determining planning applications, it was noted that performance was monitored carefully due to nationally set targets;
- It was noted that the Directorate Plan does not include a specific metric around planning enforcement. This could be added to the Plan but would have to be in a way which was meaningful.

The Chair thanked the Director of Place and Officers for the excellent Plan and noted the challenges and the work involved within the Directorate.

44 **Housing & Health**

The Director of Housing & Health presented the Housing & Health Directorate Plan for 2026 – 2028 and highlighted key pieces of work with their associated challenges and opportunities. It was planned to start conversations with other Devon housing stock holding local authorities regarding LGR. Training for staff on trauma informed approaches would be undertaken shortly.

Questions, clarification and responses included the following points:

- With regard to the relationship with town and parish councils, the Emergency Planning Officer was continuing to build the community resilience network and liaise with local councils regarding emergency planning;
- Turn around times for void and re-let properties had improved over the past year;
- Regarding the Exmouth pilot for anti-social behaviour wardens, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner provided funding for previous financial years, and it was not clear yet whether funding would be available for the next financial year;
- Timescales for reviewing fees and charges do not always fit with dates for financial years such as a review of Licensing fees and charges which is on-going.

The Chair thanked the Director for their report and noted the amount of work to be undertaken within the Directorate.

45 **Finance**

The Director of Finance presented the Finance Directorate Plan for 2026 – 2028 and highlighted the work undertaken on the Poverty Strategy and the visit from the DWP for the pilot of the Place Based work, and the work being undertaken on e-notifications for

local residents. Conversations were on-going with other local authorities regarding integrating finance systems for LGR.

Questions, clarification and responses included the following points:

- With regard to empty homes, these are now charged the full amount, or more, for council tax and there is now a reduced risk of individuals claiming an incorrect reduction;
- Across Devon each District Council sets its own council tax support scheme and these will need to be considered as part of LGR. Council housing rents are set at national level in terms of the framework of annual increases;
- Regarding the Customer Charter and the increasing digitization of services, concern was expressed that some residents do not have access to digital communication. The Council has always provided alternative means of contact for residents and this will be reflected in the Customer Charter;
- It was noted that a small element of council tax would not be collected each year which was included in the budget as a reduced percentage;
- All organisations had to consider how to reach residents who do not use digital means of communication. The Customer Charter was person-centred to meet the needs of individuals and Ward Members were encouraged to work with individual Council tenants to ensure that their needs were understood;
- The Poverty Working Group was moving into a monitoring phase and it was proposed to report on the continuing anti-poverty work on an annual basis via the appropriate Committee.

The Chair thanked the Director of Finance for the report.

46 **Governance**

The Director of Governance presented the Governance Directorate Plan for 2026 – 2028. The Director provided an overview of the new structure of the Directorate and appointments to key posts, including the new procurement function and corporate oversight of projects, programmes and strategies. This will result in the management structure within the Directorate being fully populated. It was noted that LGR would have considerable impact on the Directorate. Key projects would have to be prioritised depending on resources available.

Questions, clarification and responses included the following points:

- Training for town and parish councils was on-going and wider work on engagement was in course of preparation;
- The revised report template was ready and Officers would be trained in its use imminently;
- The People Strategy had launched recently and a report would be brought to the next Personnel Committee.

The Chair thanked all Directors for their reports and for their work.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Council, Corporate and External Engagement also thanked the Executive Leadership Team and Officers for their Directorate Plans and presentations.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That Cabinet approves the Directorate Plans for 2026 – 2028 for the Place, Housing & Health, Finance and Governance Directorates.

47 **Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026 - 2027**

Cllr Anne Hall took the Chair for this item.

The Director of Finance gave a presentation on the draft budget covering key areas.

The budget process and timeline was outlined, with Council set to approve the final budget on 25 February 2026. LGR and the Fairer Funding review were highlighted as key factors impacting the budget.

Questions, clarification and responses included the following points:

- Concern was expressed as to the level of the Council's debt and whether the Council could meet its obligations should LGR be delayed or not go ahead. It was noted that the Council was obliged to evidence that debt could be afforded;
- With regard to figures for net interest, it was noted that interest receipts were predicted to drop due to lower interest rates and lower levels of cash held by the Council in investments. Interest payable would also drop due to lower interest rates and the removal of some capital projects from the programme;
- Regarding the new town, Marlcombe, it was noted that an assertive, upfront approach was needed and that this would come with a significant funding requirement;
- The outturn report at the end of the financial year would provide detailed information on the level of various reserves;
- Regarding the reactive and preventative maintenance of trees, it was confirmed that there was budget provision, however, the Director of Place would look into this further. The Portfolio Holder for Environment – Operations advised that trained staff were in place although an unforeseen event, such as a serious storm, could place the service under pressure;
- It was noted that there was a significant increase in staff costs in the General Fund FTE increases. Increases in the homelessness team and digital team were due to staff moving onto permanent contracts and it was agreed that further description in the Budget Book would be helpful;
- It was noted that movement of staff and teams between services had impacted figures in the Budget Book;
- It was confirmed that there was budget for the train station toilets in Exmouth to remain open;
- It was noted and commended that fees and charges included an increase in line with inflation.

Appendix 1 – Draft Revenue Budget 2026 – 2027 – Special Items

The Committees considered the Special Items set out at Appendix 1 [page 59] of the report.

1. Play Park Consolidation Study - £20,000

The intent behind the study was to provide a complete understanding of the legal obligations regarding the provision of play parks, including in respect of S.106 agreements. The study would also assist with understanding implementation planning moving forwards into LGR.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That the Play Park Consolidation Study at a cost of £20,000 be included in the budget.

2. Cultural Strategy Delivery - £37,500
3. Tourism Strategy Delivery - £30,000

Activity had previously been funded through the UKSPF [UK Shared Prosperity Fund] which would be coming to an end after the current financial year. Work had been undertaken to clarify which elements of the activities should continue in the next financial year.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism noted that the Culture Strategy and the Tourism Strategy had been developed to complement each other and both supported the local economy.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That the Cultural Strategy Delivery at a cost of £37,500 and the Tourism Strategy Delivery at a cost of £30,000 be included in the budget.

4. CVC service by Devon Communities Together - £60,000 and £3,000 for Devon Connect platform

This had also been funded through the UKSPF funding and provided significant help throughout the District.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That the CVC service by Devon Communities Together - £63,000 be included in the budget.

5 and 6. Streetscene Operational Staff pressures - £118,000 and £34,000

This request reflected the need for additional capacity within the Streetscene service due to growth in the District, particularly in the west end of East Devon, and seasonal fluctuations in the summer months.

The Portfolio Holder Environment – Operations noted that the budget for Streetscene had not increased in line with development in recent years.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That the amounts of £118,000 and £34,000 to cover Streetscene operational staff pressures be included in the budget.

7. LATCo client side manager - £60,340

The Director of Finance advised that this item had been withdrawn.

The above agreed items would now be incorporated into the draft budget going forwards for agreement by Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2026 – 2027, including the associated fees and charges schedule, be approved.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

K Blakey
P Fernley
M Goodman (Chair)
A Hall (Chair)
V Johns
Y Levine
D Mackinder
A Bailey
B Bailey
K Bloxham
R Collins
T Dumper
J Heath
D Wilson

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

N Hookway
G Jung
J Loudoun
T Olive
P Faithfull
P Hayward
S Jackson

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place
Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health
Andrew King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulated Services)
Gemma Roberts, Assistant Director for People and Performance
Emma Congerton, Assistant Director Statutory Housing
John Symes, Finance Manager
Tom Winters, Interim Economic Development Manager

Councillor apologies:

I Barlow
J Brown

A Bruce
B Collins
O Davey
M Hall
J Whibley
M Hartnell

Chair

Date:

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

Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum on 13 January 2026

Minute 38 Leisure Project update

To note the contents of this update.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum held at Online on 13 January 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.11 pm

29 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 September 2025

The minutes of the previous meeting were noted as a true and accurate record.

30 Declarations of interest

Minutes 34 – 39. Councillor Mike Goodman, Councillor sits on the management committee of Sidmouth Cricket Club.

31 Public Speaking

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

32 Matters of urgency

There were no matters or urgency.

33 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were two confidential/exempt items (minutes 38 and 39 refer).

34 LED Facilities and Activities update January 2026

The LED Chief Operating Officer presented this report which provided an update on recent activities, highlighting both positive community initiatives and challenges such as increased competition and shifting user trends.

The Forum noted the report.

35 LED KPI Dashboard November 2025

The Forum received and noted key details of the performance of LED Community Leisure for November 2025. Members briefly discussed attendance trends, site-specific impacts and the effects of competition.

36 Cranbrook Leisure Centre update

The Leisure Manager provided an update on the progress of the Cranbrook Leisure Centre scheme by the project team including the appointment of design consultants, engagement with Sport England, and plans for a public consultation in February.

The Forum noted the report.

37 **Playing Pitch Strategy update**

The Leisure Manager presented an update on the draft Playing Pitch Strategy outlining the methodology, key findings, collaboration with local councils, and next steps for consultation with a view to finalising the Strategy and Action Plan by end March 2026. He thanked consultants Strategic Leisure for their work on the project.

Discussion included the following points:

- Auxiliary facilities such as changing rooms are part of the assessment process and, working with national governing bodies, the strategic plan will provide evidence of need which will support clubs to access grant funding.
- It is important to get the Strategy agreed and protect the facilities required to influence and inform the delivery of the Local Plan.
- The Strategy will become a key archive to hand over to the new organisation following Local Government Reorganisation, identifying what the challenges, opportunities and assets are, and ensuring there is an accurate record all in one place.

The Forum asked officers to consult with Parish and Town Councils on the draft key principles set out in the report along with the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy Executive Summary and Action Plan and return to Committee with feedback and final edition for endorsement.

The meeting went into private session.

38 **Leisure Project update**

The Leisure Manager introduced this update report and Rachel Fowler of Strategic Leisure delivered a presentation to Forum members.

Members discussed the content and asked direct questions.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet: to note the contents of this update.

39 **Flamingo Pool verbal update**

The Forum received a verbal update on Flamingo Pool as part of the Leisure Project update (minute 38 refers).

Attendance List

Councillors present:

P Arnott
K Bloxham
M Goodman
S Hawkins (Chair)
N Hookway
G Jung
F King
J Loudoun
S Smith

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

R Collins
P Faithfull
M Hall
S Jackson

Officers in attendance:

Mike O'Mahony, Senior Leisure Officer
Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Leisure
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

Councillor apologies:

P Hayward

Representatives of LED Community Leisure in attendance:

Richard Purchase, Chairman of LED Board
Olly Swayne, LED Chief Executive
Matt Wright, LED Chief Operating Officer

Chair

Date:

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

Housing Review Board on 22 January 2026

Minute 92 Draft Housing Revenue Account and Capital Budget report 2026-27

That the draft revenue and capital estimates are approved by the Housing Review Board and recommended to Cabinet to finalise the 2026/27 budget proposals.

Minute 94 Income Management Policy

That Cabinet approve the proposed updated income management policy.

Minute 95 Possession of Council Homes and Garages Policy

That Cabinet approve the proposed updated possession of council homes and garages policy.

Minute 96 Mutual Exchange Policy

That Cabinet approved the updated mutual exchange policy.

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Housing Review Board held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton, EX14 1EJ on 22 January 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.00 pm

85 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2025 were agreed.

86 Apologies

In the absence of the Chair who had given her apologies, the Vice Chair Simon Smith was in the Chair and it was agreed that Councillor Chris Burhop would act as Vice Chair for the meeting.

87 Declarations of interest

3. Declarations of interest.

Councillor Aurora Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, She was a Council housing tenant..

88 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

89 Matters of urgency

There were none.

90 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential/exempt items.

91 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 Board noted that 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 the Assistant Director or the Democratic Services Officer.

RESOLVED:

To note the Housing Review Board forward plan.

92 **Draft Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Budget report 2026-27**

The Finance Manager's report presented to the Board the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2026/27 relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Recommendations from the meeting would be presented back to Cabinet on 4 February 2026 to finalise the 2026/27 budget proposals to recommend to Council.

The HRA recorded expenditure and income on running the Council's housing stock and related services and facilities which were provided primarily for the benefit of the Council's own tenants. The HRA was a ring-fenced account within the General Fund, with strict legal and accounting rules to maintain separation from the General Fund. The HRA must always remain in surplus, and this needed to be considered when setting each year's budget and future planning. The Finance Manager's report explained what was considered as capital and revenue and that the Council was allowed to borrow to fund capital expenditure, but not revenue without specifically required central government permission.

The key revenue budget areas and general spending categories set by the Chartered Institute for Public Financial Accountability (CIPFA), and a brief summary of what was included in each was set out in the report:

- Income.
- Repairs and maintenance.
- Supervision and management.
- Other expenditure/special services.
- Capital charges.

The HRA was currently considered to be stable but continued to face, significant financial pressure in the medium to longer term. These pressures were being seen in other stock holding local authorities and arose from a range of factors including:

- A high stock investment requirement.
- Increased consumer and regulatory standards including new legal duties relating to damp and mould.
- General inflation.
- Net zero expectations.
- Disrepair claims.
- Complaint resolution.
- High void and decant costs.

In recognition of this the Council had developed a strategic plan to address the immediate pressures and ensure a long-term sustainable business model was in place to ensure it could provide safe, warm and regulatory compliant homes.

A financial sustainability / efficiency plan was in place to address and respond to the short-term financial pressures facing the HRA. This plan set out a range of measures to increase income and deliver savings over the next 5 years and included recommendations from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA), who undertook a health check of the HRA in 2024/25.

Savills, a market leading property consultancy, had also undertaken a business plan and options review. This led to the development of a 30-year Business Plan Financial Model which underpinned immediate and longer-term budget setting decisions. This model

underpinned budget setting for 2026/27 and would form the basis of a formally published 30-year Business Plan in 2026.

An Asset Management Strategy was also under development and would outline investment priorities over the medium term. This would reflect the findings of the stock condition survey completed in 2025 and would outline how the Council would effectively manage its assets ensuring investment was targeted and efficient.

Overall HRA income was expected to be £140k above the Business Plan target. The majority of the increase arose from a planned increase in service charge income. Total HRA costs were budgeted to be around £518k below the Business Plan target. The majority of saving in the current year derived from a reduction in repairs expenditure from improved contract management. The overall 2026/27 budget achieved a net positive position of + £658k above the Business Plan target.

The proposed capital budget priorities for 2026/27 had been influenced and informed by the stock condition survey and Business Plan review and included:

- Addressing category 1 and 2 hazards.
- Tackling damp and mould.
- Continuing to ensure regulatory compliance.
- Increasing the number of Decent Homes.
- Reduced responsive repairs through planned investment programmes.
- Addressing major repair works.
- Reducing void turnover times.
- Development and acquisition of new affordable homes.

The proposed capital programme amounted to a significant investment in the Council's housing stock. The investment would result in a substantial level of additional borrowing and an increase in the overall HRA debt burden. The servicing of the debt would be met from within the HRA revenue budget and therefore create further pressure on revenue in future years. The additional interest expense burden would be offset by efficiencies, savings, income generation and strategic asset disposals.

The Director – Finance informed the Board that the budget for 2026/27 presented a good picture, but there continued to be future pressures and investment requirements of the housing stock doing forward. It was noted that the information contained in the report was compared to the 2025/26 budget, not the actual current position of the 2025/26 budget. The Director – Finance reported that internal monitoring indicated that the budget was on target, with a capital underspend currently. This would need to be monitored in terms of delivery of the capital programme.

The HRA business plan would be presented to the next meeting of the Housing Review Board and a workshop session would be run for members in advance. The 30 year business plan would come alongside the asset management strategy.

RECOMMENDED: that the draft revenue and capital estimates are approved by the Housing Review Board and recommended to Cabinet to finalise the 2026/27 budget proposals.

The Housing Review Board received a presentation from the Rental Manager on how the rental team managed rent and service charge collections. The aim was to balance the collection of rent with the sustainment of tenancies, whilst ensuring the service was:

- Accountable.
- Fair.
- Efficient.
- Effective.
- Empathetic throughout the processes.

The rental team did not wait until the customer was already in debt before they started taking action. There were a number of recovery stages which were outlined to the Board and the Rental Manager also explained the process and steps involved in taking legal action. The possible legal outcomes were suspended possession order, adjournment on terms, outright possession order, possession forthwith or in 7/14 days, or the legal action is thrown out.

The Rental Manager gave the Board a case study of a recent customer saved from eviction through joint working with Rental and Options. Since 1 April 2025, working with Homemaker had prevented four homeless cases and saved customers £135,872.12 in debt. The rental team had made financial gains for customers of £15,050.29.

In summary, the Rental Manager explained that early intervention was used to try to sustain tenancies and avoid legal action. A well-defined rent recovery process helped maintain fairness and consistency across customer interactions. Balancing compliance with compassion supported customers facing financial challenges. Eviction was only used after persistent non-payment, and after multiple interventions to try to resolve the arrears had failed. Every customer was treated as an individual, with individual circumstances.

The Rental Manager was thanked by the Board for her presentation which set out how caring the Council's processes were. There was a robust system in place with the aim of having as few evictions as possible. In response to a question, she reported that there had been no evictions over the last year for rent purposes. There had been a few evictions over the last few months related to anti-social behaviour issues, persistent non-payers and property left empty.

On behalf of the Board, the Vice Chair in the Chair thanked the Rentals Manager and stated that the Council had a holistic resilience approach, with a lot of due diligence and several layers of protection for tenants.

94 **Income Management Policy**

The Rental Manager's report updated the Housing Review Board on how the Council's rental team dealt with the collection of rent and service charges. It outlined how customers in financial difficulties were supported, with both internal finance resilience team referrals and external sources of support which were free for customers to use. There were no legislative or material changes, but the previous policy was out of date, and the wording, grammar and formatting had been updated in consultation with the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel in June 2025.

The aim of the policy was to create a rent payment culture, thereby ensuring that rent and charges were collected quickly and effectively, whilst also offering help and support to tenants/licensees if needed or requested in matters relating to financial inclusion and the ability to manage their money.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve the proposed updated income management policy.

95 **Possession of council homes and garages policy**

The Rental Manager's report updated the Housing Review Board on how the Council's rental team dealt with the possession of council houses and garages. It established guidelines for the recovery of any Council property created by a breach of tenancy/licence, whilst supporting customers in matters relating to financial/social inclusion. There were no legislative or material changes, but the previous policy was out of date, and the wording, grammar and formatting had been updated in consultation with the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel in June 2025.

The policy outlined the Council's rental team's approach to the possession of Council dwellings and garages, after a breach of tenancy through non-payment of rent/service charges. The aim of the policy was to create a rent payment culture, thereby ensuring that rent and charges were collected quickly and effectively, whilst also offering help and support to tenants/licensees if needed or requested in matters relating to financial inclusion and the ability to manage their money effectively. It was emphasised that eviction was only used as a last resort.

It was noted that garages were not supposed to be used for storing anything other than a vehicle, which included mobility aids. The Assistant Director – Regulated Services reported that there were a number of work streams going into the review of garages, which would form part of the Asset Management Strategy and the Build and Buy scheme.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve the proposed updated possession of council homes and garages policy.

96 **Mutual exchange policy**

The Housing Solutions Manager's report presented the mutual exchange policy. This had been reviewed and updated to incorporate relevant changes in practice, outlining EDDC's approach to managing mutual exchange requests. EDDC was keen to promote mutual exchanges as a way of encouraging and promoting tenant mobility. Residents had been consulted through the Resident and Leaseholder Panel, with no changes to the policy content required.

In response to a question the Housing Solutions Manager reported that been 31 mutual exchanges in 2023/24, 56 in 2024/25 and 40 so far in 2025/26. Tenants could request to mutual exchange or be downsized. There were financial incentives for downsizing, as previously agreed by the Housing Review Board.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve the updated mutual exchange policy.

97 **Tenancy services - performance report 2025-26 quarter 3**

The Housing Review Board were presented with key performance indicators (KPIs) for quarter 3 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.

100.19% of rent was collected in quarter 3, above the target of 98%. The rental collection figure was over 100% as rent was also collected for former tenancies, therefore counting towards income for that period. The rentals team demonstrated high performance with low tenant rent arrears and were within the top 25% of landlords nationally and the Tenancy Services Manager congratulated the Rental Manager and her team.

It was noted that there was a significant decrease in the number of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) cases reported in quarter 3 compared to previous quarters. There were no evictions for quarter 3 of 2025/26, although there were court proceedings in progress due to rent arrears and ASB which could lead to evictions in the coming months. 42.36% of estate inspections had been completed in the first half of the six month cycle.

Tenancy visits were a joint objective for the Estate Management and Sheltered Housing teams. The purpose of visits was to not only offer support to tenants, but also to identify any tenancy management issues, wellbeing/safeguarding concerns and issues of disrepair. The estates team were on target to complete visits to general needs tenants. The estate management team were nearing full staff capacity and it was anticipated that the number of tenancy visits to general purpose properties would increase as a result. The target for sheltered housing tenants to be visited every year was 100%. So far 60.42% visits had been undertaken in 2025/26. Sheltered housing managers would be taking a more proactive approach to ensure that Mobile Support Officers were undertaking their tenancy visits. It was noted that initial findings indicated that visits had been taking place, but not recorded on the systems. Improvements were required in new tenant visits to be completed within 10 weeks of the tenancy start date. There were 18 new tenant visits outstanding across general needs and sheltered housing. Managers would be regularly monitoring team and individual performance to drive improvements in this area. The Tenancy Services Manager outlined other areas of improvement that was anticipated through the successful recruitment of outstanding posts in the estate management team.

The Tenancy Services Manager informed the Board that the Communities Team had provided seven Community Festive Hubs across the district, giving 210 hot Christmas meals to tenants. Activities included balloon modelling and Christmas crafts, decorating community spaces and carol singing. Colleagues from Devon Communities Together also attended the festive hubs to provide advice on staying warm and safe during the colder months and supported residents with practical guidance at a crucial time. In addition, mobile support officers arranged a carol service, lunch and festive quiz for 30 residents at Palmer House.

In response to a question, it was reported that tenant scrutiny/consultation fed into strategy and policy processes.

RESOLVED: that the housing performance report – tenancy services quarter 3 (2025/2026) is noted.

Housing complaints - performance report 2025-26 quarter 3

The Housing Performance Lead's report provided the Board with details on housing related complaints performance, and details of the ongoing complaints improvement action plan. The Board noted that there had been a continued trend of improvement in response times throughout the year. 74 % of stage one complaints were processed

within target timescales during quarter 3, with 92% of stage two complaints responded to within target timescales. The approach to complaint handling was continuously being reviewed, with processes and communication channels streamlined to ensure that tenants were receiving the best service possible. The slight decline in stage two complaints received was an initial indication of successful focus on resolving complaints in full at stage one of the complaints process.

It was noted that data was not included in the figures until a complaint was closed, therefore overdue and ongoing cases were not included in the data set. A review of how data was calculated would be undertaken to provide a more accurate picture moving forward.

The Housing Performance Lead's report highlighted two complex cases which had been resolved during the quarter. It was noted that support continued to be received from the Housing Complaints Panel and a mechanism was being developed to record compliments received.

The Director – Housing and Health congratulated the Housing Performance Lead and her team who had worked incredibly hard. Some cases had been extremely challenging and a reduction in complaints coming through was now being seen. This was a result of whole collective of teams of people working very hard and proactively. It was agreed that communication with tenants was key.

RESOLVED: that the Housing Review Board note the content of the report outlining the quarter 3 performance for housing-related complaints.

99 **Property and Assets - performance report 2025-26 quarter 3**

The Housing Review Board were presented with the performance headlines for property and assets in quarter three 2025/26:

- There was continuous improvement in tenant satisfaction with time taken to complete repairs – 68% in quarter three.
- 61% of tenants felt their home was well maintained, up from 55% in the same period last year.
- The number of repairs calls received were on a continuous downward trend, with missed calls at almost zero. The introductory recorded message was longer, which meant that the length of time taken to answer calls had increased.
- The average number of days to relet a home was 58 at the end of quarter two, but this rose to 141 days in quarter three due to three long term voids being let in the period.
- Compliance was in a strong position. There had been a delay in one asbestos management survey, and the outstanding electrical checks were due to no access.

It was noted that anything over two months was classed as a long term void and that there were currently 34 properties in this category. However, this only equated to 0.8% of the entire housing stock. The Assistant Director – Tenancy Services explained how long-term voids were managed and the finances and budget involved. Some previously neglected properties required significant levels of investment and therefore disposal would be considered.

The Board were given case studies of a fire damaged property, a major adaptation, and refurbishment at Trumps Court.

Questions were raised about the process for requesting an adaptation, the number of major adaptations undertaken and keeping district councillors up to date with plans for

properties. It was suggested that the councillor enquiry form was the most appropriate way for a councillor to enquiry about and respond to constituent enquiries in relation to vacant properties.

Positive feedback was given by a tenant Board member on a recent successful repair and the Director – Housing & Health replied that the service should be more forthcoming with the compliments it received.

RESOLVED: that the housing performance report – property and assets, quarter 3 (2025/2026) is noted.

Attendance List

Board members present:

Sid Forde, Tenant
Wang Tian, Independent Community Representative
Rosemary Dale, Tenant
Councillor Christopher Burhop (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Melanie Martin
Councillor Simon Smith (Chair)
Sara Clarke, Independent Community Representative
Rob Robinson, Tenants
Councillor Tim Dumper
Councillor Helen Parr
Councillor Roy Collins

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

A Bailey
B Bailey
D Ledger
S Westerman
J Heath
P Arnott

Officers in attendance:

Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Darren Hicks, Tenancy Services Manager (Regulated Services)
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulated Services)
Andi Loosemore, Rental Manager
Andrew Mitchell, Housing Solutions Service Manager
Giles Salter, Solicitor
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health
John Symes, Finance Manager
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Tanya Traylen, Housing Performance Lead

Apologies:

Rachel Browne, Tenant
Councillor Sarah Chamberlain
Councillor Mike Goodman

Councillor Steve Gazzard (non committee member)
Councillor Ian Barlow (non committee member)
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive

Chair

Date:

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 4 February 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27

Report summary:

This report is seeking Members to consider and approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR) for 2026/27, which we are recommending remains un-changed from the 2025/26 scheme. This is because our current scheme continues to support low-income households who are still finding the current economic situation challenging, in the most cost-effective way.

We are intending to carry out a review of our CTR working age scheme for 2027/28 due to the removal of the two-child cap the government announced in the Autumn Budget (19 November 2025), and the need to start to consider aligning our working age scheme with neighbouring Devon authorities in readiness for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Any proposed changes to the scheme will be consulted on before a final draft policy is brought to Members for consideration and approval.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet

1. Fully consider the Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the scheme and
2. Recommend to Council that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age residents is approved for 2026/27.

Reason for recommendation:

The council is required by law to decide whether to revise or replace its CTR scheme each year. The proposal is that the scheme remains unchanged from 2025/26 as the current economic climate remains difficult for those on low incomes. Leaving the scheme as it is, will ensure that those households on the lowest income and therefore falling into Income band 1 would continue to receive 100% support towards their Council Tax charge.

Officer: Sharon church, Benefits and Financial Resilience Manager,
Sharon.church@eastdevon.gov.uk 01395 571791.

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

[Equalities Impact Assessment](#)

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. Background

- 1.1 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) is a means tested reduction/discount for council taxpayers who are on a low income. CTR has been in place since 1 April 2013. Each year the Council is required to review and agree the working age scheme by 11 March of the preceding financial year. Any changes made to a working age scheme are subject to public consultation.
- 1.2 The working age scheme is determined by local policy whilst applications for CTR for residents of Pension Age are determined by the national scheme that is subject to prescribed legislation.
- 1.3 We last made changes to our CTR working age scheme that came into effect from 1 April 2023. The most beneficial of those changes was increasing support for households on the lowest incomes (income band 1) to 100%.
- 1.4 We are not planning any changes this year as we will need to undertake a full review of our scheme during 2026. This is because we need to consider whether changes are required following the Autumn budget (19 November 2025) where the government announced the removal of the two-child limit from April 2026. As this announcement was made in November 2025 this was not something we could consider making changes for in our 2026/27 scheme.
- 1.5 As part of the Local Government Re-organisation, we will also need to start discussions with our neighbouring Devon authorities to consider aligning our schemes, in readiness for the new formed Unitary Council. Aligning our schemes will be a significant amount of work that will also need to be done alongside the changes set out in 1.4. It is worth noting that at present our scheme compared with other Devon authorities is more generous, for example our second income band is set at 80% whereas some authorities only offer 75%

2. Current Scheme

2.1 Our current scheme has four income bands - 100%, 80%, 55% and 25%.

2.2 The following table provides a breakdown of the number of claimants split between working and pensionable age and how the caseload has changed since April 2024.

Caseload	As at April 2024	As at October 2024	As at April 2025	As at October 2025	Difference between Apr 24 & Oct 25 (% rise)
Working age	4,527	4,530	4,459	4,612	1.87%
Pension age	3,456	3,451	3,629	3,491	1.01%
Total	7,983	7,981	8,088	8,103	1.50%

- Our Working Age caseload has increased by 1.87% between the period April 2024 to October 2025.
- The Pensionable Age caseload has increased by 1.01% over the same period. Although we saw an initial increase in the numbers being entitled to CTR following the take up campaign we ran during the winter of 2024/25, we have since seen a reduction in the amount of Pensionable age households qualifying for CTR following us carrying out more reviews of our caseload.
- The overall net effect of these changes has meant that our total CTR caseload has continued an albeit small upward trend in the number of households entitled.

2.3 The current working age caseload is broken down into the following discount bands.

Band	October 2023	October 2024	October 2025	2023 to 2024	% Change	2024 to 2025	% Change
100%	2004	1844	1252	-160	-7.98%	-592	-32.10%
80%	916	869	1034	-47	-5.13%	+165	+18.98%
55%	1194	1321	1735	+127	+10.63%	+414	+31.33%
25%	402	505	591	+103	+25.62%	+86	+17.02%
Total	4,516	4,539	4612	+23	+0.50%	+73	1.60%

- From October 2025 our caseload is more evenly spread across the four income bands as opposed to October 2023.
- The above table highlights that there has been movement from Income Band 1 primarily into Income Band 2 and 3. This movement is due to changes in circumstances, primarily the working age Housing Benefit caseload migrating to Universal Credit.
- Households that were previously receiving a welfare benefit that was passported, such as Job Seekers Allowance (income based), Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance (Income related) were automatically placed into income band 1.
- Universal Credit is not classed as a passported benefit. There are some elements we do not disregard as those who are able to work full time may also receive some of the

elements that others who do not work can receive. This approach is mirrored by other authorities including those in Devon where a banded scheme is in place.

- Households who are placed in a lower band due to the Universal Credit migration are notified that we can consider a payment out of our Exceptional Hardship fund if they are unable to afford the shortfall due to their financial situation.

2.4 The following table shows the characteristics of households where there are children, someone with a disability or someone who is in employment living in the household.

Band	Households with Children			Disability Benefit			Employed		
	Dec- 24	Dec-25	% Diff	Dec-24	Dec-25	% Diff	Dec-24	Dec-25	% Diff
Band 1 100%	671	667	-0.59%	906	326	-64.01%	134	154	+15.92%
Band 2 80%	610	619	+1.47%	405	589	+45.43%	406	395	-2.70%
Band 3 55%	601	634	+5.49%	645	1146	+77.67%	646	671	+3.86%
Band 4 25%	349	348	-0.28%	145	252	+73.79%	440	415	-5.68%
Total	2231	2268	+1.65%	2,101	2,313	+10.09%	1626	1,635	+0.55%

Note: households can fall into more than one of the above categories

- There has been an increase in the number of households receiving earnings falling into Income Band 1.
- The majority of households falling out of Income Band 1 are those where there is a disabled resident in the property, with most of these households now falling into Income Bands 3 and 4. This movement in the bands is due to the level of income received from Universal Credit that is not disregarded under our CTR scheme.
- We are currently monitoring cases that have seen a reduction in the amount of CTR due to migrating to Universal Credit, and as part of the support offered Exceptional Hardship for Council Tax will be considered for those households that are unable to afford the shortfall.

2.5 Our working age scheme continues to include an exceptional hardship fund (EHF) to help those households who will struggle to make up any shortfall in their entitlement. This allows us to provide additional support of up to 100% of the Council Tax charge. Requests are considered on a case-by-case basis and are dependent on individual needs. To date we have awarded approximately £8,500 under EHF for the financial year 2025/26. These costs are included within the total costs of the scheme noted in 3.1.

3. Future Costs

3.1 The expenditure split of the scheme as of 10 October 2025 is shown in the table below

Claim type	Expenditure costs
Working age	£5,093,319
Pension age	£5,200,996
Total	£10,294,315

3.2 Total costs of the 2026/27 scheme will depend on a combination of factors including the annual rise in Council Tax and the economic outlook.

- 3.3 The cost of the CTR scheme is funded through the Council Tax base, and the costs are shared in proportion between the preceptors. For East Devon the CTR expenditure equates to 7% of the total cost.
- 3.4 Alongside notifying those of pensionable age of possible entitlement we have now introduced the vulnerable debt tool kit within Revenues and Benefits. Officers will advise those who could be entitled to CTR to make an application which may result in new claims for CTR being received in the future.
- 3.5 It is a possible that there will be a reduction in the overall cost of the CTR scheme due to the changes mentioned in 1.4. The removal of the two-child limit cap will mean that households will receive more Universal Credit from April 2026. This will mean that households will receive an additional £298 per child per month (*present rate*).
- 3.6 Although this change will not be reflected within our scheme for 2026/27, we are currently carrying out analysis of our CTR caseload to understand the full implications of these changes. Households who are unable to afford the shortfall will be invited to make an application to the EHF to provide the required financial support.

4. Arrears

- 4.1 Nationally council tax arrears are increasing due to economic factors, and East Devon is not immune to this as we are also experiencing a reduction in our overall collection rates.
- 4.2 The following table shows the number of households who are receiving CTR as of 02 December 2025 against the number of households in arrears, further split into working and pensionable age categories.

Total			Working Age			Pension Age		
Cases	In arrears	%	Cases	In Arrears	%	Cases	In arrears	%
8045	798	9.91%	4585	725	15.81%	3460	73	2.11%

- There has been a small rise in the number of accounts in arrears for both working age and pensionable age cases compared to December 2024.
- Pensionable age arrears were previously 1.67% a total rise of 0.44%
- Working age arrears have risen by 2.12% from 13.69% to 15.81%

- 4.3 The table below shows a breakdown of those cases in arrears where CTR is being received broken down into Council Tax bands.

Band	Total CTR Cases in arrears			Working Age			Pension Age		
	Total CTR claims	CTR households in arrears	%	Total Cases	In arrears	%	Total Cases	In arrears	%
A	1884	199	10.56%	1143	178	15.57%	741	21	2.83%
B	3036	297	9.78%	1743	274	15.72%	1293	23	1.77%
C	2128	224	10.52%	1289	213	16.52%	839	11	1.31%
D	629	62	9.85%	298	50	16.77%	331	12	3.62%
E	273	12	4.39%	89	8	8.98%	184	4	2.17%
F	70	4	5.71%	18	2	11.11%	52	12	23.07%

G	25	0	0	5	0	0	20	0	0
Total	8045	798	9.91%	4585	725	15.81%	3460	73	2.10%

4.4 The following table shows the level of arrears spread across the income bands for working age cases as of December 2025.

Income Band	Working age cases in arrears		
	Total cases	in arrears	%
1	1230	168	13.66%
2	1031	171	16.59%
3	1732	282	16.28%
4	592	104	17.57%
Total	4585	725	15.81%

- Increases of arrears have been seen across all income bands since December 2024 which reflects the national picture.
- The highest rate of arrears are in Income Band 2 & 4. This was also the case as of December 2024.
- As per December 2024 the lowest level of arrears are in Income Band 1 supporting the fact that continuing to offer 100% CTR for those on the lowest incomes helps to reduce arrears.

4.5 It is important to note that the percentage of CTR working age households in arrears is still lower than it was in Jul 2022 where 19.7% of the caseload were in arrears. This was before we moved to a 100% support from April 2023.

5. Summary

5.1 Analysis of the data over the last 12 months shows that the current economic climate is still having a negative effect on household incomes. This is also reflected across all households in East Devon where we are seeing a reduction in our overall collection rates. This is not surprising with the current economic climate where people are still experiencing high energy and other essential costs such as food.

5.2 The Universal Credit migration has had a significant impact on our caseload which we will continue to monitor.

5.3 The highest level of arrears is for those households within Income Bands 2 and 4.

5.4 Overall, the spread of awards across the Income Bands is now more balanced as opposed to previous years when the majority of our case load was in Income Band 1

5.5 There will likely be changes to our scheme for 2027/28 as we look towards aligning our scheme with other Devon authorities as part of Local Government Reorganisation and consider the changes announced in the November budget.

Financial implications:

The scheme remains unchanged, so no new financial implications have been identified.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are covered in the body of the report and the Scheme itself.

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting 4 February 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026/27

Report summary:

Cabinet initially adopted the draft Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2026/27 at its meeting on 7th January 2026. A joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees reviewed draft Directorate Plans and the draft budget on 14th January, and the Housing Review Board considered the Housing Revenue Account budget on 22nd January.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees recommended the approval of the Directorate Plans as presented and the draft 2026/27 budget with no amendments to the main budget, but a further recommendation on the inclusion of special item bids totalling £302,500. These have now been added to the draft budget in line with those recommendations. The Housing Review Board recommended no amendment to the draft Housing Revenue Account budget.

It is now for Cabinet to make their recommendations to Council.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

It is recommended to Council

1. To propose the Net Expenditure Revenue General Fund Budget for 2026/27 of £28.096m (including £302,500 additional special item bids identified in 2.2 of this report) requiring £1.174m to be met from the MTFP Risk Reserve.
2. A Council Tax increase is approved of £5.14 a year giving a Band D council tax of £176.92 a year for 2026/27.
3. That the Housing Revenue Account Estimates with a net budget of nil (total expenditure met by income) is approved with a 4.8% increase on Council dwellings rents.
4. That the Net Capital Budget totalling £16.779m for 2026/27 is approved

That Cabinet

5. Approve the Directorate Plans, link provided in 1.3 of the report.

Reason for recommendation:

There is a requirement for the Council to set a balanced budget for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and to set a Council Tax for 2026/27.

Officer: Simon Davey – Director of Finance S151 sdavey@eastdevon.gov.uk John Symes – Finance Manager & Deputy 151 jsymes@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

An analysis of budget changes has not highlighted areas that give rise to any equality issues that need highlighting. Any specific service changes will be supported with a report to Cabinet accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment

Climate change Medium Impact

The budget approval gives the Council the resources necessary to undertake its business which will contribute to the carbon footprint of the Council. The Council is committed to reducing its carbon net emissions to zero by 2040 and resources have been factored into the budget to meet this priority including key actions identified in the Directorate Service Plans.

Risk: Medium Risk; Risks have been considered in preparing the budgets and the financial implications have been assessed at the point of preparation. Various budget assumptions have been made including the treatment of inflation and interest rates; estimates on the level and timing of capital receipts; the treatment of demand led pressures; the treatment of planned efficiency savings/productivity gains; levels of income; financial risks inherent in any new arrangements; capital developments; the availability of funds to deal with major contingencies and the need for any provisions. In each of these areas the Council's financial standing, management and track record have been considered to prepare robust budget proposals. Other specific areas of risk have been highlighted where appropriate within the report.

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 service

1. Introduction.

- 1.1 The Cabinet adopted draft revenue and capital budgets on the 7th January 2026.
- 1.2 The budgets, associated service implications and Directorate Plans were then considered by a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 14th January. The Housing Review Board considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget on 22nd January. Comment was also invited from the business community to the Council's draft budget proposals; no specific feedback was received in relation to the budget for members to consider at time of report writing.
- 1.3 This report follows on from the draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026/27 report presented to Cabinet on the 7th January; this gave significant narrative on the budget proposals including the details presented in the budget book. For reference:
- The budget report can be found here, [Budget Report presented to Cabinet - Item 12 on agenda](#)
 - the draft budget book here, [Budget Book 2026/27](#),
 - the Directorate Plans in the Scrutiny and Overview Agenda for 14th January 2026, [Directorate Plans - Item 8 on agenda](#)

2. Summary of recommendations to Cabinet.

- 2.1 The minutes of the joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Housing Review Board meeting are contained on this agenda.
- 2.2 The draft budget for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme was recommended by these Committees as those adopted by Cabinet with no proposed amendments to the main budget. However, both the Overview Committee and Scrutiny Committee recommended the inclusion of further expenditure of £302,500 to be met from the MTFP Risk Reserve. The items recommended to be included were:
- A budget of £20,000 for Play Park consolidation study - to cover costs to investigate/review all 80+ play sites for legal requirements/consolidation and view on future maintenance/capital cost.
 - A budget of £37,500 to continue delivery on the Cultural Strategy (previously funded from UKSPF).
 - A budget of £30,000 to continue delivery on the Tourism Strategy (previously funded from UKSPF).
 - A budget for £60,000 to continue the funding of the CVS service by Devon Communities Together for another year (previously funded from UKSPF). Also, a further request to add to this of £3,000 to be on the Devon Connect platform.
 - A budget of £118,000 to meet StreetScene staffing pressures. Broken down as £59,000 Operations – ongoing growth demand from new developments,

population growth and climate change, and £59,000 Operations Management – additional deputy Operations Manager.

- A budget of £34,000 has been requested for an additional operations post for West End specific growth associated with population increase and house building.

2.3 These items have now been included within the budget and reflected in the recommendations of this report. The additional £302,500 can be met from Reserves, but as outlined in the budget report this does add to the financial gap going forward and will require additional savings to be found in future years.

2.4 It is proposed the draft 2026/27 budget as originally adopted by Cabinet, with the inclusion of the special item bids listed in 2.2 above, are recommended to Council with the key elements being:

- A General Fund Net Expenditure Budget of £28.906m with a £5.14 a year increase in Council Tax giving a Band D council tax of £176.92 a year. This includes the fees and charges schedules that formed part of the budget process.
- A Housing Revenue Account net budget of nil (total expenditure met by income) with a 4.8% increase on Council dwellings rents.
- A Net Capital Budget totalling £16.779m.

2.5 It is proposed that Directorate Plans (prepared with Portfolio Holders), now that they have been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and recommended for approval, are adopted by Cabinet.

3. Council's Balances and Reserves

3.1 Details are contained in the draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2026/27 report presented to Cabinet.

4. The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities

4.1 The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities gives the requirement to report on a series of prudential indicators, which are designed to support and record local decision making. These indicators are required to be part of the Council's budget setting process and show the overall effect on various financing and borrowing strategies that the Council plans to adopt over the next three financial years. These indicators will be monitored and reported and when necessary updated to reflect any changes in policy.

4.2 This Council's prudential indicators are contained in the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27 – Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy reflect the proposals and details in this report.

4.3 Alongside the Treasury Management Strategy sits a requirement under the Prudential Code for the Council to adopt a Capital Strategy.

Financial implications:

Details are contained in the report

Legal implications:

The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 4 February 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Appointment of Specialist Support in Relation to Local Government Reorganisation

Report summary:

This report seeks approval for to appoint specialist advisers in relation to supporting the development of the 'Reimagining Devon' proposals for local government reorganisations including initial preparatory work to support implementation. This work is being commissioned as part of the Council's role in providing programme management support for these proposals. The costs will be met equally between the seven District and Borough Councils promoting this option.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet;

- approves the appointment of specialist advisers on behalf of the constituent Councils progressing the 4-5-1 model of local government reorganisation
- delegates authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Director of Governance and the Portfolio Holder for Council, Corporate and External Engagement to conclude the associated legal agreement

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the 4-5-1 model of local government reorganisation continues to be developed in the most robust way possible and to support initial implementation planning.

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

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 directly upon how services are delivered to residents.

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
-

1. Background and context

1.1 Cabinet has to date received a series of reports in relation to the development of proposals for local government reorganisation. This culminated in the submission of the full proposal for the 4-5-1 model of local government reorganisation, as set out in 'Reimagining Devon: Believe in Better', to the Secretary of State in November 2025. This was one of five proposals submitted in total.

1.2 A consultation exercise in relation to all of the proposals, to be run by MHCLG, is expected to commence in early February. A final decision as to which option has been chosen is then expected to be made in July.

2. Proposal

2.1 The development of the Reimagining Devon proposals benefited significantly from the appointment of specialist advisers in the form of KPMG. It is now proposed to commission further support to cover the period through to July and a final decision being made. This will focus on four key areas including helping to frame a response to the consultation exercise, providing support for ongoing engagement with MHCLG, collecting data and initial implementation planning. The latter will be progressed on an options agnostic basis.

2.2 The total cost for this work over the course of the next six months is expected to be £175k. This will be met equally between seven District and Borough Councils supporting the 4-5-1 proposals. The cost to this Council of £25k will be met from existing budgets. The work will be commissioned through a pre-tendered framework and approval is sought from Cabinet to enter in to the associated contract.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Proposals for local government reorganisation have now entered a new phase. Commissioning further support from KPMG will enable the 4-5-1 model to be presented in the best possible way and also help to ensure that initial implementation can be undertaken.

Financial implications:

To be completed by Finance.

Legal implications:

This support is being procured through a Framework and is therefore in accordance with Contract Procedure rules.



Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting 4 February 2026

Heading/Title: Annual Programme of committee meetings 2026/2027

Cabinet Member(s): Council Coordination and External Engagement

Director/Assistant Director: Interim Assistant Director Governance

Author and Directorate: Andrew Melhuish, Governance

Contact Details andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk

Key decision No

If a Key Decision has it appeared on Forward Plan

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

1. Background

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed Annual Programme of committee meetings for East Devon District Council for 2026 – 2027.
- 1.2 This report examines the implications of altering the approved timetable of council meetings. Changes can significantly impact staff resources, room availability, councillor commitments, and statutory compliance. Recommendations are provided to mitigate risks if changes become unavoidable.
- 1.3 The approved timetable of meetings is designed to ensure efficient governance, compliance with statutory deadlines, and effective resource planning. Alterations to this schedule can disrupt established workflows and create logistical challenges.

- 1.4 The importance of setting an annual programme of meetings is vital in the decision making of the Council and impacts arising from not keeping to the key dates set out include:
- Staff Resources – the programme of meetings is set in such a way to ensure sufficient staff resources are available, this is severely compromised when changes are made to the programme and could lead to impacts on meeting statutory requirements.
 - Room Availability – the programme of meetings ensures that rooms are available (usually the Council Chamber) for all meetings, any changes will impact on the ability to hold meetings in the chamber.
 - Councillor commitments – changes to the annual programme of meetings impacts councillors, particularly those working or those with particular caring responsibilities which in turn leads to reduced attendance at meetings.
- 1.5 The draft calendar is attached at Appendix ‘1’ and follows the pattern set in previous years in terms of frequency of meetings, start times and meeting days for the various committees, adapted to address any issues that have arisen during the year and taking into account service requirements.

2. Recommendations/Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet are requested to refer the Annual Programme of committee meetings for East Devon District Council for 2026 – 2027 to the annual meeting of the Council.
- 2.2 To agree that the Annual Council Meeting for East Devon District Council is held on Wednesday 13 May 2026 at 6.00pm.
- 2.3 To acknowledge the implications set out in the report for making changes to the annual programme and to ensure such changes are kept to a minimum.

3. Reasons for Recommendations/Decision

- 3.1 To ensure the Council has an annual programme of meetings in order to carry out its functions.
- 3.2 To minimise impacts on staff resources, room availability, councillor commitments and statutory requirements.

4. Options

- 4.1 The calendar of meetings provides a framework for the democratic and decision-making processes that will underpin the delivery of the Council’s key priorities. It is proposed to agree the dates as set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 As in previous years, efforts have been made to avoid holding meetings during school holiday periods, with particular reference to August. However, it is necessary for a small number of meetings to be

held, particularly regulatory committees where time limits apply for the determination of applications.

4.3 Other key points to note in relation to the proposed calendar are:

- The Annual Council meeting will take place on 13 May 2026 at 6.00pm.
- Full Council Meetings have been scheduled taking into account the reporting timetable for Budget and Policy Framework items.
- The Budget Council (Council Tax set) meeting is programmed for 25th February 2026. Additional Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings have been scheduled specifically to scrutinise the budget proposals and Directorate Service Plans.
- As far as possible meetings have been minimised during other school holidays and major political party national conferences.
- Each Committee meets wherever possible on the same day of the week.
- The Committee Chairs have the power to call additional or extraordinary meetings, when required, to accommodate urgent or unscheduled matters of business.

5. Relevance to Council Plan/priorities

Set out how report links to the Council Plan/priorities:

- ☒ A supported and engaged community that has the right homes in the right places, with appropriate infrastructure
- ☒ A sustainable environment that is moving towards carbon neutrality and which promotes ecological recovery.
- ☒ A vibrant and resilient economy that supports local business, provides local jobs and leads to a reduction in poverty and inequality.
- ☒ A well-managed, financially secure and continuously improving council that delivers quality services

The annual programme of committees ensures that the Council is able to meet its Council Plan priorities during the year.

6. Financial Comments/Implications

- 6.1 The cost of administering the proposed meetings will be met from within existing budgets (JS19.01.2026).

7. Legal Comments/Implications

- 7.1 Council and Committee meetings have been scheduled to fulfil the Council's constitutional and legal obligations. Additional Committee meetings to those proposed will have resource implications. (ALW/002545).

8. Risk Implications

- 8.1 The approved timetable of meetings is designed to ensure efficient governance, compliance with statutory deadlines, and effective resource planning. Alterations to this schedule can disrupt established workflows and create logistical challenges.

9. Equality Implications (Public Sector Equality Duty)

- 9.1 This relevance assessment aims to analyse gathered information for potential relevance to equality. If a Full Equality Impact Assessment is required ([Equality analysis impact assessment form](#)), include it as an appendix. At the minimum, the following table must be completed.

Scope (<i>Provide an overview, including objectives and desired outcomes</i>)	Approval of an annual programme of committee meetings.												
Evidence gathered and engagement (<i>List stakeholders consulted and relevant processes, policies, and data sources</i>)	None.												
Relevance assessment findings (<i>If relevant to equality, undertake a full EIA or If no relevance to equality, explain why with supporting information</i>)	<p>A full EIA is required: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, this assessment has demonstrated relevance to equality with regard to: Please check relevant boxes</p> <table><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Age</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy and maternity</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Disability</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Race</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Gender reassignment</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Sex</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Marriage or Civil Partnership</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Religion or Belief</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2"><input type="checkbox"/> Other, e.g. carers, care leavers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</td></tr></table> <p>If no, explain why: Annual programme of meetings in place to ensure sufficient diary management by councillors and officers.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/> Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/> Race	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage or Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces	<input type="checkbox"/> Other, e.g. carers, care leavers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy and maternity												
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<input type="checkbox"/> Other, e.g. carers, care leavers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.													
Relevance ranking	<input type="checkbox"/> High – Very relevant to protected characteristics <input type="checkbox"/> Medium – Somewhat relevant to protected characteristics												

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low – Not relevant to protected characteristics
Key findings and impacts	<p>Accessibility of Meetings: Changes to meeting times or locations must consider accessibility for people with disabilities, including physical access.</p> <p>Impact on Caring Responsibilities: Rescheduling meetings may disproportionately affect councillors or staff with childcare or other caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Advance Notice: Providing sufficient notice of changes helps mitigate negative impacts on those who need to arrange transport, interpreters, or personal assistance.</p>
Conclusion drawn (<i>i.e No major changes needed; EIA found no negative impact or adjust policy/process to remove identified barriers</i>)	No major changes needed by adhering to the annual programme of committee meetings.
Actions (<i>Proposed actions to mitigate negative impacts on identified groups</i>)	Approval of the annual programme of meetings.
Signed off by	Andrew Melhuish

10. HR and Workforce Implications

10.1 Support to the committees is provided from the Democratic Services Team.

11. Community Safety Implications (Crime and Disorder)

11.1 There are no Community Safety Implications arising from this report.

12. Climate Change Implications

12.1 There are no Climate Change implications arising from this report.

13. Health & Safety and Health & Wellbeing Implications

13.1 There are no Health & Safety implications.

13.2 There are no Health & Wellbeing Implications.

14. Procurement and Social Value implications

14.1 There are no procurement and social value implications.

15. Land and Buildings (non-housing)/Asset Management Implications

15.1 The Facilities Team supports the room set up associated with the calendar of meetings.

16. Overview and Scrutiny Committees Comments/Recommendations

16.1 There are none.

17. Digital and Data

17.1 Meetings listed on the calendar of meetings are available to view via the Council's YouTube.

18. Consultation and Engagement

18.1 Portfolio Holder for Council Coordination and External Engagement.

19. Communications

19.1 The annual programme of meetings will be made available on the Council's website.

20. Next Steps

20.1 Following approval of the annual programme of committee meetings the Democratic Services Team will circulate diary appointments to all Councillors and ELT and other key officers. A list of the meetings will also be added to the Council's website for public inspection.

21. Appendices

21.1 Annual Programme of committee meetings 2026 – 2027.

22. Background Papers

22.1 None.

Appendix 1 - List of meetings 2026- 2027

Meetings in **orange** are not open to the public and the public can be asked to leave other meetings on specified grounds.

2026															
2027															
Meeting	Day	Time	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Annual Council	Wed	6.00pm	13												12
Council	Wed	6.00pm			15			14		9		24		14	
Cabinet	Wed	6.00pm		3	1		2	7	4	2	6	3	3	7	5
Scrutiny Committee	Thu	6.00pm		4	2		3	1	5	3	28		4	1	
Overview & Scrutiny Committees joint meetings	Wed	10.00am								2	13				
Overview Committee	Thu	6.00pm	28		16		24		26			4	25		
Strategic Planning Committee	Tue	10.00am	5		14		22		17		5		2		4
Planning Committee	Tue	10.00am	12	9	7	4	1	6	3	8	26	23	23	20	
Audit & Governance Committee	Thu	2.30pm			23		17		19		28		18		
Housing Review Board	Thu	10.00am			30				12		21?			29	
Licensing & Enforcement Committee	Wed	10.00am			22				18			10		7	
Standards Committee	Thu	10.00am			2			1			21			8	
Personnel Committee	Tue	10.00am		30			29			3			30		
LATCo Shareholder Committee	Wed	5.30pm		17			9		18		20		24		
Asset Management Forum	Mon	9.30am		15			28			14			1		
Budget Setting and Capital Allocations Panel	Thurs	9.30am		tbc			tbc			tbc			tbc		
Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group	Tues	10.00am		16			8			1			16		
Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum	Tue	6.30pm		23			15				12			27	
Recycling & Waste Partnership Board	Wed	10.00am			22			21			27			21	

Arts & Culture Forum	Wed	10.00am		17					25					
Cranbrook Placemaking Group	Mon	9.30am		8		3		5		7		1		12
STRATA Joint Executive Committee dates tbc	Wed	2.30pm												
STRATA Joint Scrutiny Committee dates tbc	Wed	2.30pm												

Public holidays May 2026 – May 2027

Monday 4 May 2026	Early May bank holiday
Monday 25 May 2026	Spring bank holiday
Monday 31 August 2026	Summer bank holiday
Friday 25 December 2026	Christmas Day
Monday 28 December 2026	Boxing Day (substitute day)
Friday 1 January 2027	New Year’s Day
Friday 26 March 2027	Good Friday
Monday 29 March 2027	Easter Monday
Monday 3 May 2027	Early May bank holiday

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