



## Agenda for Overview Committee Thursday, 29th August, 2019, 6.00 pm

### Members of Overview Committee

Councillors: N Hookway (Chairman), V Johns (Vice-Chairman),  
M Allen, S Chamberlain, B De Saram, I Hall, M Hartnell,  
S Hawkins, F King, J Loudoun, M Rixson, T Woodward and  
C Wright

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

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(or group number 01395 517546)

Tuesday 20 August 2019

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1 Public Speaking

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

2 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 10)

3 Apologies

4 Declarations of interest

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

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 press) have been excluded. There are **no** items that officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

7 **Council Plan draft** (Pages 11 - 28)

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services will present this draft for discussion. The committee are asked to provide feedback on the priorities and actions.

8 **East Devon Policies on Poverty** (Pages 29 - 36)

Paper prepared by Councillor Mike Allen for discussion by the committee.

- 9 **Review of the Council's Governance Arrangements** - update
- 10 **Overview Forward Plan including update on active scopes** (Pages 37 - 38)

This item includes a verbal update on the scope for income generation, specifically broadband provision; and the vitality of high streets task and finish forum.

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

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**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL****Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 25 July 2019****Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.31 pm

**9 Public Speaking**

John Gregory, Labour Party member in Honiton on behalf of Honiton and Axe Vale Labour Party read out the following statement, in relation to minute 17.

“I am commenting on behalf of Honiton and Axe Valley Labour Party on the scoping of the district council’s Vitality of High Streets report and recommendations.

Labour is here today to speak up for Axminster, Honiton, Seaton, Colyton and Beer town centres. All are bursting with desire to capitalise on their unique heritage, beauty, character and amenity. We note the district council has as yet achieved none of its 2008 aspirations for the mixed-use development potential of Webster's Garage in Axminster, or Honiton’s Ottery Moor Lane, Cattle Market, Bradford Builders Yard and Chapel Street.

Town centres should be buzzing destinations, with facilities, shops, amenities, health, culture, education and wellbeing backed by excellent physical and service-based infrastructure. Employment should be place-based. Neither community wellbeing nor environment are served by turning our towns into commuter dormitories for “Greater Exeter”.

The report should take note of the recommendations of the House of Commons cross party report on "High streets and town centres in 2030", which echoes Labour’s 5 point plan to rebuild our high streets:

- Ban ATM charges and stop bank branch and Post Office closures.
- Improve local bus services and provide free bus travel for under 25s.
- Deliver free public Wi-Fi in our town centres.
- Establish a register of landlords of empty shops.
- and bring the business rates system into the 21st century.

In a rural area with underfunded public transport options, it makes no sense to rule out looking at car parking solutions, as is proposed in the scoping statement. The innovative town of Frome in Somerset has successfully provided 700 free car parking spaces within 4-13 minutes’ walk of the town centre.

Our towns should be "destinations", with creatively packaged "happenings" integrating our creative, artisan and agricultural heritage with our history. Speciality markets can be packaged as a cultural experience, supported by erection of Cullompton-style high quality gazebos at rates affordable to small traders. Publicity campaigns, tourist information, signposts and a properly funded, vibrant website and social media offering should be facilitated by the district for each town, and that link up with surrounding villages, and each other, into a coherent trail.

Labour recommends the district funds and develops best practice with visionary organisations like Light Up Axminster, that have fostered a culture of trust and

community engagement and are incubators for the ideas that will transform our town centres.”

Anna Day Lewis, Labour Party member in Colyton on behalf of Honiton and Axe Vale Labour Party, read out the following statement.

“I am commenting on behalf of Honiton and Axe Valley Labour Party on the district council response to the Fire and Rescue Service consultation.

Colyton is Britain’s oldest fire station, dating from 1681. Even our medieval ancestors were more visionary than this present government, prudently importing the latest in fire-fighting technology for the benefit of the community, with an appropriate sense of humanity.

The Labour Party opposes both the closure of Colyton Fire Station and the downgrading of Honiton Fire Station. All the fire stations at the eastern end of the district are already run on an on-call basis, and even now there are no wholtime fire station services between Exmouth and Dorchester.

The figures used to justify the closures are bewildering. Why is present performance based on 80% staffing availability, but outcomes of the closures based on 100% staffing? How can the response times from other stations to meet Colyton’s needs be justified?

Just this week fire-fighters have released a trapped child in Honiton, but helping people in trouble is excluded from the consultation’s figures. So are the first responder services the fire service undertakes on behalf of the defunded ambulance service, the frontline support it provides to the police, and the public fire and safety training.

When the Clarence Hotel burned down in Exeter almost every engine across Devon responded, but how many stations were given credit for their response? Just one response was included in these official statistics being used to justify more cuts. And with all those engines engaged in Exeter, which station was meanwhile supporting the safety of our residents? You guessed it - Colyton Fire Station.

Just today Colyton was on standby, covering a farm fire near Bridport, but will they be given credit in the official figures? No.

Independent analysis shows that over 600,000 people annually face increased risk of death by fire under any of the current proposals. With significant population growth built into our local plans, the problem can only become worse. The population of Colyton is elderly, and statistically more vulnerable to fire, and I’m afraid to say apt to nod off with something on the stove.

Firefighters routinely give many hours over and above what they are contracted to provide, and are subsidising the service with their goodwill in spite of ongoing cuts to real wages and benefits. We can’t afford to lose the goodwill of the real people providing public services at the heart of our communities.

These cuts are not penny wise and they are pound foolish. Labour calls upon the district council to strongly oppose all of the options in the consultation, and to call for the fire station in Colyton, and the two pumps in Honiton, to be retained and properly maintained for the benefit of our district.”

10 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27 June 2019 were confirmed as a true record.

11 **Declarations of interest**

Minute 17. Vitality of High Streets and Town Centres scope.  
Councillor Marcus Hartnell, Personal: Shopkeeper in Seaton.

Councillor Ian Hall, Personal: Devon County Councillor for Axminster Division.

12 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no items classified in this way.

14 **Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service Changes consultation**

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service proposed changes were under consultation. The committee had the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes, whilst maintaining the ability for individual councillors to respond in their own right.

The reasons for the proposed change in service delivery related to changing risks over time, and the need to make significant financial savings.

The consultation offered six options for change, covering aspects such as station closures and how stations were crewed. Each of the six options in the consultation included the closure of two fire stations in the District: Colyton and Budleigh Salterton.

Ward Members for Colyton, Councillors Paul Arnott and Helen Parr spoke about the impact the proposed Colyton station closure would have over a much wider area than the town itself. Councillor Arnott recommended responding against all the options listed in the consultation, as it did clash with the Council's own policy for strategic development, including the expansion of the number of homes in Axminster, Seaton and Colyton.

Councillor Parr told the committee that local people had not been reassured by the public events held by the Fire Service. She challenged the data presented in the consultation and had asked for more financial detail. She felt that the proposals impacted more significantly on the District than for any other area in Devon and Somerset. She was not convinced that any of the options proposed would ensure the safety of people in the District.

Members of the committee had considered the consultation document, with some members attending a local public event held by the Fire Service. Concerns were raised on the proposed changes, including:

- What could be done locally to encourage local employers to release employees for service, such as working with local Chambers of Commerce;

- Impact of local road infrastructure in travel time to attend any incident, particularly for rural areas;
- Proposals were not “rural proved” and the Fire Service should be asked to demonstrate that they have taken the factors of rural locations into account, including the road networks and the type of buildings and materials that have a higher risk of faster burn times (for example thatched roofing and farming stock bedding and feed);
- Fire fighters are also first responders; reducing that number impacts on delivering for medical calls and the partnership arrangements with the Health Service; as well as impacting on policing duties that they also get involved with. There was no detail in the consultation on how that would be mitigated;
- There was no information in the consultation on how the funding arrangement for the area compares nationally, therefore there was no way to ascertain if the funding was fair;
- Not enough breakdown to compare rural and town data, or data for local area to compare with national data quoted in the consultation;
- Recent examples given of incidents that may not have had a positive outcome if the proposals are implemented – one such example being a fire at Seaton impacting on 17 residents;
- Whilst many residents and tourists were better educated on fire risks, dementia was growing in the area which could lead to an increased risk;
- Financial savings appeared to be the main driver for reform and other means of bridging this gap needed to be considered;
- Details of response times for rural incidents needed to be understood, as impacted both by access and speed of response from nearest station;
- What assessment had been made of the effectiveness of fire prevention work.

The conclusion from the debate was that there was insufficient information in the consultation for the committee to make any form of recommendation to be submitted either directly to the Fire Service, or to Cabinet and Council for a response to the consultation.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the Overview Committee Chairman, working with the Leader of the Council, writes to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service asking for more information as debated in the committee meeting; requesting a response to come to the 29 August 2019 meeting;
2. that the response be debated at the 29 August 2019 committee meeting to recommend to Cabinet for their 4 September 2019 meeting to Council in order to meet the deadline of the consultation.

15 **Review of the Council's Governance Arrangements**

At their meeting of 10 July, Cabinet resolved to instruct the Overview Committee to carry out a review of the Councils governance arrangements and options for change, and report back on its findings. The Portfolio Holder for Transformation was also instructed to establish a Think Tank for the purpose of investigating the options for change.

The Chairman outlined the need for the committee to scope the project, and focus on why the change was sought. This work would then lead to weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of the models of governance available.

Members of the committee and other councillors present put forward their views, including:

- Councils with no overall control tend to have a Cabinet system and offer intense briefing to all councillors;
- The culture of the council and the officer roles need to be examined as part of the process, including how staffing levels are determined;
- Hybrid forms of models had been put in place in other authorities and should be examined;
- No effective scrutiny function was currently in place, referenced by several councillors giving examples of previous work undertaken. Scrutiny had been done of external bodies who were not obliged to take action on any recommendations made; but little of value of the work of the Cabinet;
- More effective scrutiny in current Cabinet model could mean that no change of model is required;
- Set up a shadow cabinet to closely follow the work of the Portfolio Holders;
- Need to draw up scope and progress the work to look to have a new model in place from May 2020;
- Report directly to Council with findings;
- Time was needed for newly elected councillors to understand the processes of the current system and therefore any review of changing the model should wait until after May 2020;
- Weighing up better engagement of a committee model against quicker decision process of Cabinet model;
- Need to have a decision process that can act swiftly on financial decision, for example under Commercial Investment strategy;
- Time and money impact of visiting other authorities to seek evidence;
- Public have asked for change, evidenced by the outcome of the May 2019 election;
- Members feel excluded and unable to influence decisions - Cabinet decisions seem agreed before discussion at Cabinet meetings;
- Need to gather evidence and option, including on what decisions had already been made;
- Strong leadership is key for any governance model;
- Seek examples of authorities that have reverted back to a committee system;
- LGiU document "Changing to a new committee system in a new era" was recommended to the committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation welcomed any views from councillors, including those that had experience of both committee and Cabinet models. He would be operating a think tank on a neutral approach, looking to build and evidence base to recommend a model before the next Annual Council. He would look to provide an update report on his work at the next meeting of the committee.

Advice to the committee from the Strategic Lead for Governance and Licensing was to take the necessary time to firstly establish the purpose of change, and then fully evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of governance models, which realistically may not be

possible to then deliver a change in governance by May 2020. Further work could be undertaken by the committee at their 29 August meeting, and if required, an additional meeting could be called if required by the Chairman to add to the scheduled dates.

In response to concern about some overlap or duplication of work with both Overview Committee and a Think Tank considering the same issue, the Chairman commented that there would be a balance between the two. The Overview Committee may reach a different conclusion to that of the Portfolio Holder for Transformation, but both would be put forward. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the intention was not to duplicate, but to compliment each other. Ultimately, he commented, the model was about democracy, and if a new model would be more democratic whilst still delivering decisions at a speed felt acceptable.

The Chairman concluded the debate for that meeting, summing up that it was a positive step to evaluate how decisions were made. There was also a need to address the public concern about a lack of openness and transparency. He also recommended a document by the LGA and the Centre for Public Scrutiny entitled "Rethinking governance: Practical steps for councils considering changes to their governance arrangements". The issue would be debated further at the next meeting of the committee.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the request from Cabinet to carry out a review of the Councils governance arrangements and options for change, and report back on its findings, be accepted;
2. That at the 29 August 2019 meeting, Members put forward and agree the reasons for change to the current governance arrangements and the objectives for the Council's governance arrangements going forward;
3. That at the 29 August 2019 meeting, Members consider, discuss and agree the method and process to be followed for undertaking a review of options;
4. That additional meetings of the committee be considered specifically to debate this item.

16 **Income generation including broadband scope**

The committee discussed completion of the scope of the work relating to income generation, specifically investigating the possibility of the Council providing broadband.

The Chairman updated the committee on previous work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee in hearing from a solution for Talaton Parish Council provided by a wireless solution company Voenus; and the work by the Connect Devon and Somerset project, whereby Gigaclear were under contract for delivery of the second phase of broadband provision.

The committee discussed the shortcomings of the delivery of Gigaclear and the other options that were available to bridge the gap in delivery. There were also concerns about the levels of service for 4G varying widely across the District.

Comments were made that it was unlikely to be an income generation of any scale for the authority if it commissioned another provider to deliver to areas still short of the high speed broadband required. The issue may be better considered not as an income generation possibility, but a duty of care to the local community to help deliver it. The Council could consider if it had any suitable assets that masts could be attached to, as other authorities had already undertaken, and charge a fee for that service.

The Chairman agreed that the best way forward was to form a smaller group of Councillors to work out the detail to the scope and report back to the committee on how to progress. Volunteers to assist him were Councillors Hall, Rixson and King.

**RESOLVED** that the Chairman work with a small group of councillors to discuss and complete the scope for reporting back to the Overview Committee at a future meeting.

## 17 **Vitality of High Streets and Town Centres scope**

The committee discussed the completion of the scope of work relating to the decline in recent years of high streets in the District, and how such a review could assist the latest high street yet to be built at Cranbrook.

The scope would be amended to include specific reference to developing the high street at Cranbrook, and encourage investment in the District's towns.

Members felt it was key to compare how high streets had changed from the previous Forum held in 2012 on the same issue, and it was important to talk to the retailers themselves for their views. Cllr Allen had provided the Chairman with a number of suggestions for the evidence base.

The committee were advised of the basis of a Forum, which can include councillors that are not on the Overview Committee.

Cllr Marcus Hartnell volunteered to act as Chairman for the Forum, with volunteers from the committee Councillors De Saram, Rixson, and Hawkins. Councillor Moulding also volunteered. The Chairman agreed that further volunteers could be sought from outside the committee.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That a request for volunteers for the Forum on the Vitality of High Streets and Town Centres is issued;
2. That Councillor Hartnell chairs the Forum and regularly reports progress to the Overview Committee.

## 18 **Overview Forward Plan**

The forward plan would be updated to reflect agreed requests from Council the previous evening, including the item "Poverty, homelessness, human rights and health and wellbeing in East Devon" which would be taken at the August meeting.

In light of government changes, the Chairman did not expect the Select Committee reports to be published soon and therefore removed them from the scheduled meeting.

The committee were advised to prepare for the September joint meeting with the Scrutiny committee by reviewing the current service plans. The committee preferred a start time of 10am for the all day meeting. Cllr Allen requested a follow up on a recommendation from January 2019, agreed by Council, that stated that "any amendments to make objectives more SMART following a review by Strategic Lead – Organisational Development and Transformation together with the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees"

The forward plan was noted.

**Attendance List**

**Councillors present:**

N Hookway (Chairman)  
V Johns (Vice-Chairman)  
M Allen  
S Chamberlain  
B De Saram  
I Hall  
M Hartnell  
S Hawkins  
F King  
M Rixson  
T Woodward

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

P Arnott  
J Bailey  
K Bloxham  
S Bond  
P Hayward  
B Ingham  
S Jackson  
D Ledger

**Officers in attendance:**

Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing  
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

**Councillor apologies:**

J Loudoun  
C Wright

Chairman .....

Date: .....



**Report to:** **Overview Committee**  
**Date of Meeting:** 29 August 2019  
**Public Document:** Yes  
**Exemption:** None

**Review date for release** None

**Subject:** **Council Plan 2019-2024**

**Purpose of report:** This report provides the first draft of the new Council Plan for 2019-2024

**Recommendation:** **It is recommended that councillors consider this draft of the new council Plan 2019-2024 and provide feedback on the priorities and actions.**

**Reason for recommendation:** To assist with the ongoing development of our new Council Plan

**Officer:** Karen Simpkin, Strategic Lead – Organisational Development and Transformation  
[ksimpkin@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:ksimpkin@eastdevon.gov.uk)  
 ext 2762

**Financial implications:** There are no direct financial implications.

**Legal implications:** No legal comments are required

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk  
 A failure to have a robust Council Plan would impact on the strategic planning for our services

**Links to background information:** n/a

**Link to Council Plan:** Continuously improving to be an outstanding Council

## Report in full

The council plan sets out the strategic direction of the council over the next few years. The plan looks at our priorities and actions to guide the effective use of all council resources.

The four priority areas contained in the plan are as follows:

- Outstanding place and environment
- Outstanding homes and communities
- Outstanding level of economic growth, productivity and prosperity
- Outstanding council and council services

The priorities and actions have been drawn up by all councillors within the cabinet team. These have had further oversight and input by our Strategic and Service Leads.

More detail about the priorities and the actions contained within them can be [seen here](#).

The council plan has been created as an internet based document using a template created by another authority. It is easy to navigate and is accessible for all internet users.

Political process for adoption of the new Council Plan:

- Engagement with Budget Working Party 26 June 2019
- Draft to Overview 29 August 2019
- Draft to Scrutiny 3 October 2019
- Final version to Cabinet 30 October 2019
- Agreement by Full Council 11 December 2019

# **Our Council Plan**

## **2020-2024**

Updated 21 August 2019

Our Council Plan sets out our strategic direction until 2024 and beyond – what we plan to do and how we plan to do it, so we can achieve our ambition.

### **East Devon at a glance**

East Devon District Council is a local authority providing great value services to our local residents.

Since 2014 we have built over 1,640 new affordable homes

We have spent £590,000 on improving play areas

Facilitated 400 new jobs and £30m of public sector investment in Exeter Science Park

Secured £20m of funding for new schools at Cranbrook

£30m invested in new transport infrastructure (fact check required)

We collect nearly 6,000,000 bins a year

### **Welcome**

Ben Ingham

Leader

I am delighted to have been elected Leader of the Council at a time when local people are expecting a fresh approach from their local councillors. We are deeply committed to developing its reputation as welcoming and inclusive. East Devon is a fantastic place to live, work, invest and play.

The Independent Group has accepted the challenge of providing leadership at a time when our district is facing unprecedented challenges brought about by climate change, Brexit and reduced central government funding, which has a real impact on our services. This will continue and unless we act now, the Council faces a funding gap of at least £2.7 million over the next four years.

Despite these challenges, we are committed to running an outstanding council. We must provide great services and create new opportunities for East Devon; now and for future

generations. Our new Council Plan 2019-2023 is our top level strategy, which sets out how we will achieve our ambition. The Plan addresses the key challenges for the district. It focuses on our resources and activities, encouraging us to capitalise on key opportunities that will serve the needs of all residents and our communities.

We will continuously improve the built and natural environment in our towns and villages. We must protect our communities and precious environment now and for future generations.

In the face of huge financial challenges, we will improve our self-financing plans so we can protect the key Council services that matter most to our customers. We cannot do this alone. We need strong partnerships with our town and parish councils. We need robust relationships with our businesses, community groups and local people who are already helping us to deliver services.

We must accelerate our delivery of the right homes in the right place for people in housing need. In addition, we must focus on dealing with all the issues of rough sleeping and homelessness.

We will focus on improving health, wellbeing and quality of life. As we go forward, we will look at new ways to help people to help themselves and others throughout our communities.

It is essential to have the right partnerships in place to help communities grow and for people to thrive. We will be focusing on attracting businesses and jobs to East Devon so local people can take up new opportunities.

Using common sense and common values we will work with our residents, communities and businesses to deliver the very best for everyone in East Devon.

## **Our ambition**

To be an outstanding and well-run council which provides great services and outstanding opportunities for East Devon – now and for future generations.

## **Our guiding principles and values**

Our guiding principles and values underpin everything we do and set out how we will go about our day to day work.

We will:

- Promote equal access and inclusivity for everyone in East Devon.
- Regularly consult and engage with our communities on key issues and service changes; and particularly when we run regeneration projects and activities that involve our tenants.

- Support initiatives which specifically promote the health and well-being of our residents and provide help and advice at the earliest opportunity.
- Deliver quality, accessible services - a great service, first time and every time
- Be open, clear and transparent
- Treat others and their opinions with respect at all times
- Work towards reducing our carbon footprint and enhancing our environment
- Operate as one council team.

## **People and place**

### **Location and geography**

The district of East Devon lies at the east of the county of Devon between Exeter to the west and bordering Somerset and Dorset on the east. It is one of eight Devon districts and in population terms, it is the largest in the county.

The district has a dispersed and largely rural population. The rural nature of the area is emphasised by the low population density of 175 per square km (the England average is 427).

East Devon is renowned for its beautiful countryside

Of our 30 wards 21 of them have a population density below the England average. We do however also have a mix of market and coastal towns with much higher population densities including towns such as Exmouth, Seaton and Honiton.

East Devon is renowned for its beautiful countryside. In fact two thirds of the district are recognised as being nationally important for its high landscape quality and designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - the East Devon AONB covers some 270sq km of beautiful landscape between Exmouth to Uplyme and up to Honiton, whilst to the north of Honiton you will find the Blackdown Hills AONB.

East Devon also has a stunning coastline that runs the length of its southern border. Almost the entire coastline is part of a World Heritage Coast that starts at Exmouth and runs to Swanage in Dorset.

The main settlements are the coastal resorts of Exmouth (one of Devon's largest towns – population 48,613), Budleigh Salterton, Sidmouth and Seaton and in land are Honiton, Ottery St Mary, and Axminster.

## **Transport**

East Devon is connected to Bristol and the north of the country by access to the M5 via Exeter and London and the South East by the A30/A303. London can be reached in about three hours by road.

There are two main rail routes from the district to London. One is via the Honiton to Waterloo line which takes on average three hours. The main Great Western line to London Paddington via Exeter St David's station and can take two hours to reach the capital city. The rest of the rail network can be accessed via Honiton, Axminster, Exmouth and Exeter stations.

The district contains the main airport for the south-west region with Exeter International Airport at Clyst Honiton. The airport offers both scheduled and holiday charter flights within the UK and Europe to destinations such as Manchester, Edinburgh, France, Austria, Italy, Spain and Turkey.

## **Our communities**

East Devon is home to over 142,000 people. The overall population is expected to increase by 14,300 people between 2017 and 2027, a rise of 10%.

The population of East Devon has an older age profile with the average age of its residents being 50.7 years (national average is 40.1 years). The 65+ age range looks set to grow more than any other over the next 10 years growing from 30.1% of the population in 2017 to 32.5% of the population in 2027.

An ageing population will have an impact on the provision of health care, housing requirements, the labour market and economic growth.

The average household size in the district is 2.2 residents.

Predominantly East Devon residents are from a white British background, with just 1.59% of the district's population coming from an ethnic background.

## **About us**

East Devon covers an area of 814.3 km<sup>2</sup>. We proudly have two areas designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), the East Devon AONB and the Blackdown Hills ANOB.

60 Councillors

30 Wards

68 Parishes

East Devon covers 814.3 km<sup>2</sup>

495 council staff employees

Awarded Investors in People Gold award for the second time

### **A year in the life of East Devon District Council**

5,911,495 Bin collections

82,600 calls to our Customer Service Centre

2,125 planning applications processed

Total revenue carpark transactions was £3,339,275

596 Food Hygiene Rating Scheme inspections

233 Pest control treatments

2,685 PNC issued

Processed 4,875 parking permits totalling £579,170

237 affordable homes provided

The Councils Housing Allocations Team housed 289 families

Eight play areas upgraded with new equipment and £590,000 invested

### **Our plans**

Our plans and strategies fit together so that everyone understands how their contribution fits in with the Local Plan and the Council Plan – we call this the golden thread.

### **Our corporate priorities**

We have four corporate priority areas which outline where we focus our efforts, activity and resources.

East Devon is an area of outstanding natural beauty and has a World Heritage coastline. At the same time we have thriving economies in our towns and increasing high quality commercial growth in major sites to the west of the District. Consistent with this important mix of characteristics, the Council aims to deliver against four priority areas.

We will deliver an:

- 1.Outstanding place and environment
- 2.Outstanding homes and communities
- 3.Outstanding level of economic growth, productivity and prosperity
- 4.Outstanding council and council services

## Council priority one

### **Outstanding place and environment**

Our commitment to addressing the climate change and ecological emergency is a key priority for our Council. Our focus will be on achieving carbon neutral by 2040 and taking care of and enhancing our built and natural environment in our towns and villages now and for future generations.

This work already includes:

- Working collaboratively with the communities in the West End towards the future expansion of Cranbrook, whilst maintaining the identity of the other communities in the area.
- Monitoring extant planning permissions which have not yet been built out.
- Continuing our support of the East Devon and Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnership, as nationally important landscapes covering two thirds of our district. Work with Natural England and assess the results of the Glover Review.
- Working collaboratively with the South West Coastal Path Association to promote the East Devon section of the South West Coast Path with a view to supporting tourism and wider access.
- Continuing outreach programmes with Community Development Workers to develop learning and improve health and wellbeing.
- Supporting the programme of Health Walks and Green Gyms with Active Devon, Leisure East Devon and Public Health using Sport England Funding.
- Protecting, valuing and increasing our treescape.
- Supporting Devon County Council in their work in relation to understanding and managing the ecological threats to trees with a view to ensuring trees are being replaced throughout the District.
- Working with Natural England and other agencies to protect Exe Estuary SSSI, Ramsar, SPA and other similarly designated sites.

## **Summary of our profile**

60% of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting

Over 10,000 households using our green waste scheme

66% of the district is covered by Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOBs)

5,911,495 bin collections every year

Green flag awards for Connaught Gardens and Manor Gardens

Blue flag awards for Exmouth, Budleigh, Sidmouth and Seaton beaches

Overall levels of CO2 produced in East Devon have been falling

## **Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)**

### **Planning and development**

- Deliver a coherent strategy towards carbon neutral development.
- Start preparatory work on the next East Devon Local Plan immediately. This includes working with Exeter, Teignbridge, Mid Devon and Devon County Council on the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) which protects and does not compromise the interests and ambitions of East Devon.
- Support infrastructure and commercial projects in Exeter and East Devon Growth Point and prepare Local Development Orders to speed projects in the Enterprise Zone.
- Support and facilitate communities to complete any outstanding neighbourhood plans.
- Review Community Infrastructure Levy charging structure to facilitate the delivery of critical infrastructure.
- Publish Brownfield Land Register and update this annually.
- Develop a Heritage Strategy for build areas and a heritage list to safeguard listed buildings and other heritage assets within the District. Encourage all communities to complete a local list of non-heritage assets.
- Develop a plan for Green infrastructure in our new urban developments and identify Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) to mitigate the impact of residential development.
- Identify potential Gypsy and Traveller sites by April 2021.

### **Environment**

- Commit to a Climate Change Declaration to include the Council, and encouraging all our communities, businesses and visitors in a commitment to carbon neutral by 2040.
- Publish a Climate Change action plan for East Devon to include challenging targets to achieve a carbon neutral Council at the earliest opportunity.

- As part of our engagement with Greater Exeter Strategic Partnership (GESP) and our Local Plan review, seek to identify locations for the right homes in the right places.
- Implement the Green Space Plan to ensure that our open space contributes towards the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- Ensure provision of high quality, accessible green space in Cranbrook, commensurate with a growing, healthy new town by delivering **xx to be completed**.
- Promote our ability to manage open spaces within the District on a commercial basis.
- Explore options for the financial sustainability of Seaton Wetlands, Clyst Valley Park and similar sites to help secure financial security and sustainability of sites.
- Progress Beach Management Plans for Exmouth, Seaton and Sidmouth to maintain coastal defences.
- Implement the Green Travel Plan and expand the opportunities for green travel in our car parks and other assets.
- Explore self-generation for electricity for EDDC uses including East Devon's leisure centres.
- Increase the number of trees planted on Council owned green spaces following the adoption and implementation of the Climate Change Strategy, Devon's response to trees and community orchard schemes.
- Deliver Countryside outreach work programme that will deliver work with Switch groups and children's centres with annual target of target of 80 sessions across district green spaces and working with 2000 people.
- Deliver new core Outdoor Learning package scheme that delivers 25 school visits to Seaton Wetlands and 20 outdoor learning experiences across the district to a variety of organisations (that achieves full-cost recovery) & work with 3000 young people and attract £10,000 of income.
- Countryside Team to develop new income streams to meet Transformation Strategy objective to include Higher Level Stewardship grants for Seaton Wetlands and Trinity Hill LNRs delivering £18K per annum. Charcoal production to deliver £4000 income per year; donations target from Seaton Wetlands to deliver in excess of £4000 income per annum and a business case to develop a café/retail offer on the Seaton Wetlands to deliver £15K per annum.

### **What success will look like over the next four years**

- Carbon neutral development in the West End of the district.
- Gypsy and traveller sites established.
- Reduce carbon footprint for the Council and our businesses, communities, residents and visitors in accordance with our Climate Change Action Plan.
- Countryside Team to implement measurable improvements in health and wellbeing with people staying healthier longer by delivering second phase of Connecting Actively to Nature pilot project - Wild Swimming club for Over 55s in Sidmouth and

Exmouth, delivering with Led Health Coaches opportunities for GP referral patients and further Outdoor Clubs across the district.

- Increased footfall on our Nature Reserves achieve target of 70,000 visitor footfall per annum at the Seaton Wetlands, 15,000 footfall target for Holyford Woods LNR, 10,000 target for Trinity Hill LNR, 15,000 footfall target at Knapp Copse LNR all challenging but achievable.

## **Council priority two**

### **Outstanding homes and communities**

This means making the most of every opportunity to enhance the quality of life for our residents by ensuring good, quality homes in good neighbourhoods and happy and healthy communities.

This work already includes:

- Working with communities to develop community led housing schemes such as CLTs or community schemes in conjunction with the Council's own housing company.
- Supporting rural communities to deliver new affordable homes.
- Building housing stock by purchase of former Council and similar homes and considering building Council homes using Right to Buy receipts supported with additional funds.
- Investing in and maintaining all council houses to ensure they are always safe for our tenants and their visitors.
- Actively involving our tenants in all matters that relate to the management of our housing stock including maintenance and improvement of their homes.
- Working with partners to make residents feel safe in their communities and to tackle tenancy fraud.
- Supporting community development initiatives to enhance health and wellbeing particularly the SWITCH job club to ease people of all ages into work.
- Helping our tenants to manage their household income by providing financial advice and affordable rents.
- Working to build relationships with private letting agents and landlords to help promote healthy landlord/tenant relationships and improvement in the management and condition of private rented homes.
- Providing adaptations for people with disabilities through Disabled facilities Grants and adaptations to Council homes.
- Contributing to the work led by Devon County Council which analyses and assesses deprivation and poverty in the District; working with independent social change organisations and charities to identify ways we can improve outcomes for individuals and families.
- Supporting Leisure East Devon in delivery and maintenance of leisure and entertainment facilities and parks.

- Operating a proactive community safety programme to build community resilience, address anti-social behaviour and support safeguarding in order to protect vulnerable children and adults.
- Continuing to address issues of social isolation to strengthen and build community resilience.

### **Summary of our profile**

68,950 homes in East Devon

75% of homes are owner-occupied

Largest rise in homes built in Devon since 2000 (fact check required)

Average house price is £277,000

2,125 planning applications processed

East Devon is one of the safest districts, in one of the safest counties to live in

237 affordable homes provided in 2018/19

10,000 new homes built since 2000

### **Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)**

#### **Housing**

- Increase the supply of affordable, quality housing options for those in housing need.
- Provide more high quality rented homes through East Devon Homes Ltd; a new and wholly owned Council company. Specify target.
- Work towards having no homeless individuals, households or rough sleepers.
- Lobby for the suspension/removal of the 'Right to buy' as a way of protecting our social housing stock.
- Recognise Central Government policy and indicate an intention to apply council house increases of CPI plus 1% from 2020 for five years.
- Continue to collect a high proportion of tenants' rent and service charges due (currently 99%) to ensure the housing revenue account can continue to delivery high quality services.
- Expand the Home Safeguard community alarm service, securing more customers and offering a wider range of technologies that support independent living.
- Upgrade Council homes and reduce tenant running costs with energy efficiency measures.
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a Council Letting Agency.
- Ensure that all housing assets are captured within a corporate asset register to ensure corporate management of all Council assets.

## **Communities**

- As a departure from using specific income streams for specific assets, use income from the Manor Pavilion car park to fund a refurbishment and upgrade Manor Pavilion as a key Council asset.
- Scrutinise and implement the Culture Plan 2017-2022.
- From 2020 encourage innovative new methods of funding, including Crowdfunding to deliver capital investment or revenue support.
- Prepare a bid for the Capital Programme to improve facilities at Warren View.
- Consider the business cases presented by town and parish council in relation to the transfer of assets.
- Support Town and Parish Councils to develop assets and services as they determine what is most appropriate for the locality.
- THG to develop and deliver phase 2 of the Art on the East Devon Way project and secure Heritage Lottery Fund grant and East Devon AONB funds of £23,000
- Combine art, environment and social prescribing as part of the new Thelma Hulbert Gallery Business Plan to be written and adopted for 2020-2024.
- Manor Pavilion theatre to improve its customer experience by installation of on line ticketing facility, bid for Sanditon development Section 106 funds along with car parking revenue to improve its customer infrastructure and achieve target of £200,000 ticket sales for the Summer Season production.

## **What success will look like over the next four years**

- 300 new affordable homes provide per annum including an increase of Council housing stock.
- All Council homes well maintained and 100% compliant with Health and Safety requirements.
- East Devon Homes acquiring property in accordance with its adopted Business Plan.
- Rent collection performance exceeding 99% of rent due.
- Improved energy efficiency of Council homes.
- High levels of tenant satisfaction with the Housing Service.
- A self- sufficient, income generating Home Safeguard service.
- A full events, arts and culture programme.
- Financially sustainable theatre and gallery facilities.
- Effective safeguarding measures that are protecting the most vulnerable in our communities
- Delivery of the THG's Arts Council funded outreach programme will deliver £49,900 for a 21 month project to deliver: learning programme with schools & community groups, community consultation to create cross-sector social engagement, part-fund exhibition programme Inc. guest curator and develop visual impairment accessibility

## **Council priority three**

### **Outstanding economic growth, productivity and prosperity**

This means working with local businesses, inward investors and partners to develop East Devon as a strong and competitive economy and a significant regional economic force while ensuring that the benefits of productivity and prosperity are shared with our communities.

This work already includes:

- Lobbying for and work with others to gain and promote full Broadband access for all in rural areas to support our small businesses to prosper within a world-class digital infrastructure.
- Supporting infrastructure providers, such as Ultrafast Broadband and mobile telecommunications so that these services are extended across East Devon to enhance our urban and rural economies, improve service delivery and promote social inclusion.
- Working with partners throughout Devon and the South West to improve our economy and promoting East Devon widely to ensure that the District receives the maximum benefit from national, regional and sub-regional programmes.
- Creating high-skilled and better paid jobs and opportunities ensuring residents have the skills to access the job market at all levels. This includes encouraging the sustained delivery of new high-earning job opportunities particularly across the four sites within the Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone (Science Park, Skypark, Exeter Airport Business Park and Cranbrook).
- Supporting local small and start-up businesses through advice and support coupled with promotion of employment and relevant skills.
- Utilising investment capital to develop employment opportunities in the District.
- Continuing to take an innovative approach to promote tourism within the District to make the most of the visitor and tourism economy including the development of a strategy and delivery plan for the Council and East Devon to become a much stronger place for events, attractions and entertainment.

### **Summary of our profile**

Home to over 7,000 businesses

97% of businesses employ up to 49 employees

Our business closure rate at 9% is one of the lowest in the country

43,700 jobs in East Devon

61% of pupils achieve five or more A\* to C GCSEs

36% of the working population are educated to a degree level

## **Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)**

### **Outstanding economic growth, productivity and prosperity**

- Identify and deliver projects that address issues around clean growth as defined in the emerging Local Industrial Strategy.
- Identify the best strategic sites for future employment opportunities within East Devon's towns.
- Complete Exmouth Seafront Regeneration including delivery of a Phase 3 development which must appeal all year round and be attractive to tourists and visitors. The Exmouth Seafront must include areas affordable to young working families and open community consultation will form a critical part of Phase 3.
- Build out Cranbrook Town Centre to deliver facilities needed for social cohesion and employment growth in the new town.
- Examine the viability of extra East Devon Business Centre space and additional business centre locations in East Devon.
- Examine potential for development of existing Council assets to support employment especially start-ups and businesses that increase our economic diversity, increase the attractiveness and reputation of East Devon as a place to live, work and visit.
- Develop a clear and agreed set of principles for commercialism and investment to ensure that we can generate income to help protect key services and re-invest in further business growth and new jobs.

### **What success will look like over the next four years**

- An increase in employment land development/end-use accelerating
- New business activity and an increase in job numbers
- NNDR increased receipt to the council as a result of growth in business investment/new development to help fund future delivery of council services
- Measurable per capita productivity increases
- Acquisition of commercial assets and associated growth in employment, economic activity and productivity
- New town centre and high street investment generating new footfall and reduced retail and other shop front vacancy rates
- Strengthened reputation of Enterprise Zone and wider district economy as places to invest and a council to do business with.

## **Council priority four**

### **Outstanding council and council services**

This means operating as an outstanding organisation with the highest standards of organisational development, governance, statutory compliance and financial management. Our focus will be on increasing our ability to be self-financing to support those services that matter most to residents.

This work already includes:

- Being responsive, effective and consistent in our communications by providing residents with regular communications on all council activities using social media, digital options as well as traditional communications.
- Continuing to enhance the Council's digital offer for the customer – improving and developing our website and delivering more digital services so that customers can easily access reliable information and resolution of service requests.
- Promoting greater levels of Green Waste collection to increase recycling rates that offer our customers a valued service.
- Ensuring we stay in the 10 most efficient areas in the county for waste which goes for disposal or energy regeneration.

### **Summary of our profile**

95% of invoices paid by us in ten working days

714 Freedom of Information requests received and dealt with

957,134 visits to our website

18,767 total downloads of the East Devon App

## **Key objectives for this Council Plan (2020-24)**

### **Outstanding council and council services**

- Continuously improve the customer experience in relation to the Council's telephone system based on customer and stakeholder feedback.
- Explore the feasibility of extending and promoting the Council's in-house pest control service.
- Improve utilisation of new Materials Recovery facility opened at Greendale on A3052 East of Exeter.
- Use the Residents' Viewpoint Survey April 2020 to enable us deliver and action plan to listen carefully to what our residents need and use this information to improve our services.

- Develop organisational knowledge and skill in the area of community engagement and ensure this features in our training plans.
- Achieve the Investor in People accolade at platinum level by 2020 as an external endorsement of East Devon as an exemplar of organisational management, learning and development opportunities and leadership and a high performing council. This will ensure our a high performing Council across the 9 indicators outlined in the Investor in People Standard:
  - Leading and inspiring people
  - Living the organisation's values and behaviours
  - Empowering and involving people
  - Managing performance
  - Recognising and rewarding high performance
  - Structuring work
  - Building capability
  - Delivering continuous improvement
  - Creating sustainable success

### **What success will look like over the next four years**

- Investor in People High Performing (Platinum) award.
- Continuous improvement in our residents' survey.
- 14,000 green waste customers.
- Improved customer journeys with those who wish to transact with us online able to do so across key services.

## **Finance**

The over-arching impact on the council's finances and the ability to fund services has been the reduction in central government funding to a position where the Council receives no government money to support core service deliver.

The reduction in Government funding has resulted in the Council having a funding gap of £2.1m by 2021

The cost of services we provide are now met only through Council Tax, Business Rates, charging for services and doing things differently. The reduction in Government funding has resulted in the Council having a funding gap of £2.1m by 2021 which will continue to grow unless we take action now.

This pressure will have impacts across our Council Plan as we meet this challenge.

We are meeting these challenges by:

- Protecting key public services by generating income such as our new green waste service in reducing costs
- Relocating to save £1.4m over 20 years
- Going digital to deliver services cost effectively
- Focusing on commercial property investment opportunities to generate income for new jobs and increased productivity in the district
- Using our own land and property assets more efficiently
- Finding innovative ways to help places change and meet our communities' expectations

## East Devon Review of Policies on Poverty

### East Devon Actions proposed:

#### Council should have two basic aims, that:-

- No one in East Devon is destitute without immediate help, and
- Nobody is in involuntary poverty for more than two years duration.

#### To achieve this EDDC should address the following key issues:

- Boost incomes and reduce relative housing costs through our Economic Strategy;
- Work with partners to deliver an effective benefit system;
- Improve work placements and work with Business and Public Sector to improve education standards and raise skills throughout the working population
- Strengthen families and communities to help those at risk of poverty; and
- Promote long-term economic growth sectors to reduce dependency on agriculture, tourism and catering industries

#### Background

Following a Council resolution, a presentation was delivered to Overview by John Golding in March 2019, themes were agreed for a localised investigation and analysis of poverty and related social welfare issues. Work with Devon Strategic Partnership was agreed and we set a timetable for action set to end July 2019 and a report back on the findings was expected. At the same meeting, a list of suggestions was appended for action by East Devon District Council.

In the meantime, Overview is asked to look at a range of suggestions put forward for immediate action by this Authority. Since the Devon Strategic Partnership Welfare task group were timetabled to report in July, we expect further initiatives through this autumn

**Poverty can be defined relative to income** as relative income poverty or absolute poverty. In relative poverty, each household's income, adjusted for family size, is compared to median income. *(The median is the "middle" income: half of the people have more than the median and half have less.)* Those with less than 60 per cent of median income are classified as poor. This 'poverty line' is the agreed international measure used throughout the European Union. This is used in the UK

Absolute poverty by contrast is about being destitute; about not having enough for basic needs <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-definitions.pdf>

The relative poverty threshold is around £195 a week for a lone parent with two children. Using this definition there are over 3 million UK children living in poverty. Shockingly almost half of these children (1.4 million) live in families with a household income far below this – an average of £124 per week for one adult and two children. At least half of the children living in poverty have a parent who works, showing that low paid work is just as likely to cause financial hardship as reliance on benefits. <http://www.family-action.org.uk/section.aspx?id=691> **58% of those in poverty are in "persistent poverty"** (people who would also have fallen below the poverty line in at least two of the last three years). This is as of 2015/16

#### A new way of measuring poverty is being adopted

One of the biggest criticisms of our welfare system is that only focuses on one standard – income. It makes no allowance for inescapable costs of different situations in households with children, with disability, with long-term illness costs, with different housing costs or with inescapable debts.

Therefore the DWP is moving to one of the most comprehensive measures of poverty on offer at the moment. It is produced by the [Social Metrics Commission](#) (SMC). The SMC is an independent group of experts who have been working to improve the way we understand and measure poverty in the UK. Last autumn they published their [first estimates as follows](#):

Around 22% of the public are in poverty and nearly 33% of children. Nearly half (48%) of people in poverty live in a family where someone is disabled.

The SMC's estimate of 11% of pensioner households in poverty compares favourably with the Government's own measure, which places pensioner poverty at 14%. Age UK also reported that a key driver of poverty amongst this older group is "the impact of an unexpected expense"

**The Practical implications of poverty are that you do not have enough money for:-**

- heating to keep home adequately warm;
- a damp-free home;
- two meals a day;
- the ability to visit friends or family in hospital or other institutions;
- the ability to replace or repair broken electrical goods;
- fresh fruit and vegetables every day
- celebrations on special occasions;
- all recommended dental treatment;
- a warm, waterproof coat;
- the ability to attend weddings, funerals and the like;
- meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day;
- curtains or window blinds;
- household contents insurance;
- enough money to keep your home in a decent state of decoration;
- hobby/leisure activity;
- appropriate clothes for job interviews;
- table and chairs at which all the family can eat;
- for taking part in sport/exercise activities or classes;
- for two pairs of all-weather shoes;
- for regular savings of at least £20 per month for future financial challenges;
- for regular payments to a pension.

**What are the causes of poverty?**

**1) Catastrophic events**

- a. Accident or severe illness
- b. Family breakdown and separation
- c. Job loss
- d. Self-employment failure

**2) Low skills-low pay**

- a. Low education achievement
- b. Low self-esteem
- c. Inadequate experience and contacts

**3) Single parent**

An estimated 50% of children in poverty are in single-parent households

**4) Disability**

Some 3,000 people in East Devon claim ESA. Under the SMC's measure, nearly half of people in poverty (48.3%) are living in families with a disabled person. Disabled people are at higher risk of becoming trapped in poverty because disabled people frequently face costs of the adaptations, specialised transport, warmth and support that are needed.

**5) Addiction/ Substance abuse**

Alcohol and drugs can cause a cycle of deprivation, family breakdown and job loss. Poverty is in 50% of families where one adult drinks to excess. Gambling addiction also wrecks lives.

**6) Old Age**

- a. Those over 50 have much-reduced chance of re-employment and even less chance of skills training. Half will never be re-employed if they lose their job
- b. Inadequate pensions from loss of jobs or plateaus in pension entitlement lead to low retirement incomes
- c. Old Age Pension is now inadequate by itself

**7) Rising Housing costs**

This is not only rent cost inflation but short tenures and the failure of housing benefit to keep up. 31% of pensioners who rent are in poverty (2/3 in Social rent). The Chartered Institute of Housing report that the cumulative effect of the changes to Local Housing Allowance rates is that “an increasing majority” of private tenants are finding there is a “widening gap between the rent they pay and the help they get in their benefit to cover it”. StepChange, estimated this applied to around one third of their clients who live in the private rented sector. This group are a “highly vulnerable poor who are likely to be in persistent poverty struggling to meet their basic needs”

**8) Domestic Abuse**

One of the hidden factors in poverty is not only the physical abuse causing family breakdown but the controlling abuse of one partner restricting essential living funds

**9) Benefits changes and delays**

The 5-week break in income from Universal Benefit plus shortages in housing benefit have been accompanied by a wide range of welfare restrictions including working tax credit and family allowance. Over two thirds (69%) of people in poverty live in families where no adult saves

**10) Contracts of employment**

- a. Zero-hours contracts / insecure work / seasonal work
- b. Part-time work
- c. Low pay-low prospect industries

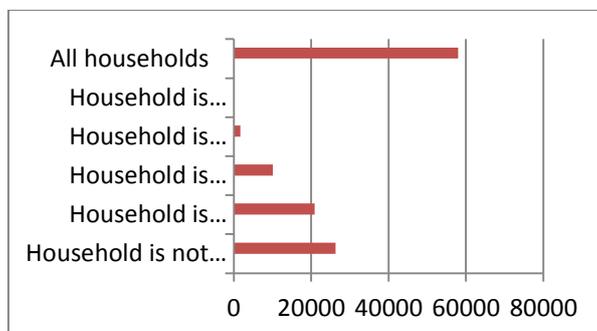
**Lone parent households** are much more likely to be in poverty than other types, for example: 52% are poor, compared to just 11% and 9% of couples without children and pensioner couples respectively

**Workless Households** (where there is no adult in work) show 68% of households are in poverty, compared to just 9% of households where all adults are in work. However Working-age people in poverty are increasingly likely to be in working families

**Women**, “86% of savings to the Treasury through tax and benefit changes since 2010 came from women” at the end of 2017

**East Devon Deprivation**

Office of National Statistics shows some 11,956 households in East Devon have 2 or more scores for deprivation but this drops to 1,187 households for 3 or more. The highest numbers of households in deprivation are in Exmouth Town, Exmouth Littleham, Exmouth Withycombe, Honiton St. Michaels, Honiton St Pauls, Sidford and Seaton. Each Ward has 100 or more households in deprivation on 3 or 4 dimensions. **Action in these 7 wards would halve serious deprivation in East Devon**



In East Devon, Public Health Devon official statistics show 8.7% of people in income deprivation, 9.6% of households are in fuel poverty. 9.2 % of pensioners are in poverty 16% of households have

no car or van. 10.3% of East Devon children are in low-income families. Half of these children are in working families. After the cost of housing is taken into account, 22% of East Devon Children are growing up in poverty. **This means 6,344 children are in poverty - each one an individual.**

### Trends

Between 2000 and 2008 there was a marked reduction in pensioner and child poverty but the financial crisis and austerity measures have worsened the situation since 2016. Austerity measures and Universal Benefit changes coupled with benefit freezes are increasing numbers in poverty. 50% of child poverty is in working families especially in 4 sectors: Food Services, Agriculture, Administration and Wholesale/retail sectors. These sectors are where a significant proportion of the East Devon population work.

**Most poverty rates aren't all that different from what they were at the start of the 2000s.** The most marked reduction has been in pensioner poverty, it is almost half as common as it was back in 2000, while rates for working-age adults are now slightly higher. Poverty rates fell in the years after 2010, as the UK recovered from the financial crisis, but are now showing clear signs of rising again.

**Benefits are eroding:** The value of benefits, for people in and out of work, has been steadily eroded by "uprating changes", the shift from Retail Price Index to Consumer Price Index in 2011, and the 1% limit from 2013. Even without any further changes, this would have contributed to a reduction in financial security for many of the households that DWP supports. This includes people who are wholly reliant on benefits, and people who need benefits to top-up income from low-paid work. The Commons Work and Pensions Committee in cooperation with the National Audit Commission has just issued a report (July 2019) heavily criticising the Department of Work and Pensions in terms of policy, complexity and accountability:-

*"It is difficult to avoid concluding that the Department lacks the tools and insight to fully understand and evaluate the impact of its reforms on some of the most vulnerable people it supports"*

Expectations of increased food and energy costs post Brexit will worsen the trends noted above.

### Local authorities have a statutory duty to:

- Assess and keep housing conditions under review
- Take enforcement action to address the most serious health and safety hazards
- Licence large Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
- Administer and approve Disabled Facilities Grants
- Prepare plans to improve home energy efficiency

They also have powers to:

- provide financial and other assistance to tackle poor house conditions
- deal with empty homes and
- deal with poor management in HMOs. Where a landlord has committed a relevant offence, a tenant or local housing authority may apply for an order requiring repayment of rent to the tenant/local housing authority

## Conclusions and recommendations

### National Issues

#### Welfare Benefits

Prejudice about "the undeserving poor" has been discredited. While no-one denies a small portion of welfare goes to benefit cheats, the vast majority would not wish to remain in poverty. Nationally the Social Security changes instituted during austerity need to be re-evaluated. The *delivery* of Universal Credit has been a failure although the concept was a good one to allow people to work themselves out of poverty. Brexit will worsen the situation. The Parliament's Welfare Committee

report is highly critical of detailed aspects of DWP and welfare allowances. At present, over £24bn a year is paid by the taxpayer to people on Housing Benefit. This money then goes to the Landlord. It is a regressive benefit because rather than a progressive one which lifts people out of poverty

**Housing Policy.** A realistic adjustment of housing benefit is needed alongside enhanced National Planning Policy Guidance for affordable and social housing. Rent tenure changes and charges need to be seriously modified to allow long tenures without interim charges. Council should lobby for continued reform of tenancies, and a new Housing Act which undoes some of the changes introduced in 1988 (e.g. Section 21). We need the return of soft and sensible rent controls, not a hard and strict cap but by reviving the role of the Fair Rent Officer to take decisions case by case. This might help make the market more affordable for our local residents while we all wait for the new social housing we so desperately need. Standards of rental accommodation with legal penalties for breaches need to be imposed

**Employment Contracts** need to be significantly altered to eliminate Zero-hours contracts and improve short-term contract terms

## **East Devon Actions proposed:**

**Council should have two basic aims, that:-**

- No one in East Devon is destitute without immediate help, and
- Nobody is in poverty for more than two years duration.

**To achieve this we should address the following key issues:**

- Boost incomes and reduce relative housing costs;
- Work with partners to deliver an effective benefit system;
- Deliver actions with Business and Public Sector to improve education standards, raise skills and improve work placements;
- Strengthen families and communities to help those at risk of poverty; and
- Promote long-term economic growth to reduce dependency on agriculture, tourism and catering industries

**Specific Action with Partners:**

**Cabinet should organise lobbying of Government Policymakers by the Council and with Partners**  
Aimed to improve Welfare, Housing Policy and Employment Law using this report as a basis.

There is now a general power to give financial assistance for home repairs, providing the Council has a published policy for providing such assistance. Council should develop a clear Private Sector Housing strategy which plays a key part in delivering the various duties and powers the Council has regarding housing, such as:

- assessing the quality, condition and management of the housing stock in the private sector
- tackling poor housing conditions and take action where the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard is not met
- developing measures to bring empty properties back into use
- helping to drive up standards of property management in the private sector
- helping to improve homes through grant assistance in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)
- preventing and reducing homelessness
- improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions from housing. From April 2018, it is unlawful for a landlord to rent out a residential property that does not reach a minimum energy efficiency standard. The intention is for the minimum standard to be set at EPC rating E.;

- administering and enforcing mandatory HMO (house in multiple occupation) licensing

We cannot deliver the aims of such a strategy alone and it will only be achieved with the assistance of partners and with Devon Home Choice

**Devon Strategic Partnership** should report on poverty mapping and should include actions regarding:

- Welfare Benefit Policies
- Homelessness
- Exeter and Heart of Devon local Economy actions on jobs
- Health and wellbeing integrated developments
- Broadband
- Food Banks
- Discretionary funding and match-funding with grants
- Review of Priorities

**Action with DCC and Skills Agency** Can improve skills and employment career advice to schools and links with SMEs through coordination with Jobcentres:-

- **Work with EHOD Partners** including Skills Agency to enhance skills in Admin. Food Supply, Wholesale/Retail and Agriculture especially to counter Brexit damage
- Work with Partners to support low-income residents into higher paid employment and raise skills, attainment and life chances.

**Encourage Clinical Commissioning Group** and County Council focus on poverty alleviation through coordination with the District Council

- Work with partners to improve health outcomes for people on low incomes, including physical and mental health.
- Apply rigour with transport licensing to improve rural and town access

**Potential key areas of focus for the Council's own action going forward:**

- All relevant services and policies to be subject to "poverty proofing" by a report to Overview when each Service Plans and budget is being developed
- Economic Development to prioritise Business support for Technology, Professional Services and Manufacturing businesses.
- Economic Development to counter stereotypes of age in employment practises by suitable fact-based engagement with employers
- Planning to be supportive in Planning applications for Technology, Professional Services and Manufacturing businesses.
- Contract to AED or similar entity to crowdfund ( and raise donations and legacies) and then administer an emergency help fund to help with catastrophic life events. Find grant funds for emergency bridging loans and signpost help
- Specific EDDC local action integrated with volunteers to focus on key families based on the success of the Troubled Families Programme including creche, early years and childcare facilities; food clubs to improve nutrition; mums and dads clubs to improve parenting and homework and food facilities for children
- A specific EDDC action research project to focus on disability and chronic ill health:
  - Evaluation by Housing Department of disability affects in our social housing stock

- Research by Policy Planning Department on design standards which inform policies to address poverty amongst disabled people.
- Advisory help on home adaptations grants and methods for the disabled and elderly using Disabled facilities grants, Warm Home grants etc.
- Mechanisms for mapping and enabling key volunteer agencies with committed 3-year funding support based on performance goals
- Strengthening Community team action to build self-help among community volunteers
- A Grant fund contributing to revenue funding of Foodbanks for the next 3 years
- EDDC Community team to engage the Faith and Voluntary sector in an audit of what help exists in East Devon and plan how to help this sector can efficiently harmonise with statutory bodies
- Support residents to access benefits and respond to the impacts of welfare reform and Brexit.
- Work with voluntary sector partners to provide debt advice and financial advice.

*For example UC claimants are able to access the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support Fund (FSF)—a discretionary fund, controlled by Work Coaches—to cover the up-front costs of childcare, if these would otherwise present a barrier to work. Universal Credit claimants are required to pay for childcare upfront, and claim the money back from DWP. Initial costs, including deposits, can run to hundreds of pounds: costs that may be prohibitive for people with no savings or immediate income. The Flexible Support Fund can be used to meet these costs.*

- Promote and signpost residents to sources of affordable finance.
- Support residents in fuel and water poverty to reduce their energy and water bills.
- Continue to promote the Living Wage to employers through Economic Development.
- Work with local businesses to identify ways that they might use their skills, capacity and resources to support the achievement of shared objectives around poverty and disadvantage.
- Continue to promote digital access for residents on low incomes with a PC loan fund.
- Continue to promote volunteering as a means to develop skills and employability and build communities.
- Promote community pride and cohesion through supporting a range of community events and celebrations to raise funds to alleviate immediate poverty.
- Construct new Council homes, working with social landlords and developers to deliver more affordable homes.
- Provide housing, employment and skills support for homeless people.
- Deliver a range of projects to support groups of people that are more likely to experience poverty, including women, children and substance abuser

#### **References to background information:**

Report of the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee July 2019

Office on National Statistics 2019

Measuring Poverty 2018 Social Metrics Commission

UK Poverty 2017 Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
National Audit Office report on Homelessness 2017  
Causes of Poverty Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2016  
Housing and Planning Act 2016  
Reducing Poverty in the UK: a collection of evidence reviews Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2014  
Devon Food Poverty Dashboard - August 2014  
Below the Breadline Trussell Trust 2014  
Devon housing and health briefing note 2013  
The Perfect Storm Oxfam 2012  
Poverty and Social Exclusion Economic and Social Research Council 2012  
Department for Work and Pensions (ISBN 978 1 908523 01 3) Research Report 765. August 2011  
Energy Act 2011  
Housing Act 2004  
Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002  
Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996  
Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act and the Tenant Fees Act  
Valuation Office - Private Rental Market Summary Statistics

**Link to Council Plan:** Outstanding communities and economy.

<b>Overview Committee Forward Plan 2019/20</b>
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**Work allocated to the Forward Plan:**

Meeting date	Topic
5 September 2019	Joint meeting with Scrutiny Committee on service plans. All day meeting; start time 10am
Additional meeting if required tbc	
14 November 2019	Economic Development update report Review draft drone policy
15 January 2020	Joint meeting with Scrutiny Committee on service plans and draft budget for 2020/2021. All day meeting; start time tbc
30 January 2020	
27 February 2020	Governance Arrangements
26 March 2020	

\* Dependent on publication dates of the respective Select Committee.

**Work for scoping and/or allocation to the Forward Plan:**

Proposed date	Topic
tbc	Public toilet review – consultation plan
	Select Committee report on Coastal Town Regeneration* Select Committee report on Rural Economy*
tbc	Income generation – continuing the work of the Committee from the previous civic term in order to help the budget position, look to find more income generation opportunities. A suggestion was made to add to that investigating the Council financing, through loan, broadband delivery in areas still not benefiting from the Connect Devon and Somerset project.
tbc	High street and village centre regeneration – expand to include the development of new high street in reference to Cranbrook, and centre initially on the towns before later work on villages
tbc	Natural Capital in the Heart of the South West document

## Work identified by the Committee for prioritisation, scope and allocation:

1. Business case for increase in community engagement officers – this fell under the remit of the Housing Review Board, where the issue had already be raised, but could also be monitored by the Overview Committee as part of its review of the service plans;
2. Review out of hours telephone system provided by the council for residents and tenants – the Portfolio Holder for Environment had raised this issue with the Chairman, as he had experienced a poor response to a call but also felt that the system had not been reviewed for some time and therefore should be considered by the Overview Committee;
3. Climate change – including rising sea levels, coastal erosion, single use plastics, to determine what can be done locally as well as lobby Government and feed into the Devon group;
4. Fairer funding from Government for the south west region
5. Community focus
6. Promotion of EDDC services to local residents
7. Improving working with Town and Parish Councils
8. Tackling poverty
9. Reviewing internal recharges – understanding the breakdown of recharges, and being satisfied that these are correctly applied to be confident that the Council is as efficient as possible before examination of making further budget reductions;
10. Street trading
11. Right to buy effect on housing stock
12. Delivery of housing, specifically assisted living
13. Transport – specifically fares for 16 – 18 year olds still in education but not qualifying for state help. A suggestion was made to widen this to look at the timetable too, as many recent changes has resulted in longer and more complex journeys for residents, particularly to the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital;
14. Policy implementation – that policies put in place were being applied in practice. Whilst no specific examples of where a policy was not being applied were given, the suggestion that equalities would be a good starting point;
15. GESP involvement