

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: