

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Council held at Online via the Zoom App on 9 December 2020

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.54 pm

105 Public speaking

The Chair welcomed members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and explained that all participants were taking part remotely and the meeting was also being viewed online and recorded.

The Chair then started the meeting by doing a roll call of those present, and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

During the meeting the public would be able to participate if they had pre-registered to speak. One member of the public had pre-registered.

Lisa Beigan introduced herself as a resident of Honiton, involved in Honiton Forward. A petition signed by 1400 local people had been presented to EDDC to request the Council undertake a Community Governance Review to rectify the situation at Honiton Town Council. She referred to the lack of transparency, flouting of principles and disregard of public views by the Town Council and to papers submitted with the petition indicating numerous complaints and disputes involving the Town Council. It was no longer considered that it had a mandate from the public and were not promoting civic pride or values, so EDDC had a duty to respond.

She stated that Honiton Forward was not a political campaign and supported the work of many local groups to make life better locally and they seek to work alongside the Town Council. They have opposed the current position of certain individuals but this was not on a party political basis. They had wanted to restore the Town Council through a proper election process and residents asked existing Town Councillors to stand down for a few months to enable this to happen and to participate in an election to facilitate a fresh start. Most had stood down, but some had not, but what was needed locally is a fresh start which was the rationale behind raising a petition.

In response, the Chair thanked Lisa for attending the meeting and confirmed that EDDC would be in contact about next steps following receipt and assessment of the petition.

106 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the two previous meetings of the Council held on 21st October and 24th November were confirmed and agreed as a true record.

107 Declarations of interest

114. Motion: Poverty Strategy and Actions.

Councillor Mike Allen, Personal, Member of Honiton Community Church and involved in the Food Bank.

114. Motion: Poverty Strategy and Actions.

Councillor Paul Hayward, Personal, On Executive Board of a community group which seeks to alleviate food poverty in Axminster.

114. Motion: Poverty Strategy and Actions.

Councillor Paul Jarvis, Personal, Works for a Charity on the High Street in Budleigh Salterton.

114. Motion: Poverty Strategy and Actions.

Councillor Paul Millar, Personal, Involved in work for the Co-op Group in Exmouth which seeks to alleviate food poverty, and volunteers for Exmouth Friends in Need which is a charity set up to relieve poverty.

114. Motion: Poverty Strategy and Actions.

Councillor Steve Gazzard, Personal, Member of Exmouth town Council.

114. Motion: Poverty Strategy and Actions.

Councillor Vicky Johns, Personal, Director of Ottery Community Volunteers and Ottery Community Larder.

108 **Matters of urgency - Infrastructure Funding Statement 2019-2020**

The Chair outlined that under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010, there is a legal requirement for East Devon District Council (EDDC) as a planning authority to prepare an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement which must be published and submitted to the Government by 31 December 2020. She had agreed to this as an urgent item so that EDDC could submit a Statement to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in order to meet the deadline.

As Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, Cllr Ledger explained that this was a new requirement on the Council to provide information about income and expenditure relating to the CIL and an infrastructure list. The report will be going to the Strategic Planning Committee to note, and to agree the delegation of responsibility for this to the Committee in future years.

Due to the fact that some Cllrs had been unable to access the background link in the report prior to the meeting, the Chair invited members to vote to proceed on this as a legal requirement and to be able to meet the deadline, but giving delegated powers to the Chief Executive to proceed. Cllr Ledger confirmed that he was happy with this approach.

RESOLVED that Council:

1. Noted the contents of the report and the requirement to provide an “Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement” by 31st December.
2. Gives delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Group Leaders to approve the 2019/20 ‘Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement’ based on the information detailed in this report and submit this to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government by the 31st December 2020.
3. That the future consideration and approval for publication and submission of the “Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement” be delegated the Strategic Planning

Committee and the committee's Terms of Reference within the Constitution be updated to reflect the delegation.

109 **Announcements from the Chair and Leader**

There were no announcements.

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

There were none.

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

Twenty one questions had been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9.2. The questions and answers had been circulated with the agenda and published on the website. Councillors submitting questions are entitled to put a related supplementary question (Procedure Rule 9.5). A summary of the supplementary questions asked and the responses is set out below.

Q 2: Cllr Millar asked if a letter could be sent to the relevant Minister in relation to legislation which would limit the maximum noise levels of fireworks, because this was still a live issue for residents.

In response the Portfolio Holder for Coast, Country & Environment, Cllr Jung confirmed that he would send a letter.

Q7: Cllr Millar asked whether he could receive an assurance that his emails and the data contained within them which may relate to residents have not been accessed by any third parties as a result of the recent password data breach.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that a report is currently being produced on this matter and would be made available to members in due course.

Q11: Cllr Faithfull asked the Leader whether he thinks that the operation of the Member Advisory Panels (MAPs) fits in with the principles of openness and transparency.

In response, the Leader advised that this had been an issue which concerned him when he was elected and when he later became Leader, he had ensured that MAPs would from then on be clerked properly by an officer of EDDC, the minutes would be agreed by the Chair of Planning from when they would then remain on file so that if applications were received, the issues involved would be in the public domain, thus introducing transparency.

Q12: Cllr Parr queried whether the assumption by the Portfolio Holder of an anticipated revenue loss of £2.3m should be included in the Medium Term Financial Plan which runs from 2021 to 2031, and how he will manage to achieve a balanced budget in future.

In response the Portfolio Holder for Economy & Assets stated that the question posed related to a hypothesis he had put forward at a meeting of the Asset Management Forum and was impossible to answer. He had not stated that any revenue would be lost, and since cars had not yet been abolished by the Government, EDDC still owned car parks

from which they would receive income and it was a case of monitoring the situation if the Government changed its current policy.

Q13: Cllr Twiss asked a supplementary question relating to whether there were plans to house all of the street homeless across East Devon over the winter and what capital projects are underway which Next Steps funding may have assisted with.

In response the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities advised that EDDC did not apply for Next Steps funding because there were not enough Street Homeless to warrant applying for it, and because the funding was for capital projects. There is work underway to house people across the district in existing accommodation, for example, in Exmouth.

Q14: Cllr Moulding asked how the Portfolio Holder could ensure that every meeting was open and transparent to those attending and that information is available to all.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Democracy and Transparency said that if members became aware that documents were not available in future that they should contact her and she would investigate the matter.

Q15: Cllr Moulding asked a supplementary question in relation to how decisions would be made about electric charging points if it was not known what would happen in relation to a future reduction in cars.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Climate Action said that they could not predict the future but needed to provide for facilities for residents and visitors under the prevailing conditions. The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets reiterated that that this was another question based merely on a hypothesis put forward at another meeting.

Q16: Cllr Moulding asked why there were no projections for a future 5 year land supply and how the Portfolio Holder would secure the 800 additional homes required for Axminster.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets stated that a report would be presented to Cabinet in February 2021 which would indicate the Council's plans on this matter, but since the economic situation currently changes so frequently, it is impossible to provide much detail until the Prime Minister makes the situation clearer.

Q18: Cllr Moulding asked specifically about a timetable for the delivery of a supermarket in Cranbrook which is a fast growing town.

In response the Leader referred to the Strategic Planning Committee which would be meeting on 15th December when this issue would be discussed. There were two models for how this could be delivered and positive discussions had been held with the Ward Cllrs for Cranbrook.

Q19: Cllr Hartnell queried whether it was acceptable for EDDC to have no plan to kickstart the local economy post COVID, and to wait until February 2021 to develop one.

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets refuted the comment by stating that EDDC did have its priorities, a team of dedicated staff bringing forward economic projects, and grant funding. A Statement of Intent had been published ahead of a new Council Plan but external circumstances kept changing. In the context of a rapidly deteriorating economic situation, the Council is working with local businesses and

communities, a wide variety of partners and the Local Economic Partnership, but there is a crisis occurring.

Q21: Cllr Allen asked the Leader if he considered that maximum speed should be applied to support people in poverty.

In response, the Leader stated that he was disappointed by the tone of the debate at the meeting so far, when all members should be aware of efforts made to date on poverty through the Financial Hardship Fund, Community Support Hub, support to Food Banks, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Track and Trace Payments Scheme which had made the Council very busy over recent months. Since the level of crisis relating to COVID seems likely to continue until the spring, exacerbated by leaving Europe, there are likely to be food shortages and the Council needs to act collaboratively to tackle poverty as a matter of urgency.

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

The Chair requested that the minutes of the following committees be received and any recommendations to Council be approved.

(a) Minutes of Cabinet held on 28 October 2020, Minute numbers 227 - 243
Cllr Arnott presented the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28th October 2020. Following a vote by those present in favour of the recommendations contained therein these were agreed.

(b) Minutes of Cabinet held on 25 November 2020. Minute numbers 249 - 266
Cllr Arnott presented the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25th November 2020. Following a vote by those present in favour of the recommendations contained therein these were agreed.

(c) Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 5 November 2020. Minute numbers 87 - 94
Cllr Brown presented the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 5th November 2020. Following a vote by those present these were agreed.

(d) Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 20 October 2020. Minute numbers 62 - 76
Cllr Ledger presented the minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 20th October 2020. Following a vote by those present in favour of the recommendation contained therein these were agreed.

(e) Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 22 October 2020. Minute numbers 77 - 81
Cllr Ledger presented the minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 22nd October 2020. Following a vote by those present these were agreed.

(f) Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 7 October 2020. Minute numbers 153 - 164
Cllr Wragg presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held

on 7th October 2020. Following a vote by those present these were agreed.

(g) Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 4 November 2020. Minute numbers 165 - 175

Cllr Wragg presented the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 4th November 2020. Following a vote by those present these were agreed.

(h) Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee held on 26 November 2020. Minute numbers 51 - 61

Cllr Hawkins presented the minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee meeting held on 26th November 2020. Following a query in relation to the accuracy these were returned to Audit & Governance to review.

(i) Minutes of the Licensing & Enforcement Committee held on 18 November 2020. Minute numbers 51 - 59

Cllr Whibley presented the minutes of the Licensing & Enforcement Committee meeting held on 18th November 2020. Following a vote by those present in favour of the recommendations contained therein these were agreed.

(j) Minutes of the Licensing & Enforcement Sub-Committee held on 14 October 2020. Minute numbers 27 - 31

Cllr Whibley presented the minutes of the Licensing & Enforcement Sub-Committee meeting held on 14th October 2020. Following a vote by those present these were agreed.

(k) Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 13 October 2020. Minute numbers 18 - 26

Cllr Gardner presented the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 13th October 2020. Following a vote by those present in favour of the recommendations contained therein these were agreed.

113 Changes to Governance arrangements

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to address his report about the changes to the political balance and committee allocations arising from Cllr Millar leaving the Democratic Alliance Group, and drew members' attention to the recommendations contained therein.

The Chair then invited members to vote on the recommendations. Following a vote there was a clear majority to approve the recommendations.

RESOLVED that Council agreed;

1. The revised political balance and number of seats for the political groups as set out in the table at paragraph 2;
2. The change in committee seats so that the Democratic Alliance Group lose and the Independent Progressive Group gain a seat on the Audit & Governance Committee;
3. The revisions to the Committee appointments and the appointment of the Vice Chair of Audit & Governance as detailed in paragraph 5;

4. To amend the Constitution to give delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to revise the makeup of the Panels, Forums and Joint Bodies when there are changes to the Portfolios or Assistant Portfolio positions in year.

114 **Motion: Poverty Strategy and Actions**

The following motion was;

Proposed by Mike Allen

Seconded by Maddy Chapman

Supported by Helen Parr, Bruce de Saram, Stuart Hughes, Ben Ingham, Philip Skinner and Andrew Moulding

The second wave of the Covid-19 epidemic is creating even worse economic damage to East Devon which requires short-term actions as well as strategic initiatives to be put in place immediately. There is concern about the process of holding Poverty Working Panel meetings in private when it should be transparent as well as the slow pace of results when the Council has already decided a 'policy vision' 12 months ago, namely:

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

There are 'key issues' which still need addressing urgently such as;

- Work with partners to address gaps in our benefit system and recommend solutions
- Use all available Government grants and policies to sustain incomes and reduce housing costs.
- Strengthen families and communities with clear signposting to help for those at risk of poverty including use of the Community Hub and EDDC Website to maximise help for those in economic problems
- Set up town-by-town briefing sessions in January on ways to access current support and develop financial resilience. Involve local town and Parish Councillors
- Promote help to sectors with long-term economic growth potential to reduce dependency on agriculture, tourism and catering industries

Poverty is a cross cutting issue, with several Council Services involved in our interventions and many partners to coordinate with. Other Councils are proceeding rapidly to develop 'emergency actions' which we should also consider and be reported to Overview Committee without delay.

It is vital that young people have access to East Devon local opportunities in the simplest way. With technology becoming more and more integrated into our daily lives. We recognise that Team Devon has proposed measures to help younger workers. It is considered that in East Devon this should also include those over 50 and we should seek in all age groups to address stress and depression issues. EDDC should seek to improve work placements and work trials for all ages of those seeking work. This should be a 'significant priority'.

The Poverty Working Panel has identified the following five '**strategic objectives**' to be included within the emerging Poverty Strategy which Council endorses:

- 1 Help people on low incomes to maximise their household income and minimise their costs, building financial resilience and reducing indebtedness. Lead Service – Finance.
- 2 Strengthen families and communities, including supporting groups of people that are more likely to experience poverty. Work up approaches with community and voluntary groups working to combat poverty. Lead Service – Housing.
- 3 Promote an inclusive economy, using career counselling, raising skills and improving access to a range of higher-paying employment opportunities for people on low incomes. Lead Service – Growth, Development & Prosperity.
- 4 Address the high cost of housing, improving housing conditions, creating affordable warmth and reducing homelessness. Lead Service – Housing.
- 5 Improving health outcomes for people on low incomes, including access to good diet, health care and ill health prevention. Lead Service – Environmental Health.

In the current circumstances, urgent action is required to deliver these strategic objectives to enable those in need to be helped as soon as possible.

This approach reflects evidence on the nature of poverty in East Devon and responds to changes in the current situation. Poverty is a cross cutting theme with a number of Council Services involved in our interventions and we look for good SMT coordination.

These strategies also build on the learning from the Council's existing approach to supporting individuals and communities. This learning includes:

1. The importance of balancing efforts to address the immediate effects of poverty, with preventative work to address the root causes of poverty.
2. Being clear on which issues can be addressed by direct delivery by Council services, which issues can be achieved through partnership working (where more can be achieved through collaboration), and which issues require influencing and lobbying activity (where powers lie with Government or other agencies).
3. It confirms a need to build the capacity and resilience of residents and communities which is why the Forum should be open to the public.

This Council therefore agrees that;

- (1) The 'policy vision' is incorporated immediately in the Poverty Strategy to help deliver the best response for our residents across East Devon;**
- (2) Future meetings of the Panel should be in public and past meeting agendas and minutes made available;**

- (3) To achieve faster actions the 'key issues' should immediately be addressed.**
- (4) The Poverty Working Panel should immediately review 'emergency actions' by other Councils and provide a report to Overview Committee including comment on the budgets available across local Partnerships;**
- (5) East Devon's tactical response should include the 'significant priority' mentioned above.**
- (6) It endorses the 'strategic objectives' in the emerging Poverty Strategy and asks for action proposals to address them to be presented to Cabinet within 2 months.**

The Chair invited the proposer, Cllr Allen, to speak to the motion.

Cllr Allen outlined the impact of COVID on health and the economy, and referred to studies undertaken on its effects on different sections of the community and businesses. The motion reflects the need to work together more creatively and quickly to address the issues.

Cllr Chapman seconded the motion, and expressed her concern about the plight of victims of domestic abuse at Christmas time and the new year which is usually a time when more violence and abuse takes place.

During a debate on the motion, comments included the following;

- This is an opportunity as a Council to show residents that it can work quickly and collaboratively
- The Poverty Working Panel (PWP) recognises the urgency of the situation for people and has a strategy and timetable for implementation for addressing the issues, which will include liaising with the Dept for Work & Pensions (DWP) and Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Urgent action was needed for when furlough ended for people.
- Poverty transcends politics and speed is important, so reports and actions should not be delayed by having to be processed by several committees. The work should be progressed through Cabinet and be part of the evolving Council Plan.

Cllr Ledger proposed an amendment to the motion but stated that he had circulated it to Cllr Allen prior to the meeting so that it did not become a political football or detract from the work of the PWP.

The following amendment to the motion was proposed by Cllr Ledger and seconded by Cllr Bailey;

"This Council endorses the work of the Poverty Working Panel in seeking to identify and address poverty within the District. We are pleased to note that the 'policy vision' is being included in the strategy, that meetings are now being held in public and past minutes and agendas are also being made public.

Whilst acknowledging the work already being carried out by the Council across numerous service areas and the work of the Poverty Working Panel, this Council is

concerned about the unprecedented challenges now being faced by many residents. In recognition of the worsening poverty crisis, Council hereby refers the motion to the first Cabinet meeting of 2021 to be held on 6th January for Cabinet to give it urgent consideration and to decide whether a further report should be prepared to identify practicable and affordable further actions with a view to:

- identifying any emergency actions for prioritisation;
- helping address gaps in the benefit system;
- applying for all available grants;
- strengthening families and communities with clear signposting;
- improving communication with towns and parishes around financial resilience;
- promoting long term economic growth potential;
- addressing issues affecting all age groups with regard to mental health and employment.
- assessing how the Poverty Strategy and action plan can be expedited by the Poverty Working Panel without compromising the evidenced based programme of work.”

Cllr Allen confirmed that he accepted the amendment as proposed by Cllr Ledger. On this basis, Cllr Ledger and Cllr Bailey agreed that they wanted the amended motion to go forward rather than be acknowledged as proposing a separate amendment to be voted on. The amended motion was to become the substantive motion and Cllrs Ledger and Bailey agreed that they should be shown as being in support of it.

The Chair invited Cllr Allen to sum up before moving to a vote on the amended motion. Cllr Allen thanked the Chair and all Cllrs who agreed with the motion and emphasised the need to take urgent action.

A vote on the amended motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that;

This Council endorses the work of the Poverty Working Panel in seeking to identify and address poverty within the District. We are pleased to note that the 'policy vision' is being included in the strategy, that meetings are now being held in public and past minutes and agendas are also being made public.

Whilst acknowledging the work already being carried out by the Council across numerous service areas and the work of the Poverty Working Panel, this Council is concerned about the unprecedented challenges now being faced by many residents. In recognition of the worsening poverty crisis, Council hereby refers the motion to the first Cabinet meeting of 2021 to be held on 6th January for Cabinet to give it urgent consideration and to decide whether a further report should be prepared to identify practicable and affordable further actions with a view to:

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- promoting long term economic growth potential;
- addressing issues affecting all age groups with regard to mental health and employment.
- assessing how the Poverty Strategy and action plan can be expedited by the Poverty Working Panel without compromising the evidenced based programme of work.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.54pm.

Attendance List
Councillors present:

M Armstrong	D Ledger	P Faithfull
P Jarvis	J Rowland	S Gazzard
S Jackson	J Loudoun	M Hartnell
S Chamberlain	D Bickley	B Ingham
P Arnott	J Bailey	G Jung
K Blakey	K McLauchlan	H Parr
K Bloxham	P Hayward	C Pepper
F King	S Hawkins	G Pook
F Caygill	A Moulding	G Pratt
A Colman	D Key	M Rixson
P Millar	C Gardner (Chair)	E Rylance
T Woodward	S Bond	B De Saram
N Hookway	M Allen	P Skinner
C Wright	D Manley	B Taylor
O Davey	C Brown	I Thomas
J Whibley	M Chapman	P Twiss
L Jeffery	I Chubb	E Wragg
T McCollum	A Dent	T Wright
V Johns	D Barrow	S Hughes

Officers in attendance:

Mark Williams, Chief Executive
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Councillor apologies:

I Hall

Chairman

Date: