

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the consultative meeting of Council held Online via the Zoom App on 21 February 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 9.25 pm

59 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.

He outlined that based on the decision at the Council meeting on 8 December, when Members voted in favour of the continuation of virtual meetings until 11 May 2022, the Council had delegated much of its decision taking power to Senior Officers, due to continuing concerns related to COVID risk in this area. Consequently, the meeting was being held on a consultative basis only, and the normal procedural rules as detailed in the Council's Constitution, would continue to be closely adhered to.

Accordingly, where the meeting would have normally decided a matter, it will now make a recommendation to a Senior Officer. The Officer will then take that recommendation into account, when making their decision.

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.

Four members of the public had pre-registered to speak at this meeting.

Mike Goodman wanted to outline his concerns about the process by which increased charges to car parks had been presented to Council for approval. He urged Cllrs not to vote for the increases until a Car Parking Strategy had been drafted, consultation had occurred with local residents and businesses, and an equality impact assessment had been completed. He saw no justification for the increased charges and was aware that a petition about this had been signed by many local people.

Sally Mynard representing the Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce as Vice Chair also wanted to speak about increases to car park charges. She stated that many businesses were concerned, and that the increased charges proposed were unwelcome. A petition of over 1800 signatures had been collated and would be presented to the Monitoring Officer in the next few days. She went on to say that East Devon car parks would become the most expensive compared to others in neighbouring areas and gave some examples. EDDC were actively encouraging people to shop local but would be penalising them for doing so by increasing charges to park. She stated that this showed little concern for the local economy and recovery after a difficult two years and it could be a risk to double the charges, while a more positive collaborative approach was required.

Ian Barlow, as Chair of Sidmouth Town Council also wanted to speak about proposed increases to car parking charges. He stated that the Council had had no chance to discuss this, but had received many calls from residents and traders on the topic. He was

aware that the previous administration had not increased charges for 12 years and had sympathies with EDDC's lack of funds, but if charges had been raised in line incrementally with inflation they would now only be £1.30 and not become double that, as proposed. This would affect a vibrant town which had struggled over the last two years and EDDC is gambling on an opportunity to get more money than may be achievable. It had been suggested that it was illegal to raise car park charges for purposes other than to look after car parks, and so this will not help the town.

Mrs Raw wanted to speak in relation to the traffic crossing at Newton Poppleford where her father was the victim of a tragic accident at Christmas 2020. She outlined three reasons why he died, and three solutions which might prevent such an accident happening again in future. She referred to the more effective crossing at Stowford as an example, where a belisha beacon was in place. A flashing light is not ambiguous and clearly indicates the presence of a crossing, whereas a green light which appears after too short a period of time to cross would not be helpful to pedestrians or drivers who could not see in the dark. She requested that the crossing was made safe despite the cost, if it would save lives.

Cllr Val Ranger, as ward member for Newton Poppleford, gave some background to the issues involved and previous attempts to resolve them. She had written to complain to Devon County Council as the responsible authority and to ask if they could extend the period of time pedestrians had to cross safely. This was only brought to the attention of HATOC (Highways & Traffic Orders Committee) this year and Cllr Ranger had put forward a number of recommendations. She was told these would be considered but that as an EDDC Cllr she was ineligible to vote, which was incorrect. She stated that there had already been two deaths and one life changing injury since 2016 at this crossing, and 60 other injuries since 2000. Accordingly she pointed out how much care needed to be taken when planning crossings.

The Chair thanked the public speakers for their contribution to the meeting.

60 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Chair asked for comments on the minutes of the consultative meeting of Council held on 8th December 2021.

He then invited Cllrs to vote in favour, against or abstaining the receiving and noting of the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed the minutes of 8th December were received and noted.

61 **Declarations of interest**

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Iain Chubb, Personal, Serving Member of Devon County Council which deals with Highways & Parking services.

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Ian Hall, Personal, Serving Member of Devon County Council and Vice Chair of HATOC (Highways & Traffic Orders Committee).

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Jake Bonetta, Personal, Serving Member of Honiton Town Council potentially impacted by increased car parking charges.

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Serving Member of Devon County Council which deals with Highways & Parking services.

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Marcus Hartnell, Personal, Serving Member of Seaton Town Council and a Business owner who could be impacted by increased car parking charges.

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Phil Twiss, Pecuniary, Portfolio Holder for Finance at Devon County Council (DCC). Due to a potential conflict of interest between EDDC and DCC the Cllr will leave the meeting at item 9 on the agenda relating to the budget..

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Stuart Hughes, Pecuniary, Cabinet Member for Highways Management at Devon County Council (DCC). Due to a potential conflict of interest between EDDC and DCC the Cllr will leave the meeting at item 9 on the agenda relating to the budget..

66. Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023.

Councillor Vicky Johns, Personal, Serving Member of Ottery Town Council potentially impacted by increased car parking charges

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62 **Matters of urgency**

The Chair stated that there were two matters of urgency which will be dealt with under items 10q and 11.

63 **Announcements from the Chairman and Leader**

The Chair stated that this Full Council meeting is operating as a Consultative one online to deal with the usual business at Council. However, since the setting of the Council's annual budget and Council Tax resolution requires Council to meet in person in order to hold a recorded vote, EDDC will be holding another meeting in two days' time, at the Ocean Suite in Exmouth under COVID precautions, as advised by Democratic Services. Accordingly, the budget report is included as item 9 on the agenda tonight to give all Council members an opportunity to take part in a full debate, followed by an indicative vote to take forward to the meeting taking place in Exmouth on Wednesday 23rd February.

The Chair went on to outline progress being made on the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations this year, and to particularly thank Cllrs Johns, Bloxham, Bickley and De Saram who are part of a small team working with officers to deliver the gift of one of 70 oak trees to each of the Town and Parish Councils across the district. The trees will be installed by officers from Streetscene with a commemorative plaque. To date there have been responses from 47 of the 60 towns and parishes, and contact will be made with those which have yet to respond. The trees will arrive on 28th February and planting across the district would commence from 7th March.

The Chair wanted to welcome back Cllr Ian Hall to the business of Council, having developed and recovered from COVID last year. Cllr Hall thanked the Chair and confirmed he was glad to be back and given a second chance after being ill with the virus.

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

There are no confidential or exempt items.

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

Three questions had been received from Cllrs and all had been responded to in writing and published prior to the meeting.

Q1 Cllr De Saram asked a supplementary question. What statistical research or scoping exercise was carried out before deciding to grass over the area in question?

In response the Portfolio Holder for Finance said that in line with the written response, those people using the temporary car park would have easily found alternative parking elsewhere in an EDDC car park nearby, or on street parking which was also available. Cllr Arnott reminded members that the area had not been a car park previously and had simply had a temporary planning application to allow it to become a car park, but it was no longer a car park.

Q2. Cllr Bailey asked a supplementary question. Does the Leader share her view that while pleased that South West Water (SWW) would be attending a meeting to answer questions from Cllrs and members of the public, would he agree that one hour is insufficient and would he ask them to attend for longer.

In response, the Leader agreed with this view and stated that he would be happy to make contact with officers to see if SWW could attend for longer, and given the seriousness of the situation over recent months he thought that constant engagement with them would be required in future.

66 **Report on the Council Tax Resolution 2022/2023**

Before moving to the Report on the budget, and to the next agenda item which deals with Committee minutes, the Chair stated that there were requests to Call Minutes of Cabinet from 2nd February, Minute 160, Revenue and Capital Budgets 2022/23, from Cllr Colin Brown, Cllr Bruce De Saram, and Cllr Helen Parr which was appropriate to deal with at this point.

The Chair invited Cllr Brown to speak.

Cllr Brown said that he wanted to put forward an amendment to the proposal in the budget report for Council to consider, specifically to increase car park charges up to £1.20 per hour across the board, as proposed originally by the Car Parking TaFF last year, and by Cllr Hartnell at the meeting of the Joint Scrutiny and Overview Committees Budget meeting on 12th January 2022. The amount of income generated from this would adequately cover the maintenance costs of the car parks, and would encourage better management of them. The Service Lead had confirmed that charges could not be raised simply to raise revenue for other purposes, and that the Council needed to encourage the use of car parks and take account of the impact of any changes to charges locally.

Since the Council was trying to underpin the recovery of the High streets across the district, a 100% increase would not achieve this.

Cllr De Saram stated that the proposal in the budget report to raise car park charges was a very blunt way of balancing the budget and there needed to be a better way of increasing funds. There was widespread concern that the increases were not justified and the budget report did not address issues relating to the prevention or relieving of traffic congestion which charges should help to do. He would second the proposal from Cllr Brown to increase charges to £1.20 across the board but if this was not agreed he would be unable to support the budget as a whole.

Cllr Parr referred to an email circulated by the Service Lead for Car Parking outlining the management reasons for raising car park charges. She stated that there was no evidence of what EDDC wanted to increase the charges for and her view was that local people should not be exploited. Closing public toilets and putting up car parking charges was not supporting High Streets or businesses but would just support more online shopping.

The Chair reminded members that there was a legal requirement on the Council to achieve a balanced budget.

Cllr Ledger pointed out that the amended proposal did not address the issue of what services would have to be dropped in order to facilitate a balanced budget with reduced income coming from car parks, which would also need to be proposed at the meeting.

The Strategic Lead for Finance addressed the budget report which was very detailed and produced as a result of the process involving taking a draft to Cabinet for debate in January, before then being presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committees and also the Housing Review Board, before going back to Cabinet in February with the final budget proposals, as outlined in the recommendations to the Council meeting. The proposals have accordingly been debated and agreed on a number of occasions. The budget agreed by Cabinet was balanced with expenditure matching income, reserves maintained at the appropriate level and all precepting authorities having already set and agreed their budgets. The Council Tax had been set at £156.78, which was within the threshold set by government, and the obligation to achieve a balanced budget was one to be shared equally by all Council members.

Cllr Brown confirmed that the amendment being proposed was that Council adopt the recommendation of the Car Parking TaFF to increase the charges to £1.20 per hour on all East Devon car parks currently charging £1.00 per hour.

Cllr De Saram seconded the amendment.

The Chair asked for clarification from the Strategic Lead for Finance on the implications for the Council if the amendment was passed. The Strategic Lead confirmed that planned expenditure would have to be changed accordingly to meet the reduced income.

The Chair invited comments from members on the amendment.

Comments or questions from members included the following;

- The Conservative Group appeared to be claiming the proposal in the budget report was illegal which was incorrect. Differential charging in car parks across the district was exactly about managing and easing traffic congestion and

encouraging visitors and there was little point having the same charges in all car parks.

- Could the proposers of the amendment clarify what services would be cut if car park charges were not increased? Members could not vote for an amendment without knowing which services would be cut to take account of the reduced resources available.
- Further clarification was required from the proposers about the existing 30 minute charge, the five month winter rate of £2 per day which would be retained in the budget proposals and the introduction of the Resident permit which would be offered on a monthly basis and represented great value at £10 per month.
- By introducing the increased charges the Council would effectively kill off the major towns in the district and encourage more online shopping.
- Members needed much more information before increasing car park charges and their impact on local businesses.
- The decision to increase the charge to £1.20 in prime car parks was made last year by Council and would be operational in April 2022, so £300k was already banked in the base budget. There was also a need for £730k to meet the expenditure for additional staffing agreed at Scrutiny and Overview and £50k for the tree strategy.
- What approach would be taken if the amendment is passed?
- Speakers were only focussing on the hourly rate when there were so many other proposals which made up the overall car parking package. EDDC would remain one of the cheapest places to park, retaining its winter rate, a half-hourly rate, a low cost resident permit, no charging after 6pm, three different rates for different towns ranging from £1.20, £1.50 and up to £2.00. East Devon has the problem of having towns and coastal areas without having enough space for everyone and few adequate bus services. EDDC have not put up charges for 12 years and have still managed to absorb the VAT taken by government and keep repairs and maintenance at a minimum. The package overall was well thought through for local residents and businesses despite erroneous examples being used by some at the meeting. The actions proposed by EDDC would not damage the High Streets and were unlikely to push people to shop out of town because it remained such a popular pastime. The proposals have also been developed and debated over the last two years and should come as no surprise.
- Clarification about how increasing charges can ease congestion was given on the basis of logic, that local residents would be likely to use less popular and less expensive car parks, leaving the most popular ones free for visitors.
- A lot of opposing information was being presented with members being told that the Council could not increase charges at the same time as needing to balance the books or it would lose staff and services.
- Some Cllrs reported not having received any approaches from people who were concerned about increased car park charges. There was a lot of unnecessary hysteria and hype in a period running up to the next election. Car parks do not come free and come at a cost to local councils who have to pay for maintenance and associated costs. All costs are currently going up and since charges have not been raised for 12 years it was time that they were.

Cllr Loudoun moved that the question now be put.

The Chief Executive advised the Chair that the amendment should be debated until all Cllrs were clear about the consequences of it being carried and what further proposals may be required to address the reduced income to the Council which would result.

- It was unfortunate that the amendment had only just been presented at the meeting and no more work could be done to develop a more thought through proposal.
- It was only at Cabinet in February that the proposed increases were presented, and no consultation has taken place on them to date.
- The alleged deterrent to parking in town centres was unlikely to be realistic. Increased fuel costs had not put people off and people would continue to shop locally for certain items such as their groceries, rather than shopping online. Local businesses appeared to be over-estimating the number of people who travelled into town centres by car. If it did deter people, it would be much better for the environment and ease congestion. As it was, it was to be hoped that increased charges would aid congestion.
- The petition in Sidmouth only focussed on the headline figures but there is considerable congestion in its car parks as well as free parking if people know where to go.

The Chair asked Cllr Arnott to speak on the amendment.

Cllr Arnott commended to all Cllrs the statements made by Cllr Jung and Cllr Rixson. Further that the Car Parking TaFF had spent two years debating without an outcome, hence the need for the job to be done by others now. He went on to ask for clarification on the topic of legality around charging.

The Chief Executive referred to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Service Lead which had previously been circulated to members and explained that the legal position was essentially as it had been for the last 20 years in that as long as income from car park charges was being used to deal effectively with car parks, then any additional income raised could be used to support other purposes. In addition, consistent practice over the years had been that when debating the budget, proposals to reduce or increase income, carried a corresponding obligation to address the issues raised by the consequences

The Strategic Lead for Finance clarified that the car parking charges proposed had been taken into the budget to make it balance and become available for services generally. If the amendment was carried and the budget proposal was rejected, Cllrs would be reducing the money available overall. The net amount of approximately £1m additional resources being taken out of the budget would then have to be found elsewhere, leaving the question of where the Council could find a reduction in expenditure to this amount to make up for the proposed loss of income and to obtain a balanced budget.

Cllrs asked how they could move to a vote on an amendment which is only one part of the budget, and without having another proposal to compensate for the consequences.

The Chief Executive clarified that it was the responsibility of the proposers of the amendment to come up with an equivalent proposal of how to cut £1m from the budget.

The Chair asked Cllr Brown as proposer of the amendment where the reduction revenue was going to come from.

Cllr Brown suggested that the officer wish-list of £730k was excessive and the tree strategy which would cost £50k, alongside the pay restructure and other items with high

costs attached should be considered more carefully, but he was not categorically suggesting that these form a counter proposal.

The Chair clarified that accordingly there was no specific proposal being put forward to make up for the reduction in budget which was required for a balanced budget.

The Chief Executive advised that the amendment is incomplete and involves accepting £1m reduction in the Council budget.

The Chair confirmed that Council can treat the amendment as incomplete but there is no counter proposal and no way forward.

In terms of timing, the debate on the budget could take place at this meeting, but a counter proposal identifying £1m would need to be found by Wednesday 23rd February. If not, the budgets of Devon County Council, the Police, the Fire & Rescue Service and those of Town and Parish Councils as well as EDDC would also be affected. Expectations on Cllrs at this meeting have been clear for at least two weeks.

The proposal for a recorded vote on the amendment and seconded by Cllr Skinner was carried by a vote of those present.

The Chair then invited members to vote in a recorded vote for or against the amendment, or to abstain.

Recorded vote on the budget:

Councillors Dean Barrow, Colin Brown, Alasdair Bruce, Fred Caygill, Maddy Chapman, Iain Chubb, Bruce De Saram, Alan Dent, Ian Hall, Marcus Hartnell, Mike Howe, Ben Ingham, David Key, Richard Lawrence, Andrew Moulding, Helen Parr, Christopher Pepper, Philip Skinner, Tom Wright - voted in favour – 19.

Councillors Megan Armstrong, Paul Arnott, Jess Bailey, Jake Bonetta, Andrew Colman, Olly Davey, Cathy Gardner, Steve Gazzard, Sam Hawkins, Paul Hayward, Nick Hookway, Paul Jarvis, Vicky Johns, Geoff Jung, Jamie Kemp, Dan Ledger, John Loudoun, Dawn Manley, Tony McCollum, Paul Millar, Geoff Pook, Geoff Pratt, Val Ranger, Marianne Rixson, Jack Rowland, Eleanor Rylance, Brenda Taylor, Ian Thomas, Joe Whibley, Tony Woodward, Eileen Wragg, Chris Wright, – voted against – 32

Councillor Faithfull – abstained – 1.

Following the recorded vote the Chair confirmed that the amendment was lost.

He went on to ask for comments on the Budget report.

Cllr Rowland outlined some of the challenges which had faced the Council over the last two years, including supporting Leisure East Devon which had been facing the possibility of being unable to continue without such local support. Whilst the loss to leisure services had been compensated for in some areas by central government, it had not been the case in East Devon. He was clear that tough decisions have had to be made in unique times and developing a budget was about protecting frontline services. He stated that the petition referred to earlier was misleading because many people would only have seen the headline figures about the doubling of some car park charges, without the issues being set into their wider context.

Cllr Ledger stated that a good communications strategy was needed in future for dealing with information which could be available to the public. For example, if the amendment had been carried, press headlines following the meeting could have given the message

that EDDC had voted for a £1m reduction in budget, leading to cuts in services. He went on to say that many things which had been neglected in recent years are now being developed again, in areas such as housing and the Arts. For example, the Housing Task Force was about to recruit officers in order to be able to deliver social housing for the first time in years, and the budget was very positive and forward looking.

A number of Cllrs confirmed that brave decisions are being made again alongside investment in services.

Cllr Arnott stated that he had not heard from local MPs on financial support available whilst the Council's resources and reserves were being depleted. He also reiterated the many recent achievements put in place despite this, and the work officers had done on housing, climate change and dealing with COVID. He also wished to thank the Chief Executive for the straightforward advice given to Cllrs about the position and responsibilities they faced. If some Cllrs chose to put in a wrecking amendment, there were serious consequences which would be felt by local communities.

The Chair moved the Budget report and invited members to vote in favour, against or to abstain from recommending presentation of the report to the Extraordinary meeting of Council on 23rd February for approval.

Following a vote, the Chair confirmed that the Budget report and its recommendations contained therein were recommended for presentation to, and approval at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 23rd February.

RECOMMENDATION;

That the Budget report would be presented for approval at the Extraordinary Council meeting on 23rd February 2022.

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

This item is to receive the minutes of Committees, and invite members to vote in favour or against recommending passing recommendations contained therein for approval to Senior Officers if appropriate, or receiving and noting them when there are none.

The Chair invited the Leader and Chairs of Committees to present their minutes.

(a) Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 5 January 2022. Minute numbers 126 - 148

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.

(b) Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 February 2022. Minute numbers 149 - 171

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.

(c) Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 December 2021. Minute numbers 20 - 30

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.

- (d) Minutes of the Joint Budget meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committees held on 12 January 2022. Minute numbers 31 - 37**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (e) Minutes of the Joint Budget meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committees held on 17 January 2022. Minute numbers 38 - 44**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (f) Minutes of the Housing Review Board meeting held on 13 January 2022. Minute numbers 16 - 28**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (g) Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 14 December 2021. Minute numbers 51 - 57**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (h) Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 11 January 2022. Minute numbers 58 - 65**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (i) Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 25 January 2022. Minute numbers 66 - 67**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (j) Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 26 January 2022. Minute numbers 68 - 69**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (k) Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 8 February 2022. Minute numbers 70 - 75**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (l) Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 15 December 2021. Minute numbers 77 - 87**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (m) Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 19 January 2022. Minute numbers 88 - 100**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.

- (n) **Minutes of the Licensing & Enforcement Sub-Committee meeting held on 9 February 2022. Minute numbers 26 - 30**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (o) **Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee meeting held on 20 January 2022. Minute numbers 27 - 38**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendation contained therein recommended for approval.
- (p) **Minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 27 January 2022. Minute numbers 17 - 25**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.
- (q) **Minutes of the Extraordinary Personnel Committee meeting held on 18 February 2022. Minute numbers 26 - 31**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.
- (r) **Minutes of the Strata Joint Executive Committee held on 19 January 2022. Minute numbers 1-8**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.

68 **Report - Changes to Governance arrangements**

The Chair stated that this item was added to the agenda as a matter of urgency due to the fact that the Council was obliged to review the political balance figures as soon as reasonably practicable after a change and this Council meeting presented the last opportunity until April.

He invited the Chief Executive to address the report on Changes to Governance arrangements.

The Chief Executive referred to the fact that following the departure of Cllrs Bonetta and Millar from the Democratic Alliance Group in order to form the Labour Group, it was necessary to address changes to the political balance, committee seat allocations and committee appointments arising from the creation of a Labour Group for the purposes of the Council's administration. The report dealt with changes arising as a consequence, and contained three recommendations.

Cllr Arnott commented on behalf of the Democratic Alliance Group that it wished the Labour Group good fortune and was delighted that they were forming their own group.

Cllr Bonetta in turn thanked the Leader for his comments, and wanted to re-assure members that regardless of forming a separate group, the Labour Group would be

intending to support a progressive administration for the purposes of building a stronger future together.

The Chair invited members to vote in favour or against receiving and noting the report and its three recommendations.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the report from the Monitoring Officer was received and noted and the recommendations passed to Senior Officers for approval.

Recommendation:

That Council;

1. Agree the revised political balance and number of committee seats for the political groups as set out in the table at paragraph 3 and committee seat allocations table at Appendix 1;
2. Agree the change in membership of the committees as set out in paragraph 5;
3. Agree that Cllr Woodward be appointed to the vacant Scrutiny Committee seat; and recommend that Senior Officers approve what is agreed.

69 **Motion: Housing requirements in local authority areas**

The Chair invited Cllr Bailey as proposer to speak to the Motion.

Cllr Bailey outlined that the motion in front of members was an amendment to the original wording, as advised by the Chief Executive, in order to make it clear that since the Local Plan is the most important issue facing the District going forward, the motion was not about trying to delay its progress at all. She also clarified additional recommendations to strengthen the motion further.

She stated that the number of houses required to be delivered by the District was set at 918 each year until 2041. This figure was not based on local information but a national target of 300,000 based on statistics from the ONS which simply reinforced past trends and did not account for the actual housing needs of the area. Based on a simple mathematical formula, it did not take account of a number of factors including that two thirds of East Devon land was in an AONB area; that there were no brownfield sites which could be developed; that many acres of green sites would have to be developed upon, as well as new towns being built and existing communities being swamped. There were also 12000 homes standing empty, 2300 second homes and no evidence that sufficient affordable housing would be built for households in need or young people. She went on to say that this was a flawed approach which many other Councils shared similar concerns over and did not encourage sustainable development. The motion was not about stopping the Local Plan which would create the risk of losing control over the planning process, but speaking to government on behalf of the District and the concerns of local residents.

Cllr Johns as seconder of the motion reiterated the fact that the national system was unfair in the way it applied to East Devon and other areas.

Comments during the debate included the following;

- That this issue and how the numbers required for development in East Devon were set had never been the subject of a cross-party debate previously, and was very helpful.

- That much housing in the District was bought for second homes or by Buy to let landlords, neither of which helped local residents.
- Neighbourhood Plans were on a potential crash course with the differing requirements of strategic planning requirements.
- EDDC was right to challenge dubious algorithms which did not stack up locally, since housing needed to be built in the right locations.

The Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee advised members strongly against any actions which could cause delays to the Local Plan and potential loss of the five year land supply, suggesting that the formula for setting the number of houses could be argued further down the line.

The Chief Executive read out the amended motion with recommendations as follows;

'On the 22 June 2021 the Strategic Planning Committee resolved:

1. 'That the need for robust evidence on housing need and supply to justify strategic policy on housing requirement provision to include in the local plan be endorsed in principle.
2. That the transparent and timely use of that evidence through the plan making process to justify local plan policy on housing requirement provision be endorsed.
3. That the questions raised in paragraph 6.3 of the report were considered and commented on and the consideration to not challenge government standard methodology at this time to help to inform officers' work in developing a housing strategy for the new local plan was agreed'.

This resolution has been the basis of the work done to date on preparing a draft Local Plan for the district for the period 2020-2040.

It is however apparent from consideration of the draft Local Plan to date that the implications of pursuing this approach are not acceptable to the communities of East Devon.

Mindful of this and fully accepting that it is imperative that we continue our progress with the draft Local Plan this Council also agrees to write to Michael Gove the Secretary of State for Levelling Up Housing and Communities:

- (a) calling on him to review the standard methodology in the light of concerns about the reliability of the algorithm used and the AONB designations and other environmental constraints in the district; and
- (b) calling on the government to identify a more positive approach to solving the housing crisis rather than requiring the granting of more planning permissions.

In addition this Council calls on its MPs to support us in our representations to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up'.

The Chair confirmed that Cllr Bailey was content with the amended motion and invited her to give her right to reply.

Cllr Bailey reinforced how important it was to follow up concerns expressed with algorithms as an inappropriate way to develop housing in East Devon, and the need to make robust representations to local MPs and Michael Gove as Secretary of State.

The Chair invited members to vote in favour or against receiving and noting the Motion.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the Motion was carried by a majority of those present and would be passed to Senior Officers for approval.

RECOMMENDATION to be passed to Senior Officers;

That on the 22 June 2021 the Strategic Planning Committee resolved:

1. 'That the need for robust evidence on housing need and supply to justify strategic policy on housing requirement provision to include in the local plan be endorsed in principle.
2. That the transparent and timely use of that evidence through the plan making process to justify local plan policy on housing requirement provision be endorsed.
3. That the questions raised in paragraph 6.3 of the report were considered and commented on and the consideration to not challenge government standard methodology at this time to help to inform officers' work in developing a housing strategy for the new local plan was agreed'.

This resolution has been the basis of the work done to date on preparing a draft Local Plan for the district for the period 2020-2040.

It is however apparent from consideration of the draft Local Plan to date that the implications of pursuing this approach are not acceptable to the communities of East Devon.

Mindful of this and fully accepting that it is imperative that we continue our progress with the draft Local Plan this Council also agrees to write to Michael Gove the Secretary of State for Levelling Up Housing and Communities:

- (a) calling on him to review the standard methodology in the light of concerns about the reliability of the algorithm used and the AONB designations and other environmental constraints in the district; and
- (b) calling on the government to identify a more positive approach to solving the housing crisis rather than requiring the granting of more planning permissions.

In addition this Council calls on its MPs to support us in our representations to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up'.

The Chair thanked everyone including members of the public for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.25pm.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

J Kemp	J Loudoun	G Jung
V Ranger (Vice-Chair)	J Bailey	H Parr
M Armstrong	P Hayward	C Pepper
P Jarvis	S Hawkins	G Pook
S Chamberlain	A Moulding	G Pratt
P Arnott	D Key	M Rixson
F Caygill	C Gardner	E Rylance
A Colman	D Manley	B De Saram
P Millar	C Brown	P Skinner
R Lawrence	M Chapman	B Taylor
T Woodward	I Chubb	I Thomas (Chair)
N Hookway	A Dent	P Twiss
C Wright	D Barrow	E Wragg

O Davey
J Whibley
T McCollum
V Johns
D Ledger
J Rowland

P Faithfull
S Gazzard
I Hall
M Hartnell
M Howe
B Ingham

T Wright
S Hughes
A Bruce
J Bonetta

Officers in attendance:

Mark Williams, Chief Executive
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Hopkins, Communications Consultant

Councillor apologies:

S Jackson
K Blakey
K Bloxham
D Bickley
M Allen

Chair

Date: