

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 21 March 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.41 pm

39 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 January 2024 were signed as a true and accurate record.

40 Declarations of interest

Minute 44. Tree Strategy for East Devon District Council.
Councillor Vicky Johns, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Ottery Parish Council.

Minute 44. Tree Strategy for East Devon District Council.
Councillor Tim Dumper, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 44. Tree Strategy for East Devon District Council.
Councillor Dan Wilson, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 45. Public Health Strategy 2024-2027.
Councillor Vicky Johns, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Health Strategy Director of Ottery Larder.

Minute 46. East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031.
Councillor Jenny Brown, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Honiton Town Council.

Minute 46. East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031.
Councillor Brian Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 46. East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031.
Councillor Vicky Johns, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Ottery Parish Council.

Minute 46. East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031.
Councillor Tim Dumper, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 46. East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031.
Councillor Dan Wilson, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 46. East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031.

Councillor John Heath, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Beer Parish Council.

Minute 47. Coach Tourism in East Devon - Task and Finish Forum
Councillor Vicky Johns, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Ottery Parish Council.

Minute 47. Coach Tourism in East Devon - Task and Finish Forum
Councillor Jenny Brown, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Honiton Town Council.

41 **Public Speaking**

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

42 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

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

There were no confidential/exempt items.

44 **Tree Strategy for East Devon District Council**

The Chair introduced Rosie Walker, the Woodland Trust's Regional External Affairs Officer for the South West. Ms Walker delivered a presentation concerning the new Devon Tree Strategy and its relevance to East Devon, outlining the significance of trees, hedgerows and woodlands as an integral part of the environment and summarising some of the challenges involved in growing and protecting them.

The Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure thanked Ms Walker for the interesting and thought-provoking presentation. He went on to outline the issues specific to East Devon and the proposed creation of a Tree Strategy for EDDC which would help to frame the challenges around growing and protecting trees and woodlands in the district, to enable the Council to make informed decisions according to its resources.

It was noted that the Council agreed a budget to develop a Tree Strategy in 2022/23, but that work on this had been delayed to enable the strategy development work to align with the recently finalised Devon Tree Strategy.

The Overview Committee was asked to consider recommending to Cabinet the development of a Tree Strategy for EDDC and to procure an additional resource to draft the Strategy, as agreed previously with Council.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Members challenged whether it was appropriate to spend £50k on creation of a Tree Strategy for East Devon when there are strategies from outside of the organisation that are freely available, and officers within the Council with expert knowledge. In response,

the Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure stated that there is very limited resource in-house, with officers wholly focused on planning consultations and Tree Preservation Order (TPO) applications. The proposed Strategy is complex and wide-ranging in scope and it is necessary to bring in specialist advice and knowledge to develop it.

- Some members were disappointed that the Strategy had not been developed earlier. The Assistant Director – Countryside and Leisure explained that it had been appropriate to wait until the Devon Tree Strategy had been developed first in order to ensure alignment between authorities. Moreover, the timing has meant that the requirements placed on the Council through the new Environment Act can be embedded into the Strategy for East Devon.
- One member was concerned that the criteria for TPOs and the enforcement of them should be reviewed to ensure greater consistency, given that TPOs can be overruled by some external bodies and TPO applications have been turned down on occasion.
- The Strategy can be used to ensure that proper thinking goes into the planting of trees to avoid creating problems for the future.
- The Strategy will deal with protection of trees and hedgerows as well as planting.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

1. The development of a Tree Strategy for East Devon District Council
2. To procure an external resource to draft the Strategy as agreed previously by Council.

45 **Public Health Strategy 2024- 2027**

The Public Health Project Officer introduced this item and asked members to consider the Public Health Strategy 2024-2027 and make recommendations, and to recommend it to Council for approval.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- The Strategy recognises the importance of partnership working and supporting community groups, and the Council will shortly be recruiting to a Community Engagement Officer post.
- An effective sewerage system is fundamental to the long-term health of the population. South West Water are identified as a partner in the Strategy, and they have an obligation for the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve.
- Healthcare issues such as access to GPs and NHS dentists are outside of the scope of this Council, as are matters which contribute to rural isolation such as the closure of mobile libraries and banks. However, there are many aspects of our services' work that do contribute to the health and wellbeing of our residents. Networking is important. As an example, the Woodbury, Exmouth and Budleigh (WEB) Community Health and Wellbeing Board provides a mechanism for representatives from this Council to collaborate with representatives from within health and social care.
- Once adopted, the Strategy will be published and can be shared with town and parish councils.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

1. To adopt the Public Health Strategy 2023-2027

46 **East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031**

The Parking Services Manager introduced this item and asked members to review the guiding principles, objectives and supporting rationale of the draft East Devon Parking Strategy 2024-2031, to determine whether public consultation should be sought and to identify an appropriate decision-making format that could support delivery of key elements of the Strategy.

The Strategy had been produced through internal consultation as well as being the subject of an elected member workshop to which all members were invited.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Workshop-style sessions will take place with a number of towns where the winter offer of a £2.00 all-day charge for parking is causing problems, to consider how the offer can be refined so that it meets its purpose.
- Installation of low-energy light bulbs in car parks has begun and there has been no reduction in brightness.
- Future lining works to car parks will be carried out to a new standard specification, losing 1 in every 24 spaces to make spaces wider and more accessible.
- Work is ongoing to look at renewing car park signage on a town by town basis.
- Upgrade works to electric vehicle charging points have been put back to July and in the interim, the spaces will be opened up for pay and display parking.
- It would be appropriate to consider the installation of ANPR pay-on-exit systems for some of the district's car parks.
- One Member expressed that consideration should be given to parking for trucks and coaches.
- With a view to achieving Net-Zero by 2040, the Council will be open to exploring the value of utilising parking spaces for other uses such as for bike parking lockers or other types of development.
- There is a commitment to working closely with Devon County Council (DCC) to align their tariff policy with that of EDDC; it was noted that DCC intentionally set their tariffs higher than EDDC with a view to incentivising drivers to use EDDC car parks before using DCC on-street parking.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

1. To adopt the Car Parking Strategy 2024-2031, subject to appropriate amendments reflecting discussions;
2. That public consultation on the Strategy is not undertaken, subject to appropriate consultation on any decisions resulting from its adoption; and
3. That a small, politically-balanced Working Group or Portfolio Team be convened to deliver key elements of the Strategy, with relevant Ward Members and Portfolio Holders invited whenever appropriate.

47 **Coach Tourism in East Devon - Task and Finish Forum**

The Principal Solicitor introduced this item and asked members to consider the scoping document for a proposed Task and Finish Forum to consider the details of a Motion on Notice from Council on 6 December 2023 in respect of Coach Tourism in East Devon.

Cllr Haggerty summarised the benefits of coach tourism for the district, and Cllr Arnott thanked Cllr Haggerty for bringing the Motion to full Council.

RESOLVED

1. That the Overview Committee supports the setting up of a Coach Tourism in East Devon Task and Finish Forum to review the Motion on Notice;
2. That the following members will serve on the Task and Finish Forum: Cllr Vicky Johns, Cllr Jenny Brown, Cllr John Heath, Cllr Tim Dumper, Cllr Del Haggerty; and
3. That the Committee supports the scoping document set out in Appendix A to the report.

48 **Work Programme 2023-2024**

This item was for Members to consider additions to the Overview Committee's work programme.

Cllr Melanie Martin introduced a proposal which she had submitted regarding the banning of the use of snares and glue traps on council owned land and invited members to add this item to the Committee's work programme, for scoping work to be undertaken.

In discussion, members were broadly supportive of the proposal but were keen that any ban should cover traps used against mammals and reptiles but not those used against insects and moths, which can damage crops. A report should also consider how a ban can be enforced.

RESOLVED

To add Cllr Martin's proposal to the Overview Committee's work programme regarding the banning of the use of snares and glue traps on council owned land, for scoping.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Bailey
J Brown
T Dumper
P Fernley
A Hall (Chair)
J Heath
V Johns
M Martin
T Olive
D Wilson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
C Brown
R Collins
D Haggerty
G Jung
D Ledger
M Rixson
P Arnott
M Goodman
N Hookway

Officers in attendance:

Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Richard Easthope, Parking Services Manager
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Charles Plowden, Assistant Director Countryside and Leisure
Helen Wharam, Public Health Project Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Hopkins, Corporate Lead - Communications, Digital Services and Engagement

James Chubb, Countryside Team Manager
Will Dommett, District Ecologist
Chris Hariades, Landscape Architect, Development Management
Alistair Jeans, Arboricultural Officer

Councillor apologies:

Y Levine
C Nicholas
H Riddell

Chair:

Date: