

Report to: Overview Committee



Date of Meeting 30th May 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon

Report summary:

On the 10th October 2023, Cabinet considered the [Local Economic Review](#) developed by EDDC's Economic Development team.

In summary, it was resolved that: 1) the work be endorsed; 2) that the evidence it comprises be used to inform the development of the emerging Council Plan; and 3) that a new Economic Development Strategy for East Devon would be developed to directly engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review.

In response to this, the report introduces at **Appendix A** our draft Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) for Overview Committee for review.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Overview Committee;

- 1) review and endorse the draft Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) for East Devon; and
- 2) recommend it to Cabinet for publication.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Council's resources and those of our partners most effectively engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review whilst delivering on the [Council Plan](#) (2024-2028) priority for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy

- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Medium Impact

Our policy programme promotes activity in support of the broadest range of residents, organisations and employers. The Strategy aligns with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals which include a commitment to reduced inequality. The work has been developed on the basis of an inclusive consultation programme, ensuring the widest range of perspectives have been considered. In relation to protected characteristics, we are prioritising support across demographics, from younger working age adults to helping older residents who wish to remain economically active. The work includes commitments to coordinate employment support for economically inactive residents of all ages, including specialist support for those with disabilities. It aims to reduce the number of households facing poverty, including through the provision of retrofitting grants to reduce energy use and associated spend.

Climate change Medium Impact. ONS data shows East Devon's higher levels of out-commuting is a significant contributor to our high emissions. The Strategy responds to the need to prioritise decarbonisation and reduce travel to work times through strengthening local employment and associated land provision. This will improve our job density alongside supporting the wider transition to a low carbon economy

Risk: Low Risk; There are no significant risks associated with the report recommendations.

Links to background information 10th October 2023 Cabinet Report: East Devon – [Local Economic Review](#); 7th December 2023 Economy [Portfolio Holder Report](#) to Scrutiny Committee; District Wide [Consultation](#) on the Draft Economic Development Strategy; Growth, Development & Prosperity [Service Plan](#) 2024-25.

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Report in full

1. Background

- 1.1 On the 10th October 2023, EDDC's Economic Development team presented a report to Cabinet setting out the main findings of their Local Economic Review (LER). It highlighted the core issues and challenges facing our district economy as evidenced from the most up-to-date Census and ONS data.
- 1.2 Some of the core findings from the LER are as follows:
 - **Demographics:** East Devon has the third lowest proportion of working age residents and fourth highest proportion of retirees in the country. We've notable variance in the age profile of settlements, though only two of our 30 wards have a retiree population below the national average.

- **Employment:** East Devon has the lowest proportion of economically active residents and highest number of economically inactive residents compared to the other EHOD geographies, regional and national averages. Despite this low proportion of economically active residents, the district has one of the lowest rates of unemployment, with claimant count figures slightly above pre-pandemic levels.
- **Wages:** Despite the critical loss of Flybe in 2020 and around 1,000 of our most valuable highly skilled jobs, average wages in East Devon have increased to match the regional average, though remain below the national average.
- **Productivity:** Average productivity rates in East Devon are catching up with Exeter but remain consistently below the national average.
- **Workspace:** There is high demand from employers to provide local employment, though the available supply of employment land and premises is critically constrained. This means some local employers must relocate in order to grow, contributing to high levels of out commuting.
- **Wellbeing:** East Devon residents' sense of worthwhileness and life satisfaction was previously high but has decreased back down to the national and regional average since the pandemic. Reported anxiety has increased since 2018-19 to meet the regional average in 2021-22 with our happiness index score dropping below the regional and national average over the same period.
- **Carbon:** Our carbon emissions per capita has decreased, but remains higher than neighbouring authorities, national and regional averages with transport (including commuting) accounting for 31% of our overall emissions. The amount of carbon emitted in East Devon will need to rapidly decrease in order to reach net zero by 2040.

2. Context

- 2.1 Endorsement of the LER work was sought alongside approval for its use in informing both the emerging Council Plan and in the development of a new 5-year Economic Development Strategy for East Devon.
- 2.2 Members noted that the data presented had far reaching consequences that would help shape future decisions in the district. They saw the significance of this reliable and transparent evidence as providing an important baseline from which to develop a robust Economic Development Strategy. This, in turn, would inform an improved policy approach and direct actions in supporting delivery of our new Council Plan aims.
- 2.3 October Cabinet resolved:
 1. That the report and detailed Local Economic Review which underpins it, be endorsed.
 2. That the use of the Local Economic Review and up-to-date statistical evidence it comprises be used to inform the development of the emerging Council Plan.
 3. That a new Economic Development Strategy for East Devon would be developed that would directly engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review.

3. Strategy Development

- 3.1 Since this Cabinet resolution was agreed, the Economic Development team have employed a strong project management approach in developing the new Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) presented at **Appendix A**.

- 3.2 Just as with the Local Economic Review, the work has been produced in-house, employing existing Economic Development Officer expertise and support from wider corporate teams, without recourse to external commissioning. The work has benefited from strong levels of engagement across Council services, most notably from Comms and we are grateful for this collaboration.
- 3.3 The work began with the initial development of the detailed Project Brief outlining the purpose, timeframe and process for developing the Strategy. This included an ambitious approach to maximising engagement and feedback from 1) our business community, stakeholders, and organisations in order to develop first draft of the Strategy, and 2) a district-wide consultation seeking views on this initial draft to inform a final draft to be developed. The brief was reviewed and agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Economy in November 2023 and work got underway.
- 3.4 To provide some context to the approach taken by the team in developing this work, an overview of project milestones delivered is presented in **Appendix B**.
- 3.5 The result of this work is the 5-year Economic Development Strategy now presented to Overview for review at **Appendix A**.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Widely consulted on, we believe the Economic Development Strategy sets out a clear, shared vision for East Devon's economy from 2024 to 2029.
- 4.2 Aligned with the Council Plan, the work articulates a consistent message on our economic priorities. We feel it makes clear how we will direct resources in delivering an achievable set of outcomes, working with partners to strengthen future funding bids. We hope we have made clear the links to relevant strategies and plans already being delivered, as well as the objectives we share with our regional partners and local stakeholders.
- 4.3 The Strategy presents a clear policy programme. This will be effective in focusing the Council's resources and those of our partners in a) addressing our most pressing local economic challenges, and b) helping to both inform and deliver on our Council Plan priorities for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.
- 4.4 Should the work meet with members' approval, we invite Overview Committee to endorse our draft Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) and, in turn, to recommend it to Cabinet for publication. This will help ensure EDDC has in place a robust, transparent and effective Economic Development Strategy making clear our most pressing local priorities (issues and opportunities) for investment and intervention.

Financial implications:

At this stage no additional funding is being requested, it should be noted that certain actions do rely on devolved funding and some on possible Council investment which in these cases that will have to be considered by Cabinet and Council on case by case basis if outside existing budgets and approvals.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.

Economic Development Strategy 2024 – 2029

Foreword (*Economy PFH*)

It is with great pleasure that I am introducing East Devon's Economic Development Strategy 2024-2029.

This document has been developed to address East Devon's unique set of opportunities and challenges, offering a clear set of economic priorities for the rest of this decade. We know that times have been challenging for many local businesses in recent years. This is why we feel it's important to make clear where East Devon District Council can have the greatest impact in supporting the development of our economy with the influence and resources available to us.

Our five policies reflect the areas in which we can be most effective in focusing collective efforts. They are an example of how even the largest and most complex issues of our time, such as climate change, can be addressed through directing local action. Every project we embark upon, whether it's developing the Enterprise Zone or establishing food festivals like Gate to Plate, can be linked back to one of these five core policies.

We're hugely grateful for the valuable insights and feedback provided by our most significant local employers, representative organisations and stakeholders in helping to shape the overall strategic direction of this work. What was clear in working together to develop this Strategy was that this continued collaboration would be just as essential for delivering on the agreed strategic objectives.

Whether it's ensuring the construction of new infrastructure, promoting employment and skills or protecting our natural landscapes, it's essential that we continue to strengthen our engagement with our local, regional and national partners to deliver shared economic priorities in the way our residents and businesses expect of us.

In setting a strategic direction for our priorities and actions for the next five years, we can ensure we deliver impactful, effective projects which target our core needs, make the most of emerging opportunities, and celebrate the unique character of our district.

Introduction

The strength of East Devon's economy lies in its strategic connectivity and diversity. Whether it is cutting-edge research and development at Exeter Science Park, nationally renowned restaurants on our coastline, or small enterprises tucked away in our rural hamlets, East Devon has a broad economic base, home to businesses of all sectors and sizes.

This diversity creates resilience, cushioning our economy from the worst impacts of the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. A robust economy, well-positioned in terms of our beautiful coast and countryside, proximity to Exeter and major transport routes, helps to make East Devon an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit.

East Devon's economy has its challenges. Most of these are driven by historic local trends such as lower wages, limited workspace provision in rural areas and higher house prices compared to national averages. The quality of our natural environment is a key economic driver, but rural employment development to improve the sustainability of our communities, can be challenging to deliver. By striking the right balance, we can reduce out-commuting and emissions whilst making the district more attractive for working age residents.

East Devon is already feeling the effects of wider social and global environmental challenges, such as our ageing, less economically active population, climate change and a biodiversity crisis, all of which require urgent attention.

With an informed Economic Development Strategy and a clear set of actions, we can more effectively tackle these challenges, further strengthening the diversity and resilience of our district economy. This is particularly important in responding to our most pressing global challenge of transitioning to a Net Zero economy, in our case, by acting decisively on some of the greatest opportunities for positive change in the district.

To make this Strategy as accessible as possible, we have included a glossary of key terms which can be found at the end of the document.

What is Economic Development?

Economics is the study of scarcity, whether it is the scarcity of physical things like natural resources and products, or of intangible things like ideas or time. 'Economic development' prioritises these scarcities in a way to improve the wellbeing of citizens, providing them with a good quality of life.

Previously, this meant chasing growth at any cost, focusing on conventional economic outputs with the social and ecological consequences viewed as secondary, or even irrelevant. This outdated approach is neither desirable nor sustainable.

Our approach to economic development is different. We view our economy as being embedded within a unique and sensitive environmental and social system. Economic growth should only happen where there is a proven link to the improved and equitable economic wellbeing and prosperity of our residents. In addition, economic growth needs to be bound together with both ecological regrowth and greater social pride and cohesion.

Why do we need a Strategy?

East Devon members committed the Council to develop an Economic Development Strategy in the [Council Plan \(2024-28\)](#). Our decision to prioritise this work was shaped by our Economic Development team having both the required resource, and the ambition to inform our evolving strategic landscape at a critical time.

The national and global economic turmoil witnessed over recent years has prevented us from being able to reliably baseline the performance of our economy. This situation has stabilised to some degree and the results of the 2021 Census now provide a groundswell of evidence, enabling us to better identify and understand the district's various economic and demographic strengths and weaknesses.

We have witnessed an ongoing transfer of powers and funds to local authorities to aid economic development at a more localised level. Although these resources have been limited to date, they have nonetheless provided an

effective tool for local authorities to set local priorities based on local need. This has helped us to act upon East Devon’s core economic challenges and opportunities.

Having a clear and concise Economic Development Strategy for the district with a clear pipeline of projects will strengthen our hand for future funding bids and opportunities arising from further devolution. The Strategy is distinct from the Council Plan and emerging Local Plan but will help to outline in more detail the economic priorities set out in these documents.

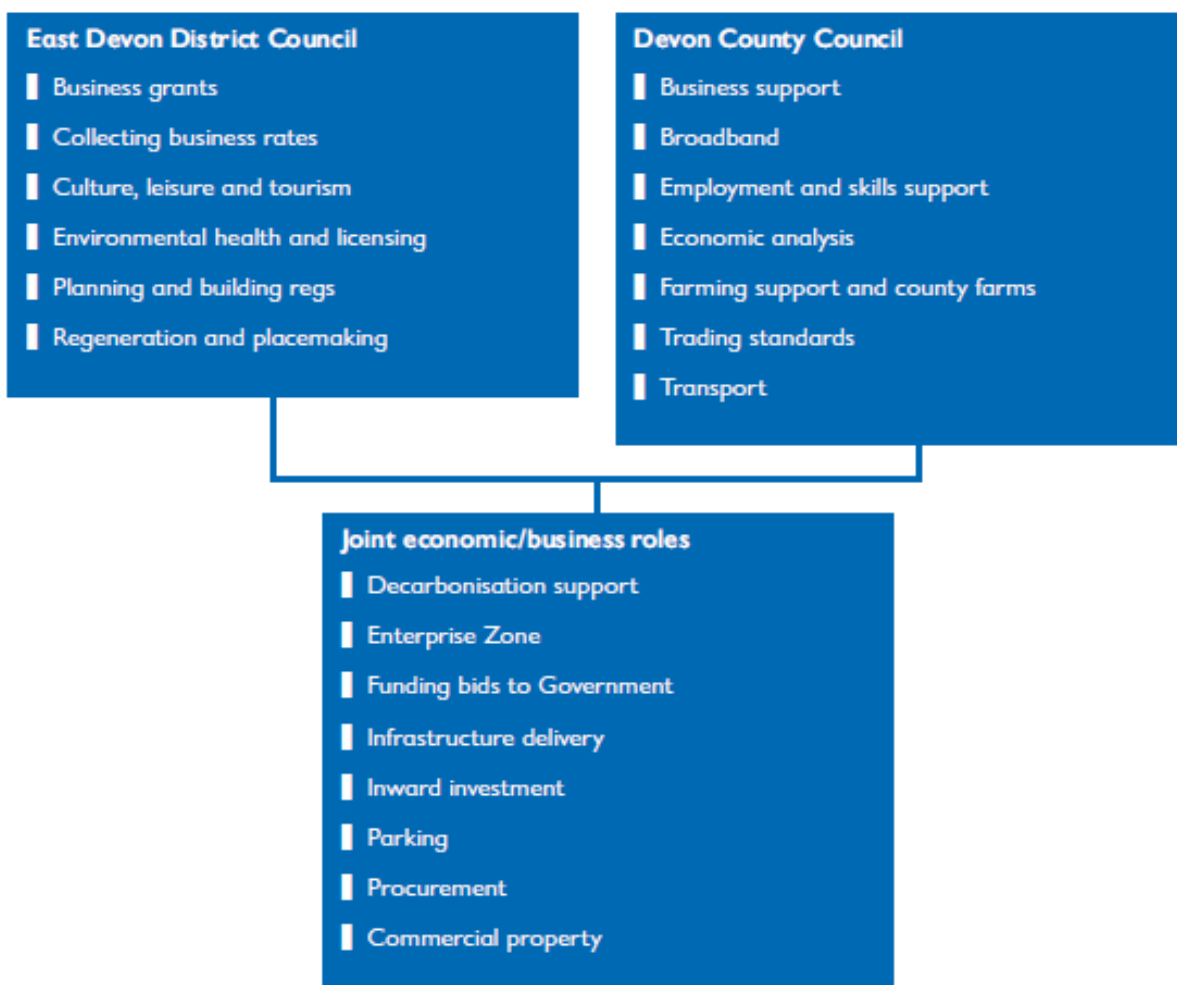
Our aim is for the Strategy to provide the clarity and confidence needed for residents, strategic partners and inward investors.

Roles

This Strategy acknowledges the various roles played by local, regional, and national partners in supporting the economic development of East Devon. The Council’s role is to provide additionality to what is already being delivered, avoid duplicating what our partners are doing and play to our strengths and specialisms as a district council.

The diagram below shows which economic activities and business services have traditionally been delivered by East Devon District Council and Devon County Council.

Economic/business roles



In addition to these responsibilities, one of the most important roles of a local authority is to be an enabler. By collaborating with local partners, we can help to facilitate those shared aspirations, as we can achieve more when we work together than we can apart.

Shared Goals

Our Economic Development Strategy needs to align with wider strategic objectives at a regional, national, and global level. Where new strategies are developed at a regional level resulting from devolution for example, we will ensure that shared objectives are identified and can be acted upon at a local level.

To ensure there is alignment with longer term global priorities, each action presented within this Economic Development Strategy will be linked to one or more of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We have taken this approach to demonstrate to our residents how action at a local level can feed into critical global priorities.



Evidence

This Economic Development Strategy for East Devon has been developed using a wide evidence base. This includes data from the 2021 Census and other Office for National Statistics (ONS) datasets. Evidence commissioned by the Council has also been used, including the Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) produced to help inform the emerging Local Plan. This data was brought together to form a [Local Economic Review](#) endorsed by EDDC Cabinet and published in October 2023.

Ranked 4th

in proportion of retirees out of England's 332 local authority areas

By 2040

Our net zero goal, carbon emissions are not falling fast enough

58,000+

Economically inactive residents, 46% of East Devon District Council residents

+14%

increase in population from 2011 and 2021

Average wage

£29k < **£31k**

East Devon and the South West

UK average

Jobs in East Devon for every working age resident

0.74 jobs

Average productivity of the national average

£35 per hour

of value added since 2011

Average wage

has outpaced inflation since 2011

6,730 businesses

registered in East Devon

30% of residents mainly work from home

3% Exmouth Town Ward unemployment rate

508,000sqm

Demand for industrial and logistics workspace significantly which outstrips supply 17,000sqm

1.7% unemployment rate

South West 2.1%
England's average 2.9%

To sense-check this data and fill in the gaps, a series of in-person and online consultation exercises were organised with local businesses and stakeholders. The graphic below illustrates some of the main points of feedback.

“The low carbon sector is a huge opportunity

to attract talent and create high value jobs.”

“Housing is a key constraint.

Can we ringfence homes for young people?”

“Green jobs present our biggest high-skilled employment opportunities.”

“We need to focus on creating careers rather than jobs;

people need to see that staying here will provide them opportunities to move up.”

“Shift in what young people value creates a great opportunity for East Devon to market itself on a lifestyle basis and attract young people.”

“The real struggle is the lack of small commercial units.”

“We’re so busy trying to find workspace for our growing business, it is hard to focus on other business needs”

“There is no space available and businesses will just leave rather than wait for workspace to come forward”

Vision

A strategic vision gives purpose to the actions we take. The vision of this Strategy is linked to our definition of ‘economic development’, the evidence and our role. It aligns with other relevant visions and strategies, primarily the [Council Plan](#) and Local Plan.

Our vision is for East Devon to have a **sustainable and equitable economy** geared towards the improved **wellbeing of our residents, prosperity of our businesses and protection of our natural landscapes**. This vision is based on five key aspirations:

- A just transition to a Net Zero economy, displaying tangible progress towards decarbonisation and nature recovery.
- Our aspirational and traditional sectors to have the workspace and investment they need to thrive.
- Well-paid and productive careers that residents of all ages can be proud of.
- A more attractive offer for young adults to want to live and work in the district.
- To provide agile, responsive and quality public services that local businesses can rely on.

Policy Programme

To fulfil our vision, we have developed five policies to focus our actions within five years. These policies have been developed to address core challenges from our [Local Economic Review](#) and stakeholder evidence base whilst also acknowledging the service specialisms and resources of East Devon District Council.

Industrial Policy

Our Industrial Policy will target public resources towards specific sectors and industries to provide the support they need to grow and prosper. A focused industrial strategy can promote 'clustering' where businesses within a specific sector establish a local ecosystem of competition, collaboration, and innovation.

The Council can action its Industrial Policy using grant funding programmes provided by Government and regional bodies. Our aim is to directly stimulate growth in both aspirational sectors with a high growth potential and businesses in traditional sectors seeking to modernise. In turn, this financial investment will unlock high-value job creation, higher productivity and new innovative products and services coming to market.

East Devon provides a unique economic offer with Devon's only international airport and hosting a thriving Science Park. These advantages have shaped this Industrial Policy and the sectors we want to promote. To align with the wider Strategy, our Industrial Policy will promote clean growth and outcomes such as tackling climate change and minimising waste.

Policy outcomes should also be inclusive and aspirational by helping to create jobs which foster occupational pride and financial stability and prioritising areas of higher rural deprivation. This also means identifying opportunities to distribute the learning and benefits of high growth initiatives such as the Science Park across the wider district wherever possible.

An industrial policy can also be used as a strategic signal to central government and other sources of funding to unlock larger streams of investment for our target sectors. This will help to catalyse confidence in the private sector to invest in East Devon, demonstrating how the Council and business can work effectively in partnership.

Industrial Policy Priorities

This policy outlines how we will support our aspirational and traditional sectors, including through future grant funding schemes and other mechanisms of support. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase the number of well-paid and secure jobs.
- To increase the number of businesses experiencing productivity gains.
- To increase the development of new clean technologies, services, and production processes.

The Policy will align with existing sectoral strategies, such as the [Tourism Strategy](#) and the [West End Clean Growth Vision](#).

Industrial Policy Priority	Funding/Resource	Links to UN Sustainable Development Goal
Invest and support projects linked to 'clean growth' including clean energy, green finance, sustainable transport and innovations in the circular economy.	Devolved funding, Enterprise Zone investment	9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure 12. Responsible Consumption and Production

Invest and support projects linked to new digital and data innovations, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and drone technology.	Devolved funding	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Support the development of the Future Flight Innovation Zone centred on Exeter Airport.	Officer time Devolved funding	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Invest and support projects to promote East Devon's renowned food and drink sector, including events and exploring specialist workplace provision.	Officer time, Devolved funding	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Invest and support projects linked to East Devon's Tourism Strategy to promote improved quality, collaboration, sustainability and accessibility across the sector.	Officer time, Devolved funding	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Invest and support projects linked to our most rural businesses, including farm businesses seeking to diversify.	Devolved funding	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Workspace Policy

There is clear market failure in the delivery of employment land in East Devon which will steadily degrade our economic wellbeing unless intervention is taken to address this. Including a Workspace Policy in this Strategy is a direct response to the challenge of insufficient employment land. The Council can action this policy by pooling resources including planning expertise, council-owned assets and engagement with landowners.

Additional employment land needs to reflect current and future need both across and within settlements. A number of East Devon's existing employment allocations have viability constraints which are holding back delivery. This creates a risk that more of these sites intended to provide higher value employment could be lost to housing or to employment uses which only create a small number of lower skilled jobs. Supporting the development of these sites for high value commercial uses can help to strengthen pride in place and improve the economic resilience of our communities.

Any development must also be coupled with the right level of infrastructure, which requires effective coordination between different public sector bodies and essential utility providers. Prioritising the delivery of much needed employment land and premises will promote settlement self-containment and reduce the need for car-based commuting. We will encourage the redevelopment and intensification of existing low-performing commercial sites to minimise the need to develop new sites in environmentally sensitive areas. We will also support the development of non-allocated employment land where proposals comply with the Local Plan.

To align with the wider Strategy, we need to ensure that new workspace can accommodate aspirational careers which are well paid and secure. Our aim is to support the delivery of key allocations, including council-owned assets, by seeking funding from Government and investing our own funds where this can generate a reasonable return.

Workspace Policy Priorities

This policy outlines how the Council will try to increase the supply of employment land and commercial premises in East Devon. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To sustainably increase the net supply of employment land and commercial premises across the district.
- To reduce the number of car journeys and overall distance required for commuting.
- To protect and enhance our existing employment generating land and premises.

This Policy will align itself with the relevant strategies and policies of the emerging Local Plan, any updated iterations of the National Planning Policy Framework and the findings of any viability assessments.

Workspace Policy Priority	Funding/Resource	Links to UN Sustainable Development Goal
Lead the delivery of the Enterprise Zone programme by investing in the delivery and effective marketing of new commercial space.	Officer time, Enterprise Zone budget	9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
Explore the viability of developing small start-up units on vacant Council-owned land.	Officer time, EDDC Investment	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Support the viability of employment allocations by exploring the use of Local Development Orders and working with partners to ensure their development.	Officer time	9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
Ensure employment and skills plans are produced for larger residential and commercial developments.	Officer time	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Maintain an online platform to help inform growing businesses about available workspace and link with relevant commercial agents.	Officer time	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth

Environmental Policy

Climate change represents the largest market failure in our history. With EDDC declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019 and setting a target to reach Net Zero by 2040, we need to take clear and decisive action across all services to support a just transition.

There is a clear gap in provision when it comes to supporting residents and businesses to reach net zero by 2040. Filling this gap requires attitudinal and behavioural change, enabled through accessible support and guidance. The Council will also seek to utilise a limited amount of grant funding to help those local organisations who lack the funds to deliver decarbonisation projects.

There is a significant cost associated with reliance on fossil fuels, including higher energy bills and penalties for companies violating environmental regulations. If we fail to align our actions with the global economic shift to clean energy, we risk being left behind, with the impacts felt most strongly by our poorest and most isolated residents.

Decarbonisation relies not just on equipment, but also on the skills required to retrofit buildings and deliver infrastructure. Infrastructure delivery will also need to be linked to environmental goals. For example, the delivery of

active travel options, like new cycle paths and footpaths, can help to reduce the need for car-based commuting. This can lead to health and wellbeing benefits and lower transport costs.

There is a real opportunity to link local environmental action to East Devon’s brand as a sustainable tourism destination. This includes preventative measures, such as our opposition to sewage discharging on East Devon’s nationally renowned beaches. Local arts and culture projects focused on environmental issues can also help to strengthen a sense of local pride and solidarity, increasing the district’s appeal to younger professionals drawn to our natural capital and a better work-life balance.

Our Environmental Policy will embrace opportunities develop a circular economy, lower waste and inefficient spend on energy, and promote skills development in green sectors which are key to meeting carbon and biodiversity goals. Our actions will show that economic growth and ecological regrowth can work hand in hand.

Environmental Policy Priorities

This policy will outline how we will support the decarbonisation of our economy and promote biodiversity net gain. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase the number of businesses reaching net zero by 2040.
- To increase the take-up of clean energy equipment to lower bills and tackle poverty.
- To increase the number of residents upskilling into green jobs.
- To increase the quantity and quality of sustainable travel options.

The Policy will align with the Council’s [Climate Change Strategy](#) and [Nature Recovery Declaration](#).

Environmental Policy Priority	Funding/Resource	Links to UN Sustainable Development Goal
Provide training and specialist one-to-one support for organisations seeking to decarbonise, reduce waste and become more resource efficient.	EDDC business support budget	12. Responsible Consumption and Production 13. Climate Action
Provide decarbonisation grant funding to those organisations in most need.	Devolved funding	7. Affordable and Clean Energy 13. Climate Action
Support the reskilling and upskilling of residents into retrofitting and other careers linked to clean growth.	Devolved funding	4. Quality Education 13. Climate Action
Ensure that large scale employment development is coupled with sustainable travel options.	Officer time, Enterprise Zone funding	11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
Provide retrofitting grants to households in poverty who cannot access support from other schemes.	Devolved funding	1. No Poverty 7. Affordable and Clean Energy
Support projects which seek to directly link climate action and nature recovery with our local culture and tourism offer.	Officer time, Devolved funding	11. Sustainable Cities and Communities 13. Climate Action

Social Policy

Our Social Policy will ensure that specific actions are taken to ensure that economic development is inclusive, equitable, and strengthens residents' pride in place. East Devon faces particularly unique demographic challenges, with one of the highest proportions of retirees in the country. Whilst residents living longer and healthier lives is a key measure of success, the attractiveness of East Devon as a retirement location could lead to further migration of retirees into the district.

This demographic shift has created a severe imbalance in age groups within the district and across separate communities, comparing Sidmouth and Cranbrook, for example. This can lead to negative social outcomes, such as a reduced sense of belonging for those in under-represented age groups. Ageing populations have also been linked to lower productivity, higher demands on public services, a growing reliance on low-value jobs and reduced housing availability for those of working age. This in turn creates a feedback loop, where more younger residents feel compelled to leave the district to find a quality career, affordable housing, and a better lifestyle.

An effective social policy can help to reshape this dynamic. The Council will explore ways for those at or near retirement to continue to play an active role in boosting the economy, be it through mentoring younger entrepreneurs or promoting community cohesion in a voluntary capacity. The Council will also seek to bring forward a suite of innovative and pioneering projects to increase the attractiveness of East Devon as somewhere for younger people to live and work, utilising drivers such as an improved culture and leisure offer alongside town centre regeneration.

Rebalancing these long-term imbalances in our demographic profile will take a long time, but with the right actions in place, we can begin to mitigate these challenges and promote social and economic opportunities.

Social Policy Priorities

This policy will outline how we will help to improve pride in place and the social fabric of the district. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase the number of residents with an improved sense of pride in their community.
- To reduce the number of households facing poverty.
- To increase the number of younger working age adults (18-30 year olds) living and working in the district.
- To increase the number of residents who are economically and socially active.

The Policy will align with the Council's [Cultural Strategy](#) and [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#).

Social Policy Priority	Funding/Resource	Links to UN Sustainable Development Goal
Develop bids to support high streets and regenerate town centres, focusing on sustainable retail and an attractive social offer.	EDDC Investment, Devolved funding	11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
Lead on the delivery of town centres for our new communities to improve pride in place.	EDDC Investment	11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
Fund cultural and leisure projects targeted to improve the lifestyle offer for young adults and promote the existing offer more widely.	Officer time Devolved funding	3. Good health and Wellbeing 10. Reduced Inequalities
Explore the viability of innovative projects to provide housing for young professionals in our coastal and market towns.	Officer time	10. Reduced Inequalities 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities

Help coordinate employment support for economically inactive residents of all ages, including specialist support for those with disabilities.	Devolved funding	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 10. Reduced Inequalities
Facilitate and promote voluntary and mentoring opportunities for those at or near retirement age.	Officer time	10. Reduced Inequalities

Resource Policy

All strategic documents must acknowledge the scarcity of time, money and staff resource available to deliver key objectives. Our resource policy will outline our approach to 'business as usual' and statutory duties, but also reiterate the need to be agile and adaptive to major disruptions. The most recent disruption was the COVID-19 pandemic, where the Council had to radically alter the services it provides.

Our Resource Policy sets out our priorities on how to manage these competing demands. This means being prepared for future challenges and opportunities whilst maintaining the same quality services our residents and businesses expect. We also need to prepare a pipeline of 'shovel-ready' projects relevant to all policies and priorities included in this Strategy. This will enable us to submit high-quality funding bids at short notice to future Government and regional funding opportunities.

Where a major disruption or opportunity relevant to this Strategy presents itself, we may need to prioritise this over other actions resulting from this work. These decisions will be based on which actions will have the most positive impact, offer the best value for money and have the clearest alignment with both the Strategy and our Council Plan.

The Strategy itself also needs to be adaptable, acknowledging that the economic and governance landscape can change very quickly, even within a five-year period. The Strategy may need to change to match these new realities, requiring a pragmatic, entrepreneurial and solutions-first mindset. Where this is the case, the core principles underlying this Strategy will remain constant, even if our priorities need to change.

Resource Policy Priorities

This policy will outline how we will conduct business as usual, whilst dealing with short-term and immediate economic opportunities and challenges. The core outcomes of the policy are:

- To increase and maintain the quality of statutory services provided to businesses.
- To successfully act upon new inward investment and funding opportunities.
- To be flexible and adaptive in our response to immediate challenges and risks which threaten the stability of our local economy.

The policy will build on the lessons learnt from our COVID-19 experience, major redundancy responses, recent funding bid submissions and the importance of funding being devolved to the right level of local government.

Resource Policy Priority	Funding/Resource	Links to UN Sustainable Development Goal
Produce a Business Charter committing the Council to providing quality public services to local businesses which offer value for money.	Officer time	16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

To ensure a responsive and efficient planning service for businesses and commercial developers.	Officer time	9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
Continue to provide an agile and approachable inward investment service to land high-value, aspirational employers.	Officer time	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Create a networking group of local businesses to share best practice, connect and collaborate.	Officer time	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 17. Partnerships for the Goals.
Ensure that East Devon businesses and start-ups can access free and professional business support services.	Officer time	8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
Work constructively with local authorities, businesses and other partners to maximise the benefits of devolution.	Officer time	17. Partnerships for the Goals.

Next Steps

How will we measure success?

An annual report will be published providing a RAG (red, amber or green) rating for each policy priority along with a brief update on how each priority is being actioned. Success will be measured against the delivery of the priorities outlined in this Strategy whilst allowing for the flexibility provided in our Resource Policy.

The policy priorities listed within this Strategy will be used to set out a list of annual actions. These actions will be assigned to a particular department within the Council and then to a particular officer or group of officers. The chart below shows this 'golden thread' of how organisational objectives feed down to individual objectives.



Each action will be measured against a target number of outputs and outcomes. All actions need to:

1. Provide additionality and avoid duplication.
2. Offer good value for money.
3. Demonstrate impact through outputs and outcomes achieved/achievement of targets.
4. Align with the Vision and Policies within this Strategy.

Where a particular priority or action cannot meet these criteria, it will be amended, removed or replaced with an alternative option where the criteria can be met. This will prevent the Strategy from becoming outdated.

We will continue to monitor the longer term economic, social, and environmental trends of East Devon, both through future datasets and the feedback we receive from businesses, partners, and stakeholders.

Our local actions alone cannot turn the tide of national and global pressures. However, by aligning our actions to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, we will work to maximise the positive impact of our actions and ‘play our part’ to address the global challenges impacting local residents.

A final monitoring report will be published in 2030 providing a detailed analysis of the Strategy, its actions, outputs and overall impact. This work will help to inform future strategies and actions aimed towards the economic development of East Devon.

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Aspirational sector	An industry with the potential to grow, innovate and create well-paying and high-skilled jobs, such as clean energy and robotics.
CCA	Refers to the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.
Clean Growth	Growing the size of the economy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants.
Council Plan	A document produced by the Council which sets out the main priorities and actions the Council wants to take.
Devolution	The transfer of power and/or funding from central government to local government.
Economically inactive	Someone who is neither in work nor actively seeking employment. In contrast to ‘unemployed people’ who are not in work but are actively seeking employment.
Employment allocation	A piece of land allocated by the Council (in the Local Plan) for commercial uses which will host jobs (industrial, retail, etc).
Employment and skills plans	A document produced by a planning applicant which details how their proposal will achieve positive education and employment outcomes for local people.
Employment land	Land on which commercial premises have been built and where jobs are hosted.
Enterprise Zone	A defined area where businesses can receive incentives to set up and expand, including lower taxes or fewer regulations.
High-value job	A well-paying and high-skilled job.
Inward investment	Investment in the local area from businesses based outside the local area.
Local Development Order	The granting of planning permission for specific types of development at a defined location, subject to certain criteria and conditions.
Local Plan	A document produced by the Council which sets out planning policies and proposals for new development.
Market failure	When businesses do not act in the most efficient or rational way, leading to harm to those businesses and/or the wider public.

National Planning Policy Framework	A document produced by Government which sets out national planning policies and details how Local Plans should be developed.
Pride in place	Local people's satisfaction with where they live, local services and engagement in local culture and community.
Retrofitting	Fitting new systems or equipment to buildings previously built without them, typically to increase energy efficiency and/or lower energy consumption.
Service Plan	A document produced by each department of the Council which sets out the main priorities and actions (from the Council Plan) which that department will take.
Settlement self-containment	A settlement (village, town or city) where residents can access all their essential services and employment opportunities within that settlement.
Statutory services	Services the Council is required to provide by law.
Sustainable retail	Retail businesses and products which seek to minimise environmental and social harm.
Traditional sector	An industry which has been historically predominant in the locality, such as agriculture and tourism.

Appendix B: Strategy Development Milestones

TASK	PROGRESS	START	END	WORK DAYS
Stage 1: Project Brief				
Develop Project Brief	100%	1/10/23	16/10/23	11
Seek endorsement from PH	100%	16/10/23	20/10/23	5
Establish officer group to assign roles	100%	25/10/23	25/10/23	1
Stage 2: First Consultation and Strategy Drafting				
Prepare consultation	100%	30/10/23	10/11/23	10
Consultation period	100%	13/11/23	15/12/23	25
Review responses	100%	11/12/23	22/12/23	10
Draft consultation version of EDS	100%	1/1/24	19/1/24	15
Service & ADs review, PH update	100%	22/1/24	2/2/24	10
Stage 3: Second Consultation and Strategy Finalisation				
Prepare consultation	100%	5/2/24	16/2/24	10
Consultation period	100%	19/2/24	8/3/24	15
Review responses	100%	11/3/24	22/3/24	10
Draft post-consultation version of EDS	100%	25/3/24	5/4/24	10
Team review	100%	8/4/24	12/4/24	5
Final draft development	100%	15/4/24	26/4/24	10
Stage 4: Engagement and Endorsement				
GDP service review	100%	18/4/24	26/4/24	7
ADs review	100%	30/4/24	2/5/24	3
ELT consideration	0%	3/5/24	7/5/24	3
Overview meeting	0%	30/5/24	30/5/24	1
Cabinet meeting	0%	10/7/24	10/7/24	1
(Days remaining)	100%	3/5/24	10/7/24	49