

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 5 February 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.02 pm and ended at 8.23 pm

129 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet held on 8 January 2025 were agreed.

130 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations given.

131 Public speaking

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

132 Matters of urgency

There were two late items that officers agree should be dealt with in this way recorded at Minutes 145 and 147.

133 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one item that officers recommended should be dealt with in this way recorded at Minute 147.

134 Minutes of Poverty Working Panel held on 18 November 2024

Members noted the Minutes of the Poverty Working Panel held on 18 November 2024.

135 Minutes of the joint budget meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee held on 15 January 2025

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of the joint budget meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and Overview Committee held on 15 January 2025.

The Chair thanked officers and Members of both committees for their contribution to the meeting.

Minute 44 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26

That the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2025 / 2026 including the associated fees and charges schedule be approved.

136 Minutes of Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum held on 14 January 2025

Members noted the Minutes of the Leisure Strategy Delivery Forum held on 14 January 2025.

137 **Play park renewal contract 2025**

The report sought delegated authority to award a play park renewal contract.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Grant delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Streetscene in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment to award the play park contract to the preferred supplier.

REASON:

To enable the Assistant Director to award the contract to the preferred supplier following completion of the tender exercise.

138 **Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26**

The Director of Finance updated Members that Cabinet adopted the draft Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2025/26 on 8th January 2025. A joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees reviewed those budgets on 15th January and the Housing Review Board considered the Housing Revenue Account budget on 30th January.

The Overview and Scrutiny committees and the Housing Review Board proposed no amendment to the draft budget. The Local Government Finance Settlement was published on the 3rd February, the only change to affect the council compared with the provisional settlement published just before Christmas was knowing the National Insurance grant/reimbursement sum for 2025/26. This did not meet the full cost estimated for increased national insurance contributions next year, with a shortfall in the General Fund of £324k required to be met from the General Balance and a £54k shortfall in the Housing Revenue Account which would reduce the contribution to be made to the HRA Balance to £0.196m (draft budget sum was £0.250m).

As part of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities the council was required to set prudential indicators as part of its budget setting process, these indicators were detailed in the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 – Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, included the Capital Strategy to be recommended for adoption by Council.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

1. To propose the Net Expenditure Revenue General Fund Budget for 2025/26 of £25.392m, requiring £0.394m to be met from the General Fund Balance.
2. A Council Tax increase is approved of £5 a year giving a Band D council tax of £171.78 a year for 2025/26.
3. That the Housing Revenue Account Estimates with a net budget of nil (total expenditure met by income) is approved with a 2.7% increase on Council dwellings rents.
4. That the Net Capital Budget totalling £31.223m for 2025/26 is approved

REASON:

There was a requirement for the council to set a balanced budget for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and to set a Council Tax for 2025/26.

139 **Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 and Capital Strategy 2025/26**

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) produced a Code of Practice for treasury management for Public Services. One of the main recommendations of the code was the requirement for an annual Treasury Management Strategy to be adopted formally by the council. There was also a requirement to set prudential indicators relating to all treasury activities that the authority would undertake in the forthcoming financial year.

The presented draft Capital Strategy formed part of the annual budget setting approval process. This draws together various adopted strategies and agreed process of the council that govern how it managed capital expenditure and investment decisions. The Capital Strategy brought these areas together in one overarching document.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code required local authorities to produce a capital strategy to demonstrate that capital expenditure and investment decisions were taken in line with desired outcomes and to take account of stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

RECOMMENDED to Council to:

- 1a. Adopt this Treasury Management Strategy including the Prudential Indicators for 2025/26.
- 1b. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.
- 1c. Approve the Annual Investment Strategy, creditworthiness criteria and updated list of counterparties.
2. Adopt the Capital Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29.

REASON:

The Council was required to adopt formally a Treasury Management Strategy and set prudential indicators before the beginning of the new financial year. To comply with good practice there was a requirement for the Council to have in place an adopted Capital Strategy.

140 **Financial Monitoring Report 2024/25 - Month 9 December**

The report gave a summary of the Council's overall financial position for 2024/25 at the end of month nine (31 December 2024). Current monitoring indicated that:

- The General Fund Balance was currently projected to be above the adopted level, no action was recommended for members consideration at this stage. Forecasts indicated a favourable position of £662k was predicted. The council continued to see a significant favourable position in treasury management interest.
- The Revised Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget approved by Council (July 2024) agreed the use of the HRA Balance up to £1.750m in year, with the acceptance this would take the HRA Balance below its minimum adopted level of £2.1m to £1.350m, to be replenished in future years. Expenditure was being maintained within this parameter with ongoing analysis on future spending plans and projections to gain assurance on this position to financial year end.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Acknowledge the variances identified as part of the Revenue and Capital Monitoring process up to Month 9.

REASON:

The report updated Members on the overall financial position of the Authority at set periods and included recommendations where corrective action was required for the remainder of the financial year.

141 **Councillor DBS checks and Safeguarding Protocol**

Members were updated on the progress in relation to the introduction of Councillor basic Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks, since the Council adopted a Protocol introducing DBS checks for Members on 17 April 2024 .

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Note the update to the DBS checks and Safeguarding Protocol.

REASON:

The Council had decided as part of its Safeguarding Policy to undertake DBS checks for members. The report ensured that Cabinet were up-to-date in relation to the progress made in implementing the Protocol

142 **Community Grants**

The report provided an update on the current community grants issues and the initial proposal on how this would be moved forward.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Agrees to the re-setting of the Community Grants Schemes from 2025/26.
2. Agrees the combining of the Community Buildings Grant, Small Community Grants and the Action on Poverty Grants funds into one grant scheme across the following two years (25/26 & 26/27).
3. Request the Community Grants Panel to recommend the final co-designed scheme to Cabinet for approval, ensuring it reflects the Council plan priorities and takes account of need.
4. Agrees to the change in the Community Grant Panel Terms of Reference to remove the reference to the Lead officer being the Community Engagement and Funding Officer and replace this with the Benefits and Financial Resilience Manager which sits under the Finance Directorate.

REASON:

To ensure the council supported the VCSE sector with a new and updated grant scheme for 2025/26.

143 **Forward Plan quarterly review**

Members agreed the contents of the forward plan for key decisions for the period 1 March 2025 to 30 June 2025.

144 **Calendar of meetings 2025/2026**

To consider the calendar of meetings for the Council's 2025/2026 civic year.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

that the calendar of meetings timetable for 2025/2026 civic year be referred for approval to the annual meeting of the Council, subject to discussions with the Chairs of the meetings listed.

RESOLVED:

that the 2025 Annual Council meeting be held on Wednesday 14 May.

REASON:

Adopting an annual calendar of meetings was to meet the legal requirement to hold an Annual Meeting, and such other meetings as were necessary for the conduct of the Council's business in accordance with its Constitution.

145 **Devolution update**

The Director of Place provided an update on proposals relating to devolution and local government reorganisation. This follows the publication of the English Devolution White Paper on the 16 December 2024. This was the subject of a report considered by Cabinet on the 8 January and then full Council on the 9 January. The report set out the key options in relation to the potential configuration of both strategic and principal authorities. It also highlighted that further clarification, in terms of the process for submitting proposals for unitary authorities and whether the planned County Council elections scheduled for May would be postponed, was still awaited from national government.

Following a Secretary of State announcement on 5 February it was confirmed that the Devon County Council elections would take place in May 2025 which meant that the Local Government Reorganisation proposals would likely be implemented in April 2028 as opposed to April 2027. A further Ministerial letter had also been received that day setting out further details of the process for submitting proposals for the establishment of unitary councils.

The Chair expressed his concern in relation to the short response timeline the Government had set for submission of initial proposals for 21 March 2025 and for final proposals for 28 November 2025. He paid tribute to EDDC officers and wished to reassure them they had his complete support and that their welfare was paramount.

Discussions included the following:

- The need to keep residents updated.
- The possibility to a cross party working group to assist the council in the process.
- The need to be realistic and focus on priorities.
- The need to have trust and confidence in officers and leadership to take this through the initial process.
- Acknowledgement that this was unsettling for all involved hence the importance for interim arrangements.
- This was the worst time financially for councils to be going through this.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Note the contents of the report and receives additional reports as further clarification was received and the proposals developed.

REASON:

To ensure Cabinet was fully engaged in the devolution and local government reorganisation proposals.

146 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out on the agenda, is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B).

147 **Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) - Project progress update - Part 2**

RESOLVED:

The recommendations as set out in the report were agreed.

Attendance List

Present:

Portfolio Holders

M Rixson	Portfolio Holder Climate Action & Emergency Response
G Jung	Portfolio Holder Coast, Country and Environment
D Ledger	Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes & Communities
S Jackson	Portfolio Holder Communications and Democracy
J Loudoun	Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination
N Hookway	Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
P Arnott	Leader of the Council
P Hayward	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Economy and Assets
S Hawkins	Portfolio Holder Finance, Group Leader of Cranbrook Voice
T Olive	Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning

Also present (for some or all the meeting)

Councillor Aurora Bailey
Councillor Brian Bailey
Councillor Ian Barlow
Councillor Kevin Blakey
Councillor Colin Brown
Councillor Bethany Collins
Councillor Roy Collins
Councillor Peter Faithfull
Councillor Steve Gazzard
Councillor Mike Goodman
Councillor Richard Jefferies

Also present:

Officers:

Jo Avery, Management Information Officer
Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer

Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Richard Easthope, Parking Services Manager
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health
John Symes, Finance Manager
Katie Webb, Property Lawyer
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

Chair

Date: