

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 8 January 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.43 pm

109 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 November 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet held on 27 November 2024 were agreed.

110 Declarations of interest

Min 116. Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 December 2024.

Councillor Nick Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Min 117. Minutes of Exmouth Beach Management Plan Steering Group held on 23 October 2024.

Councillor Nick Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

111 Public speaking

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

112 Matters of urgency

There was one matter dealt with in this way recorded at Minute 128.

113 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were none.

114 Minutes of Scrutiny Committee held on 7 November 2024

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of Scrutiny Committee held on 7 November 2024.

Minute 26 Climate Change report

1. That Cabinet note the progress made in achieving the actions specified in the Climate Change Action Plan 2020 – 2040.
2. That Cabinet consider the lessons learnt and how these can be applied to the development of the next Climate Change Action Plan.
3. That all Members be included in the development of the Climate Change Strategy going forward and that SWEWG be brought in to provide technical information and expertise to assist Members

115 **Minutes of Asset Management Forum held on 2 December 2024**

Members noted the Minutes of Asset Management Forum held on 2 December 2024.

116 **Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 December 2024**

Members noted the Minutes of Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Group held on 10 December 2024.

117 **Minutes of Exmouth Beach Management Plan Steering Group held on 23 October 2024**

Members noted the Minutes of Exmouth Beach Management Plan Steering Group held on 23 October 2024.

118 **Minutes of Joint meeting of the Overview Committee and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 December 2024**

Members noted the Minutes and recommendations of the joint meeting of the Overview Committee and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 December 2024.

Minutes 34 – 38 Key Directorate Plan Objectives 2025-2026

That Cabinet approves the Directorate Plans for 2024 – 2028 for the Housing and Health, Place, Finance and Governance Directorates.

119 **Minutes of the Cranbrook Placemaking Group held on 18 November 2024**

Members noted the Minutes of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held on 18 November 2024.

120 **Council Tax Base 2025/26**

The Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services and Corporate Fraud & Compliance presented the report that set out the tax base for 2025/2026 and included the breakdown for each parish, expressed in terms of Band D equivalent properties on which the council tax would be based. This was an important component in the Council's budget setting process for 2025/2026.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Agrees the approval of the tax base for 2025/2026 at 65,142.52 Band D equivalent properties.
2. Agrees the amount for each parish as detailed under section 3 of the report.

REASON:

The calculation of the tax base was prescribed in regulations and was a legal requirement. The council tax base was defined as the number of Band D equivalent properties in a local authority's area. The tax base was necessary to calculate council tax for a given area.

121 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26**

Members were asked to consider and approve the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for 2025/26 that was recommending no change from the 2024/25 scheme. This was due to the current scheme continuing to support low-income households in the most effective way in the current economic climate.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

That the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age residents is approved for 2025/26.

REASON:

The council was required by law to decide whether to revise or replace its CTR scheme each year. The proposal was that the scheme remained unchanged from 2024/25 as the current economic climate remains difficult for those on low incomes. Leaving the scheme as it was, would ensure that those households on the lowest income and therefore falling into income band 1 would continue to receive 100% support towards their Council Tax charge.

122 **Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26**

The Director of Finance presented the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26 for adoption by the Cabinet before consideration by a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Housing Review Board. Recommendations from these meetings would be presented back to Cabinet on 5 February 2025 when members would finalise budget proposals to recommend to Council.

The report has been compiled before the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announcement on the 18 December 2024, it was confirmed that the outcome of the Settlement was in line with the estimates made in the report and no amendments were required.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Agree the draft revenue and capital estimates including the associated fees and charges schedule, before forwarding to a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Housing Review Board for consideration.

REASON:

There was a requirement to set a balanced budget and a Council Tax for 2025/26.

123 **East Devon National Landscape Management Plan consultation**

EDDC together with other local authorities had previously authorised the East Devon National Landscape Partnership to undertake a review of the National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan by 31 December 2026, as required under Section IV of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The review process was underway with key issues, new challenges and opportunities having been identified, including through stakeholder engagement. Approval was now sought for public consultation on a draft of the reviewed Plan to take place during February and March 2025. This would inform any changes to be made and once finalised the revised Management Plan would be recommended by the National Landscape Partnership, for adoption by each of the local authorities by the end of July 2025.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Agrees to the East Devon National Landscape Partnership undertaking public consultation on the reviewed East Devon National Landscape Management Plan for 2025-2030.

REASON:

To enable the East Devon National Landscape Partnership to carry out the consultation on the reviewed East Devon National Landscape Management Plan. EDDC with other local authorities, had authorised the East Devon National Landscape Partnership to review the Management Plan on their behalf. Consultation was a standard component of statutory Plan preparation, involving a consultation period during which consultees, including the public, could comment on the draft Plan.

124 **Culture Strategy 2022 - 2031 support**

Since the creation and adoption of the Council's Culture Strategy 2022-2031 a significant amount of progress had happened with the appointment of the council's Cultural Producer to drive the Strategy's 10-year Delivery Plan forward. The setting up of the Arts Culture East Devon (ACED) network had now attracted over 200 local cultural and creative organisations across the district that were helping to drive community engagement, social capital, pathways for young creatives, engaging in Placemaking schemes and boosting the local economies of towns and rural areas. This had been supplemented with the funding received from the UK SPF and the cultural programme which had enabled an acceleration of many priority areas in the Culture Strategy. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) had also helped to set up the Creative East Devon Fund which was a competitive application process open to all the District's local creative and cultural organisations within the ACED network to develop and grow their work.

The Council Plan had identified the value and importance of its cultural programmes and events within its current Council Plan and how it could help to shape areas such as place making, enable community cohesion and support local economies with job creation and apprenticeships into the creative and arts sector.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Approve the support of the Screen Devon scheme and its supporting Key Performance Indicators by granting additional funding of £10,000 for the 2025/26 financial year as set out in the report.
2. Approve the support of the Villages in Action programme and its supporting Key Performance Indicators by granting additional funding of £5,000 (in addition to the existing annual contribution of £10,000) for the 2025/26 financial year to support the recruitment of a new Network Lead in East Devon.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

3. That a budget of £15,000 is provided from the UK SPF Year 4 allocation in the first instance to fund the recommendations to provide additional funding of £10,000 to Screen Devon and additional funding of £5,000 to Villages in Action as set out in recommendations 1 and 2 and for this to be met from the General Fund if UK SPF funding is not available.

125 **Draft Housing Strategy**

The Housing Projects Officer presented the draft Housing Strategy which was requesting approval to go out to consultation for 11 weeks, before a final draft was produced and

presented in Summer 2025. The strategy sought to focus resources on four key strategic areas which aimed to deliver over the next 5 years.

Objective 1: Delivering person-centred housing services

Objective 2: Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Objective 3: Improving the standard of homes and communities

Objective 4: Increasing the supply of homes

A detailed delivery action plan would sit alongside the strategy to track and demonstrate achievements against the objectives.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

That members approve the attached draft (including any amendments agreed at this meeting) for public consultation to begin in January 2025.

REASON:

The draft strategy set out the intended direction for the delivery of housing related services across the council for the next 5 years. The council wished to seek the views of the public, external agencies and others before finalising its approach.

126 **Corporate Peer Challenge Review outcome**

The Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination reminded Members that the Local Government Association (LGA) were commissioned by EDDC to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge following a Motion at Full Council in July 2023. The Peer Challenge was conducted in February 2024 and an action plan and timetable to address the recommendations was presented to members in July 2024. The Peer Challenge Team returned on 28 November 2024; this report presents the conclusions reached by the Peer Team when reviewing the progress that has been made. His following comments was asked to be noted.

“The peer team were pleased to note how much progress had been made by the council since the corporate peer challenge had taken place just nine months earlier. It was clear that EDDC has made significant progress which was a positive reflection of the hard work that has been undertaken by the council. EDDC has embraced improvement, and this is evidenced in the action plan which includes not only the key recommendations made by the peer team but also includes progress against additional comments and suggestions that were mentioned in the Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report”.

The Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Co-ordination and the Chair thanked staff, executive officers and Members for their engagement into the review.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

That the report and positive conclusions of the LGA be noted.

REASON:

To support and maintain ongoing improvement at the Council.

127 **Appointment to the Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group**

The Director of Place presented his report which sought endorsement for the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to represent the Council on the Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group. This would play an important role in advising, informing and influencing

the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) to support the delivery of the housing aspects of the devolution deal.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

Endorses the nomination of the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning to represent the Council on the Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group.

REASON:

To ensure that the strategic housing challenges and ambitions were clearly articulated through the work of the Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group.

128 **English Devolution White Paper**

The Director of Place presented the report which highlighted the English Devolution White Paper that set out the new government's approach to deepening and widening devolution in England. The document placed an emphasis on areas adopting a mayoral model to access additional powers and greater financial flexibility. The White Paper also set out plans to reorganise local government, with an aim to establish larger unitary authorities in two-tier areas and where smaller unitary authorities cannot meet local needs. The report also summarised proposed changes to how strategic planning would be dealt with across wider geographies.

Discussion included the following:

- The importance of progressing the production of the Local Plan
- One unitary authority would be disastrous with no benefit to residents
- Two unitary councils would be a better option
- The need to be proactive and clear on our views
- Residents must be made clear as to the challenges the council would be dealing with
- Devon was vast and there was no set precedent to get guidance from. A single unitary authority would cover a huge area. This had the potential for services being devolved to Towns and Parishes
- Would lose local democracy and accountability and become more cumbersome
- Worried the proposals were rushed and not thought through
- The need to get it right the first time

After Members debated it was agreed that two further recommendations would be asked of Council, recorded below at 3 and 4.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Notes the key proposals arising from the English Devolution White Paper, including the proposed introduction of a new devolution framework and the plans for local government reorganisation.

RECOMMENDED to Council that endorsement is given to the;

2.
 - a. Joint Leaders statement from the Devon Districts Forum
 - b. Potential to promote the establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority for the peninsular to cover Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Cornwall
 - c. Need to engage with our communities, partners and stakeholders to develop considered and coherent proposals around changes to the current model of 10 councils in Devon to a smaller number of suitably sized unitaries rather than defaulting to a single unitary approach.

3. Belief that a preferred pathway should be explored which would create two Devon Unitary Authorities, one of which should be focused around the North Devon, Mid Devon, East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils, along with Exeter City Council.
4. Belief that the people of Devon would be best served after the abolition of the county council by the two new unitaries, containing a city in each this being Plymouth to the west, and Exeter to the east.
5. Grants delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Council and Corporate Co-ordination to advance negotiations around the form and coverage of future Principal Authorities.
6. Receives a further report in February providing an update on the negotiations before interim proposals are submitted to central government.

REASON:

To ensure all members were aware of the proposed changes set out in the English Devolution White Paper, particularly those relating to local government reorganisation.

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 Colin Brown
Councillor Jenny Brown
Councillor Bethany Collins
Councillor Roy Collins
Councillor Peter Faithfull
Councillor Richard Jefferies
Councillor Sophie Richards

Also present:

Officers:

Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Libby Jarrett, Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Customer Access, Fraud & Compliance
Tim Laurence-Othen, Housing Projects Officer

Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place

Chair

Date: