

Report to: Council



Date of Meeting 14 May 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Annual report of the Overview Committee 2024-25

Report summary:

To review the work of the Overview Committee during the 2024-25 civic year.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Council note the work that the Overview Committee has undertaken during the 2024-25 civic year.

Reason for recommendation:

To inform Council of the work of the Overview Committee

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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 Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☒ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery

- ☒ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
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Report in full

The Overview Committee

Overview and Scrutiny is a non-executive function carried out by three committees, the Overview Committee, the Scrutiny Committee and the Housing Review Board, within a set of guiding principles of effective scrutiny promoted by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

The Overview Committee principally provides 'critical friend' challenge and reflects the voice and concerns of the public and its communities prior to decisions being taken so as to make an impact on the delivery of public services.

Specific functions of the Overview Committee, relating to policy development and review, include:

- To assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues.
- To conduct research and carry out community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible actions.
- To consider and propose mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options.
- To question members of the Cabinet and/or other committees and senior officers about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area.
- Subject to prior approval of an annual work plan, to liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.

The Chair of the Overview Committee for 2024-25 was Councillor Anne Hall, with Councillor Tim Dumper as Vice-Chair.

Words from the Chair

"This year has seen several new policies come before Overview focusing on the Green Agenda.

Now we are moving towards a unitary authority within the next couple of years our focus will be on prioritising which policies need to be reviewed and strengthened to take forward and look forward to working closely with Cabinet and Officers to enable this."

The following examples summarise the Overview Committee's work over the 2024-25 civic year.

1. An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon

In May 2024, the Overview Committee considered the new five-year Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for East Devon. The EDS had been developed following a Local Development review presented to Cabinet in October 2023, the findings from which highlighted the core issues and challenges facing the district's economy. The Strategy had been widely consulted on, addressed the core challenges highlighted by the Local Development Review and set out a clear vision for East Devon's economy to 2029.

The Overview Committee recommended the Strategy to Cabinet for adoption.

2. East Devon Trees, Hedgerow and Woodlands Strategy

The Overview Committee considered the East Devon Trees, Hedgerow and Woodlands Strategy, in October 2024. The THaWS is a ten-year strategy which aligns with the Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, Local Plan review and Nature Recovery Plan.

Following consideration, the Overview Committee recommended to Cabinet i) the adoption of the final draft of the THaWS 2024 – 2034; ii) to appoint a part-time Tree & Woodland Project Officer role to enable the delivery of the Strategy; and iii) to note the Overview Committee's concerns

about the reduction of the enforcement role within the Tree team and to consider to continue to include this vacant post in the establishment, going forward.

3. Wildlife Improvement Policy

The Overview Committee considered the Wildlife Improvement Policy in February 2025. The Policy would ensure that the StreetScene department's current and future Wildlife Improvement areas were managed, maintained and improved to a high standard whilst also supporting the Countryside department's role in meeting new legislative targets for Nature Recovery. It would also help to increase residents understanding of the gravity and consequences of climate change and biodiversity loss, and the urgency of putting in place mitigations to these crises.

The Overview Committee recommended to Cabinet to adopt the Wildlife Improvement Policy as an official EDDC policy.

4. Coach Tourism in East Devon

In February 2025, the Overview Committee received a report which outlined the work of the Coach Tourism in East Devon Task and Finish Forum (TAFF) set up in April 2024, which aimed to explore opportunities around coach tourism in East Devon and help increase coach passenger visitors to the district. The report set out the achievements of the TAFF to date, and its recommendation for the Committee members to consider.

The Overview Committee recommended to Cabinet that EDDC fund 50% of the costs of signage required for East Devon towns to satisfy the criteria for Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) Coach Friendly accreditation as identified through the formal CPT audit process, up to £1,500 per town and an overall maximum for the district of £12,000, subject to individual town and parish councils meeting the remaining 50% of the costs.

5. Update Paper on the Introduction of an Online Petition Scheme

On 13 July 2022, Cabinet referred the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting (09/06/22) to the Overview Committee to progress the recommendations which were i) to consider a petition platform within the Council's website; and ii) to publicise the Council's petition scheme via the Council's weekly press release.

The Overview Committee received an update paper in March 2025 which set out that the Democratic Services Manager would work with the Digital Team and Strata to deliver an online digital petition platform for the submission of members of the public with implementation of an online petition form by 30 May 2025.

The current petition scheme will be reviewed at a future meeting of the Overview Committee to ensure that it remained fit for purpose.

6. East Devon National Landscape annual review 2024/25

In March 2025, the Overview Committee received and noted the East Devon National Landscape Annual Review report 2024 and update on the Management Plan Review 2025-2030.

Financial implications:

All financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

Legal implications:

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