

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 3rd March 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Cranbrook Category 4 Infrastructure Contributions

Report summary:

The council is collecting financial contributions for a group of projects termed in the Cranbrook Plan as 'category 4 infrastructure'. These monies are secured from new developments permitted within the Cranbrook Plan Area since the adoption of the Cranbrook Plan in October 2022. The contributions are pooled to fund a number of projects that lie within category 4. The council needs to establish a mechanism for the allocation and spending of these contributions to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between funding the critical infrastructure necessary for the proper functioning of the town and that which is categorised as important.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that the 'Mechanism for the allocation of category 4 infrastructure contributions' included at appendix 1, together with the assessment criteria questions at paragraph 16 are adopted for use by the council in relation to category 4 infrastructure contributions received from developments in the Cranbrook Plan Area.

Reason for recommendation:

The requirement to have a clear set of principles in place for the spending of category 4 infrastructure contributions is important to ensure there is a fair, transparent and robust process implemented for the allocation and spending of the millions of pounds that will be received over the coming years, ensuring that the constituent projects are funded in a suitable order.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Assets and Economy
- Communications and Democracy
- Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- Environment - Nature and Climate
- Environment - Operational
- Finance

Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning

Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information Cranbrook Local Infrastructure Fund - [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 28th July, 2021, 6.00 pm - East Devon](#); Cranbrook Infrastructure Delivery Plan [infrastructure-delivery-plan-august-2022.pdf](#); Mechanism for the allocation and spending of Category 4 Infrastructure Payments - [Agenda for Cranbrook Placemaking Group on Monday, 8th December, 2025, 9.30 am - East Devon](#); Category 4 Infrastructure Contributions – assessment criteria - [Agenda for Cranbrook Placemaking Group on Monday, 2nd February, 2026, 9.30 am - East Devon](#)

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

Background

1. The Cranbrook Plan Development Plan Document (the Cranbrook Plan) categorises infrastructure requirements into four categories to ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure in a manner which also secures cost equalisation across the four expansion areas of the town. It also provides policy support for financial contributions to be made from housing schemes within the Cranbrook Plan Area but that outside the allocated expansion areas.
2. Category 4 infrastructure includes a variety of projects that financial contributions are to be secured for through section 106 agreements for new development within the Cranbrook Plan Area, as detailed in the table below. Most of the category 4 projects are not on land within the expansion area allocations and therefore developers will effectively be making 'off-site' financial contributions for projects to be delivered by a third party.

Category 4 infrastructure project	IDP Priority	Financial contribution
Health and Wellbeing Hub	1 – Critical	£7,000,000
Sustainable transport enhancements	1 – Critical	£6,378,000
Extra Care provision	1 – Critical	£3,500,000
Secondary School education	1 – Critical	£2,583,429
SEND school provision	1 – Critical	£1,017,573
Leisure Centre	2 – Important	£3,993,940
Offsite walking and cycling enhancements	2 – Important	£2,530,000
Fire station (blue light facility)	2 – Important	£1,400,000
Pavilion and 8 team changing rooms for Treasbeare Sports Hub	2 – Important	£1,350,000
Library fit out	2 – Important	£480,000
4 no. Tennis Courts with flood lighting	2 – Important	£373,000
Shared cars and e-bikes	2 – Important	£300,000
Children's centre fit out	2 – Important	£36,218

Youth centre fit out	2 – Important	£36,218
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3. Because category 4 contributions are used to equalise costs across the expansion areas, those developments with the highest on-site infrastructure burdens will be making proportionally lower off-site category 4 contributions than their counterparts who have minimal on-site infrastructure to deliver. Additionally, of the s106 agreements that have already been signed for the expansion areas, as well as those currently being negotiated, phased payment of category 4 contributions is included to ensure that development remains viable within the context of developer cash flow.
4. Together with the fact that category 4 contributions are pooled into one pot, these factors mean that the receipt of category 4 contributions will be spread over a number of years and without forward funding, will mean that the council needs to make difficult decisions about which projects to prioritise and fund in the earlier years of the expansion of the town.
5. The Local Planning Authority is currently considering the first reserved matters application for housing development in the expansion areas (ref. 25/1692/MRES) and so it is important that a process and criteria for the allocation and spending of these category 4 contributions is set to ensure that once monies begin to be received, they are capable of being spent without delay, should that be what the council chooses to do.
6. Reports relating to a process and criteria for category 4 contributions were considered by the Cranbrook Placemaking Group in December 2025 and February 2026 and the documents appended to this report, setting out a recommended process and assessment criteria have been endorsed by the Cranbrook Placemaking Group, which includes member representation from Cranbrook Town Council, East Devon District Council and Devon County Council.

Mechanism and Principles

7. As part of their consideration for a recommended process, the Cranbrook Placemaking Group met informally in November 2025 to discuss and express their preferences for the timing of requests for funding, the prioritisation of projects, decision making and forward funding. These preferences and further comments made during their consideration of a report in December 2025 are reflected in the document included at appendix 1.
8. The terms of reference for the Cranbrook Placemaking Group state that is an advisory body and therefore the Group does not have the ability to decide which projects to fund and when. As is the process for the allocation of CIL funding, the council's Strategic Planning Committee will be the ultimate decision-making body. However, the Placemaking Group have an important role to play in making recommendations on how funding should be allocated and it is proposed that their recommendations are reported directly to the Strategic Planning Committee for category 4 funding decisions to be made.
9. In 2021 the council's Cabinet agreed to the principle of an infrastructure fund for Cranbrook to forward fund the delivery of infrastructure projects that would otherwise be delayed due to the staged payment of infrastructure contributions or to fund those on-site infrastructure projects (e.g. primary schools) that are required early in the phasing of a site and have high up-front capital costs.
10. Since then, the interest rates that the council can secure through prudential borrowing have gone up and this mechanism of forward funding is not as attractive to developers as it once was. However, the council is committed to exploring ways to advance the delivery of infrastructure necessary for the community of Cranbrook and so it is recommended that reference to forward funding is included in the final document.
11. There is also the potential for an infrastructure provider themselves to forward fund the delivery of a project and this eventuality needs to be allowed for in the finalised process.
12. Included in the appendix is a proposed document for the mechanism and principles for the allocation and spending of category 4 infrastructure contributions. This takes forward the recommendations of the Cranbrook Placemaking Group.

13. To assist with clarifying the process to be undertaken, a flow chart is included within the document, together with more detailed wording under headings of timing and administration of requests, prioritisation of projects, funding rounds, decision making and funding agreements.
14. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee are requested to recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the appended document setting out the proposed mechanism and principles for the allocation and spending of category 4 infrastructure contributions.

Assessment Criteria

15. To ensure that the endorsed mechanism and principles for category 4 infrastructure spending can be properly implemented, a set of assessment criteria has been devised.
16. Funding bids would be requested to answer the following questions to provide the assessors with the information necessary to appraise their bid. The questions take account of the questions that were posed for the council's most recent CIL bidding process to ensure some consistency across the two processes, noting that the category 4 monies are collected via section 106 rather than CIL.

Eligibility check

- a. Is the project specifically identified in the Cranbrook IDP?
- b. Is the project listed under Category 4 infrastructure in policy CB6 (Cranbrook Infrastructure Delivery) of the Cranbrook Plan?

Need

- c. Does the project support a statutory service?
- d. Does the project result in enhanced infrastructure provision or delivery?
- e. What is the consequence of not carrying out the project?
- f. Is the project seeking funding for capital spend or revenue funding for feasibility studies?

Value for money

- g. If the monies requested are awarded, does a funding gap remain (capital or revenue)? If there is match funding, please provide details, even if these are not yet finalised.
- h. Costings detailed – is evidence provided?

Deliverability

- i. Has planning permission been obtained (or is not required), submitted or not yet submitted?
 - j. Please provide details of project risks.
 - k. Please provide details of the readiness to proceed, including proposed completion timescales for the project.
17. Attached at appendix 2 is a draft bid scoring template that transposes these questions, requiring assessors to award a score out of 25 for each of the four categories of question. This is also reflective of the scoring mechanism used for the most recent CIL bidding round and is considered to allow for a robust and transparent scoring that should ultimately provide a good overall assessment of the merits of a bid. The bids themselves will be dealt with in accordance with the previously discussed mechanism for the allocation and spending of the category 4 contributions.
 18. The questions listed at paragraph 16 above, together with the scoring template at appendix 2 have been recommended for agreement by the Cranbrook Placemaking Group, who considered the same at their meeting in February 2026.
 19. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee are requested to recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the assessment questions set out in paragraph 16 above.
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Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications identified within the report. (AB-17/02/2026)

Legal implications:

There are no direct legal implications identified within the report. (DH/002533-19/02/2026)