

Report to: Council



Date of Meeting 25 February 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Questions on Notice

Report summary:

The constitution provides that members of Council may ask: the Chair, the Leader or a Portfolio Holder Member of the Cabinet; or the Chair of any Committee or Sub Committee a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the district.

A member may only ask a question if either:

(a) they have given at least 3 working days' notice in writing of the question to the Chief Executive; or

(b) the question relates to urgent matters, they have the consent of the Chair to whom the question is to be put and the content of the question is given to the Chief Executive by noon on the day of the meeting.

In response to a question on notice an answer may take the form of:

(a) A direct oral answer;

(b) Where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or

(c) Where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

In accordance with the Constitution three questions on notice have been received and they are set out in the report with the responses.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

To note the responses to the questions on notice.

Reason for recommendation:

In accordance with the Council's Constitution Rules Part 4, 9.2 Questions on notice at full Council; 9.3 Notice of questions.

Question	Question from	Question	Response
1	Cllr Mike Goodman	<p>Question to Portfolio Holder for Finance</p> <p>Having been part of the overview and scrutiny looking at this year's budget, to help the public to understand the scale of the financial challenges facing EDDC. Could the portfolio holder for Finance explain the consequences for EDDC if LGR did not happen in 2027 for years 2028 and 2029.</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Finance</p> <p>This Council's future budget position beyond 2026/27 was given in the draft budget report to Cabinet on 7th January 2026. This gave an estimated budget deficit in 2027/28 of £2.8m and, if LGR was not implemented as planned in April 2028, then a further deficit of £4m in 2028/29.</p> <p>Since then, two factors have changed those numbers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview, Scrutiny and Cabinet are recommending to Council in the 2026/27 budget additional expenditure of £0.3m (special items). These items are recurring costs and add to the estimated budget deficit going forward. 2. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement published on 9th February has resulted in a further reduction in our funding compared with the Provisional Settlement by £1.2m for 2027/28 and 2028/29. <p>Taking these changes gives us a revised estimated budget deficit in 2027/28 of £4.3m and in 2028/29 £5.5m.</p> <p>Again, as outlined in the 7th January Budget Report aligned reserves against these deficits are remaining sums in the order of £5.3m. Therefore, allowing the Council to retain existing services and budget spends for the one year remaining in accordance with the existing government timetable. If extended to 2028/29, we would need to find savings in the order of £4.5m requiring a significant</p>

			<p>reduction in service spending to be implemented for 2028/29.</p> <p>These are high level estimates, and a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy will be presented for Members consideration in July 2026 when more certainty is likely on LGR. This Council has an excellent record of planning and meeting budgetary challenges, however the changes to the government funding formula has had a significant effect on our finances to a degree not seen in recent years.</p>
2	Cllr Mike Goodman	<p>Question to Leader of Council</p> <p>Can the Leader explain why he is calling for the postponement of LGR in Devon, and does he realise the financial and service impact on East Devon District Council this could have.</p>	<p>Leader of Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I thank Cllr Goodman for his question. At East Devon I have consistently thanked our officers and the PH Cllr Loudoun, and all lead members and officers across Devon, for their work in meeting the demands of government re LGR. I have also signalled that we would enter a “political” phase. We now have. • LGR was not included in Labour’s July 2024 manifesto, while Devolution through Strategic Mayoral Authorities or Foundation Level was. • Unfortunately for political reasons the then Secretary of State at MHCLG decided to force complete local government reorganisation onto the agenda. • We can be proud that as members and officers we have repeatedly met government’s tight deadlines for i) initial submissions ii) final submissions. The sheer scale of work this has

			<p>taken cannot be overstated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Throughout that period, MHCLG has repeatedly changed guidance eg around population numbers for new unitaries. At first, 500k or over, but then a loophole for Labour run city areas of 300k or more.• It also became clear through engagement with central government that their insistence on breaking up the current district/county structures was not about savings or efficiency. Baroness Taylor confirmed that the Treasury does not expect that. It is about a political wish to dismantle “Shire County” authorities which they fear are a traditional Conservative party powerbase.• For many in local government, the final straw in what has always appeared a hurried, under-resourced and ill-considered project for LGR, was the cancellation of local elections, followed by their reinstatement after the Electoral Commission stated that there was no legal basis for cancellation. Trust in due process is at an all-time low.• It is worth noting in passing that in early 2025 the then Conservative Devon County was also unsuccessful, as Exeter has been this year, in having elections cancelled in their political self-interest.• The first authority to express its outrage last
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			<p>week was the Conservative run Norfolk County Council. They have stated that they will no longer co-operate with LGR.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This was followed at the end of the week by Labour Basildon making the same pledge, which brings into question whether wider Essex too can deliver.• It is clear that the LGR project has lost the confidence of most of the LG sector. In particular, the current timelines do not include sufficient time for Boundary Commission reviews and consultations.• Moreover, every district in Devon is involved in its own major projects which members were elected and officers employed to deliver. The resource burden and distraction has been immense since the end of 2024 when the government first brought LGR onto the agenda.• Due consultations continue as is appropriate and government promises a choice in July• On all prior evidence and experience of this process, even though it is becoming obvious that May 2027 is neither realistic nor in the interest of good local government in Devon, if there is to be a delay it will be left to the eleventh hour, perhaps in the Autumn, to announce it.• Leaders are discussing this week at a political level if there is consensus to write to MHCLG a) supporting ongoing rationalisation of services across Devon especially
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			<p>through future shared services b) acknowledging the possibilities of a Strategic Mayoral Authority as per the manifesto, and the possibility of delivering that through the Combined County Authority if Plymouth join the CCA c) that in the leaders' assessment, the timescales are not realistic, and request that the SoS decide as soon as possible if there is to be a delay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding our own medium-term financial plan, the PH for Finance has provided the answer at an earlier question. In the event the SoS was minded to postpone by a year, it is likely that provision would be made tbc • At all times, it is the responsibility of the Devon council administrations to seek certainty on behalf of the public, the staff and officers, and in the interests of democracy.
3	Cllr Mike Goodman	<p>Question to Leader of Council</p> <p>In February 2025 the leader proposed a motion regarding the condition of our highways, this included a number of suggestions and some members that our roads were poor. Since then we have had ten months of the Lib Dems in power does the Leader believe our roads have improved.</p> <p>Motions Report.2.Highways.pdf</p>	<p>Leader of Council</p> <p>I thank Cllr Goodman for his constructive question. Clearly, during the ten months that the Liberal Democrats have been in power, the Highways team has been operating under a budget set by the previous (Conservative) administration . This has presented a number of challenges, not least because there was historically a reluctance to invest more capital or revenue funding into the department. This, coupled with poor central government funding, has seen a situation of</p>

			<p>unmanaged decline develop over some years. Despite the clear and obvious fiscal challenges presented, some progress has been made. The pothole trial (which saw non-safety defects repaired at the same time as reported safety defects within a defined area) was run in two divisions and was generally held to be a success – the scheme will be extended across a number of divisions in the finer months this year, which will include at least one East Devon Division. The road warden scheme, which has over 120 parishes as active users, is being extended through the Community Protocol Scheme, which gives town and parish councils better access to service delivery on projects they (the Town or Parish) wish to expedite and are happy to finance.</p> <p>At our recent budget meeting, the Liberal Democrat Administration, supported by all the other main parties, agreed an extra of 5.7% across the Climate Change, Environment and transport Department as a whole and an extra £19million specifically for highways this year, (£4million for revenue spending, £15 million capital) with an extra £10 million capital each year for the next 4 years. As such, it might be a fairer test to repeat this question in 12 months time, at which point the administration at DCC will have had the opportunity to prove their budget.</p>
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