

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 5 February 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.48 pm

48 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 January 2026 were agreed and signed as a true record.

49 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

50 Public speaking

Cllr John Loudoun had registered to speak. Cllr Loudoun is a Sidmouth Town Councillor.

Cllr Loudoun referenced the report, section 1 on page 9, which referred to Sidmouth Town Council submitting a report containing images of weeds causing damage along footpaths, pavements and in roadside gutters, and which stated that the Town Council had advocated the reversal of the ban [on the use of glyphosate].

Cllr Loudoun has been a member of Sidmouth Town Council for almost 7 years and according to the Town Clerk, the Town Council's position on the use of glyphosate is that it follows the advice of EDDC on this, and other similar matters. This position remains unaltered.

Cllr Loudoun expressed concern that the report as presented to Scrutiny might lead the Committee's Members to believe that Sidmouth Town Council submitted a report for this review and that it "*advocated the reversal of the ban (on glyphosate)*". It should be made clear that Sidmouth Town Council had not submitted a report and had not advocated the reversal of the ban on glyphosate.

Cllr Loudoun was also concerned that by providing a link to this report and stating that it is "*(from Sidmouth Town Council)*" is misleading as the Town Council has not submitted this, and it is not an official Town Council document. Rather, a Sidmouth Town Councillor drafted and submitted the report for submission to this committee as a personal set of observations.

Cllr Loudoun had spoken to the author of this document and they had authorised him to say –

"I was asked to submit my personal observations. I sent copies to (Councillor) Ian (Barlow) and (Councillor) Mike Goodman) as my local EDDC councillor and Mike as head of scrutiny. If you look carefully at the top in the introduction, I make a clear statement "I am submitting this material as an independent person. These are my opinions based upon an intimate study of the growing problem I have witnessed in the Sid Valley".

Also, for reasons of full disclosure I write I am Vice Chair of STC (Sidmouth Town Council) and a member of the Conservative Party. I am personally not happy at having my contribution labelled as STC and when I saw that I immediately told Hilary (Sidmouth Town Council Chair) of my unhappiness that this had happened”.

I am most concerned that forever anyone accessing and reading this report will read these significant and misleading inaccuracies relating to Sidmouth Town Council.

The Chair thanked Cllr Loudoun for his statement and advised that this would be minuted for the record.

51 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

52 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no confidential or exempt items.

53 **Decisions made by Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules**

There were none.

54 **Review of the impact of the ban on use of glyphosate**

The Streetscene Operations Manager introduced the report. EDDC banned the general use of glyphosate in September 2022 based on evidence of environmental damage and public health concerns from the use of glyphosate. At its meeting in September 2025, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to conduct a review into the impact of banning glyphosate and be updated on the trials of various alternatives. The report set out the results of Streetscene’s glyphosate alternative trials and feedback from Councillors in relation to areas where weed growth was a concern. The trials related only for EDDC areas that are managed and maintained by Streetscene. Devon County Council are responsible for all pavements, gutters, roadways, traffic islands etc., in East Devon.

The Streetscene Operations Manager advised the Committee that there is no Council approved policy regarding glyphosate use. Following the ban, the Horticultural Technical Officer had created a weed treatment plan which had been used to inform the report to the Committee.

The report sets out the response from Councillors to the call for evidence on problem areas. The response had been very low, which indicates that there are no major issues with EDDC maintained areas. The problem areas highlighted by Councillors were maintained by Devon County Council.

The report set out the trials of alternatives to glyphosate: vinegar; hot foam.

Responses to questions and discussion included the following points:

- It was noted that other local authorities are currently reviewing their policies on the use of glyphosate;

- It was clarified that EDDC does not have a policy regarding glyphosate use and the report therefore did not cover policy review;
- There should be no issue with the use of spraying weedkiller if used correctly;
- Concern was expressed regarding the Council's use of dicophar and the perception that this was more environmentally friendly than glyphosate;
- The Horticultural Technical Officer clarified that EDDC's decision to ban glyphosate use in 2022 related solely to glyphosate and not to other herbicides or pesticides. The Council therefore continues to use herbicides and pesticides widely across areas such as sports pitches. Dicophar is also widely used by other local authorities on areas such as sports pitches and bowling greens;
- Concern was expressed that, according to the Pesticide Action Network, dicophar is more harmful than glyphosate;
- It was noted that glyphosate kills everything, whereas dicophar is a selective weed killer which does not kill grasses, and so is used on sports pitches;
- Concern was expressed that there is no suitable alternative to dicophar available for use on sports pitches and amenity turf, however, the Council was also using dicophar as a spot treatment for weeds and it was questioned whether this had been trialled by the manufacturer and was therefore certified for uses other than sports pitches and amenity turf;
- In response to a query whether any measurement of the effects on the microbiome under the soil surface was carried out when trialling alternatives such as hot foam, it was noted that, due to capacity, it was not possible to measure impacts below the soil surface;
- Concern was expressed as to the unintended consequences of the initial ban on the use of glyphosate, particularly when alternatives required funding and capacity which was not available;
- It was noted that the public and farmers can use dicophar widely with no training or knowledge, so it may be more appropriate for the Council to use glyphosate selectively as a safer alternative to dicophar, in order to redress the balance following EDDC's ban on its use;
- It was confirmed that Streetscene has licensed operatives to use pesticides and herbicides and PPE is provided and checked regularly;
- Giant Hogweed was a concern and should be treated accordingly;
- The use of dicophar as a spot treatment had not been tested and should not be used by the Council;
- It was vital to understand the impact of all treatments beneath the soil surface in order to make informed decisions;
- Regarding the persistence of dicophar in the soil, the half-life of one of the ingredients was between 6 and 15.1 days;
- Dicophar was used in a very small quantity on a localised bed as a spot treatment during the trial; it was unclear whether other authorities were using dicophar in this way;
- Limited resources should not be used as an excuse to use potentially toxic products;
- Glyphosate was still being used by the Countryside Team to deal with Japanese knotweed;
- Concern was expressed that the Council does not currently have a policy for weed management; this could be referred to the Overview Committee;
- Decline in honey bee colonies and efficiency was of serious concern;
- Exmouth Town Council had invested in a ride on weed-ripper which provided a good alternative for weed management;
- There should be a balance between tidiness and removing wild flowers which are also pollinators;
- It was important for people's well-being to properly maintain certain areas and carefully controlled use of certain products, supported by scientific knowledge, provided a good means to do this.

The Director of Place highlighted the reference in the report to the 'integrated weed management framework' which provides a hierarchy whereby chemicals are only used

as a last resort. It was understood that the Committee was seeking reassurance that this was the case.

The Director of Place would discuss this with Officers in terms of what resources would be required to bring further consideration of the integrated weed management framework to the Overview Committee within a reasonable timescale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended to Cabinet that:

1. Streetscene discontinue the use of the hot foam method of treatment and continue to use glyphosate-free alternatives and/or manual methods until the efficiency of recent trials can be established,
2. The Director of Place to consider how the integrated weed management framework can be developed and brought for consideration by the Overview Committee, including consideration of resources and the impact from other services,
3. Councillors/Town and Parishes to continue to report areas of weed growth on pavements and roadsides to Devon County Council.

The Chair thanked Officers for their assistance in taking this matter forwards.

55 Climate Change Action Plan review

The Portfolio Holder Environment – Nature and Climate introduced this item and highlighted key achievements over the past year. The Portfolio Holder thanked Officers for their work.

The Assistant Director Environmental Health introduced the report which provided a review of the Climate Change Action Plan, looking at actions achieved and impact on carbon emissions. The Assistant Director provided a presentation which highlighted key points from the report.

It was noted that the Action Plan forming part of the report is an interim Plan which is slightly different from the previous Plan considered by the Committee. The new draft Strategy and Action Plan are currently being produced, and when finished, will be presented at Councillor workshops for members' feedback.

Responses to questions and discussion included the following points:

- Councillor workshops would take place prior to the Strategy and Action Plan going to the Overview Committee and Cabinet to enable members to have input;
- It was noted that the carbon footprint increased in 2023-24, compared with UK figures, due to increased procurement following the covid lockdowns;
- Supporting others, such as repair cafes, is vital and community action has a further reach than the Council can achieve alone;
- The Council promotes community action on the website and through social media;
- Devon County Council has a dedicated officer to promote reuse and recycling throughout communities;
- Encouraging and supporting Councillors, neighbours and community groups, including town and parish councils, to work together to deliver the Strategy will be key to its success going forwards;
- It was noted that scope 3 emissions were hard to measure and it was unlikely that an alternative measuring tool would be introduced before Local Government Reorganisation.

Changing the metric for measuring scope 3 emissions would also require retrospectively amending previous years' figures for accurate comparison;

- Carbon literacy training is on-going and is also now part of the Council's induction training;
- The appointment of the new interim Corporate Lead Programmes and Strategies would ensure that climate change is embedded in every Council project in a consistent way going forwards;
- Increased tree planting would assist with effective carbon capture and flood prevention;
- Hedges are also vital for biodiversity and for flood prevention and, wherever possible, the Council should be working with partners to increase tree and hedgerow planting;
- Reducing the carbon footprint becomes harder over time and it was unlikely that the target would be met;
- Adaptation was also a key factor in dealing with climate change;
- Planning enforcement should be more robust with regard to removal of trees and hedges, and climate action should be embedded across the whole Council so that each part of the Council abides by the commitment to carbon reduction;
- The Council could provide support for community groups by way of advice on governance;
- It was disappointing that local actions on climate change were not supported by Government decisions.

The Chair thanked Officers for attending and for their report.

AGREED

That the Scrutiny Committee complimented the service for their excellent work and progress being made in achieving the actions specified in the Climate Change Action Plan.

56 Work programme 2025 - 2026

The Committee considered the work programme.

Cllr Barlow raised the matter of planning enforcement and information which has been requested by Sidmouth Town Council regarding enforcement action in the town.

It was agreed that a scoping report on planning enforcement be brought to the April Committee meeting.

It was noted that the Overview Committee could also consider Local Government Reorganisation as a means of facilitating discussion among Councillors.

The work programme was agreed.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

I Barlow
K Blakey
A Bruce

O Davey
P Fernley
M Goodman (Chair)
A Hall
V Johns
Y Levine
D Mackinder (Vice-Chair)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

R Collins
P Faithfull
R Jefferies
G Jung
J Loudoun

Officers in attendance:

Matthew Blythe, Assistant Director Environmental Health
Catherine Causley, Climate Change Officer
Paul Fealey, Horticultural Technical Officer
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Wood, Director of Place
Julia Woodbridge, StreetScene Operations Manager
Barry James, Interim Corporate Lead Programmes & Strategies

Councillor apologies:

J Brown
B Collins
M Hall
J Whibley

Chairman

Date: