

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Overview Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 26 March 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.40 pm

60 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 January 2026

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 January 2026 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

61 Declarations of interest

Minute 66. Public Toilets programme review options appraisal.
Cllr Aurora Bailey, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 66. Public Toilets programme review options appraisal.
Cllr Brian Bailey, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 66. Public Toilets programme review options appraisal.
Cllr Ian Barlow, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Sidmouth Town Council.

Minute 66. Public Toilets programme review options appraisal.
Cllr Tim Dumper, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 66. Public Toilets programme review options appraisal.
Cllr Matt Hall, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Minute 66. Public Toilets programme review options appraisal.
Cllr John Heath, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Beer Parish Council.

Minute 66. Public Toilets programme review options appraisal.
Cllr Dan Wilson, Affects Non-Registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

62 Public Speaking

No members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting.

63 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

64 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There was one confidential/exempt item (minute 66 refers).

65 Work Programme 2025 - 2026

The Overview Committee's Work Programme 2025-2026 was received and noted.

Following review of proposal forms received, Members agreed to add the following items to the Work Programme:

- Community Action Groups Devon update; and
- Preventative maintenance of trees in high amenity use area and another policy for tree maintenance of trees in EDDC controlled social housing.

66 **Public Toilets programme review options appraisal**

The Assistant Director Place, Assets & Leisure presented this report concerning the Public Toilets Programme Review, together with a confidential options appraisal.

The report followed a Member briefing to the Overview and Scrutiny committees in July 2025, a report to Overview Committee on 30 September 2025, and recommendations from Cabinet on 4 February 2026 which included the following:

- The principle, and community benefit, of transferring council-owned public conveniences to town and parish councils with the possibility of the concurrent release of proportional amounts of residual capital funding, subject to the timely review of the existing refurbishment arrangements, and potential transfer protocols, by the Overview Committee to ensure best value for both EDDC and the lower tier authorities.

The Committee was asked to consider the options appraisal and make recommendations to Cabinet in order to inform next steps.

The Vice-Chair moved that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out in the agenda is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing these items in private session (Part B). The motion was carried by a majority show of hands.

Members discussed the options appraisal and relevant considerations in detail and at length, including the following points:

- Views were expressed that transferring public toilets to Town and Parish Councils was the only option to protect them going into Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), given that they are a discretionary service.
- There was no indication that LGR would not go ahead; however, should it halt, the Finance Director explained that the spending review received recently had hit district councils hard and there were significant savings to be made. It would therefore be necessary to look at areas of discretionary spend.
- It was possible, subject to budget, to complete the Public Toilets programme and, prior to vesting day, enter into conditional contracts with Town and Parish Councils to transfer the toilets on completion of the programme. This would involve this Council needing to find millions of pounds of additional budget, and would be a Member decision.
- In the event that this Council completed the Public Toilets programme and retained the assets, the successor authority could nevertheless take the decision to close them or sell the sites for commercial development.
- If public toilets were transferred to Town and Parish Councils with a dowry then it was suggested that the Town and Parish Councils should be free to decide how the money was spent, without restriction.
- The Assistant Director explained there was an intention to include contiguous assets such as parks and open spaces in the package offered to Towns and Parish Councils, to make the proposal more attractive and with a view to protecting community assets.

- One Member suggested that adding contiguous assets would make the proposals more complicated and expensive and could scare Towns and Parish Councils who would not want the cost of maintaining parks and gardens.
- This Council needed to understand and provide detailed costings to Town and Parish Councils before negotiations could commence, and this work required resource across services including Streetscene, Legal, HR, Finance and Place.
- It was suggested to have joint working groups between the district and parish and town councils, which could help both tiers of councils to make decisions in a better way and help to spread an understanding of how the transfers could work.
- The Assistant Director stated that he would check if the Council was in contract with the payment provider to continue charging for the 4 pay-to-use sites.

Following the discussion, Members agreed by a majority show of hands, to support the recommendation that public toilets be transferred to Town and Parish Councils in current condition and with a dowry reflecting appropriate share of remaining approved capital budget.

Members considered the role Overview Committee was to have in the Public Toilets Programme moving forward, and indicated that the Committee would like to be appraised with the transfer protocols in order to have oversight of them.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

A Bailey
B Bailey
B Collins
R Collins
T Dumper (Vice-Chair)
A Hall (Chair)
M Hall
J Heath
Y Levine
D Mackinder
D Wilson

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
M Goodman

Officers in attendance:

Tim Child, Assistant Director Place, Assets & Leisure
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
James Docherty, Assistant Director Governance & Legal
Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Councillor apologies:

K Bloxham
P Fernley

Chair:

Date: