

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Cranbrook Placemaking Group held at Conference Room, Younghayes Centre, Cranbrook on 8 June 2026

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 12.30 pm

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 February 2026 were agreed as a true record.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public speaking

There were no members of the public present.

4 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

5 Confidential/exempt items

There was one item of confidential/exempt information, minute number 14 refers.

6 Discussion with the Cranbrook New Community Partners

The Cranbrook New Community Partners (the Consortium) provided responses to strategic matters raised by Members:

- Construction of Ingrams road to the northern boundary (as per condition)
The Corporate Lead – New Communities reiterated that the road is required by condition to extend to the northern boundary before first use. The current construction stops short of this point. The Consortium confirmed that the work will then be available. Estimated completion in July (subject to agreement with the consortium).
- Update on marketing of phase 2 retail land
The Consortium updated included:
 - The land continues to be marketed by the appointed commercial agent.
 - No offers received to date.
 - Marketing sign vandalised and not yet replaced.
 - Agent advise guide price remains reasonable.
 - Market conditions remain challenging.
 - Historic vacant units in the town centre have discouraged investor confidence.

The Group queried whether guide the price should be reviewed and sought assurance that agents remain proactive and requested clarity on feedback that the

scheme design may not suit potential purchasers; the Consortium maintained the agents are actively marketing.

The Director of Place reminded the Consortium that EDDC had previously submitted an offer for the retail land, which was declined. It was noted that EDDC has the option to submit a further expression of interest.

➤ Town Centre Parcels – MLR uplift works

The Group requested an updated programme for the MLR uplift works, noting their importance for public accessibility and future town centre development.

The Consortium update:

- Current traffic and school make immediate works impractical.
- All utilities require diversion; quotes are being sought.
- Section 38 amendment may still be required.
- A more detailed programme should be available within the next few weeks.

The Corporate Lead – New Communities emphasised the need for realistic timescales due to repeated slippage in previous commitments and highlighted the need to coordinate with crossing points, public accessibility works and future development.

➤ Site Safety and Contractor Parking

Recent press coverage highlighted unsafe parking near the school.

The Consortium update:

- On-site parking now available for contractors.
- Regular external health and safety inspections taking place.

The Group welcomed the improvements and requested continued monitoring given cumulative construction activity.

➤ Communications with residents

Cranbrook Ward Member, Councillor Kim Bloxham advised that a commitment was previously made to provide monthly construction newsletters to schools and residents. Draft newsletters received from Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey has raised concerns that the current drafts would generate more questions than answers as no dates have been provided. The Group sought agreement that a combined newsletter was preferred to provide clear messaging with accurate timings.

The Group discussed various disruptions that were causing a number of complaints to the town council and it was suggested strongly for joint communications, coordinated via Brookbanks as the Town Council was the first point of contact by residents complaining about development work which the Communications Officer was responding to on behalf of the developers. It was agreed that a joint meeting be set up to discuss a joint approach to communications.

➤ Unfinished highways causing safety concerns

Significant concern was raised about long-term unfinished roads, raised ironworks and unsafe pedestrian environments. The Consortium acknowledged that the ironworks should not be raised years in advance and that historic delays in Section 104 (drainage) approvals with South West Water have created a backlog.

- **Badger Way – footpaths and safety issues**
Current temporary arrangements are unsafe for wheelchairs, prams and pedestrians and the Town Council requested a proper temporary footpath, clear signage and a timeline for re-opening.

The Consortium agreed to review this urgently.
- **Court Royal Crossings**
Concerns were raised regarding the lack of safe crossing points to Morrisons, and it was suggested that the Consortium collectively consider whether a formal crossing point is required.
- **Bus stop issues on MLR**
This ongoing issue, which has been raised previously on several occasions, relates to the use of rubber mats at temporary bus stops to cover muddy verges. It was highlighted that these are not suitable for people with disabilities, and a request was made for proper hardstanding to be provided.
- **Flooding and drainage issues at Stone Barton**
An on-site meeting was held following the flooding that affected Taylor Wimpey homes early this year. A further meeting was missed by the Taylor Wimpey representative without apology. It was noted that work continues to explore a solution to this issue.
- **Public Open Space (POS) Maintenance**
Multiple POS areas not being maintained by developers prior to handover to the Town Council resulting in complaints from residents. The Town Council requested that the Consortium ensure landscapers maintain all POS within their ownership and to address specific areas previously reported which are still unresolved.
- **Adoption of roads**
Residents increasingly frustrated by years-long delays.

The Consortium explained that due to the delay in Section 104 agreements this has stalled the Section 38 road adoptions.

EDDC requested:
A clear update at the next meeting
A realistic adoption programme

The Consortium raised the following issues:

- **Outstanding planning conditions on town centre parcels and struggling to get interest from registered providers for the affordable housing.**
EDDC advised that this is being discussed with the Housing Team and officers will continue to engage over this matter.

The Group received an update on education provision in Cranbrook, covering early years, primary, secondary and SEND.

It was noted that pupil number remain high, but for September 2026 all Cranbrook children who applied for a school place within Cranbrook secured a place with no need for bulge classes. Expansion works are progressing, including additional capacity at Rockbeare Primary School and improved kitchen facilities at Cranbrook Education Campus.

There is an identified shortfall in year-round early years and childcare provision, although this will be partly addressed by a new nursery opening in Cranbrook in September 2026, alongside additional provision near Exeter Airport.

Plans for future provision include:

- A new 630-place primary school at Cobdens (target opening September 2028, subject to funding).
- A further 420-place primary school in a future expansion area.
- Phased expansion of Cranbrook Education Campus secondary provision to at least 1,200 places.

In relation to SEND provision, delays to the DfE's free school programme which was due to deliver the planned SEND school in Cranbrook were noted. Devon County Council has instead accepted capital funding to deliver additional SEND education provision more immediately to address existing demand and is prioritising increased capacity within mainstream school settings across Devon.

In line with the recently published Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper DCC was taking a regional approach to SEND provision with a strong emphasis on supporting children within mainstream schools through a three tiered approach:

- Inclusion and support bases (early intervention)
- SEND specialist units (special school places within a mainstream setting). All options are being explored with Exmouth and Honiton currently furthest progressed for East Devon.
- Special schools (higher level of need)

Key challenges highlighted included high pupil yields, limited ability to forward fund infrastructure and Section 106 delivery constraints linked to housing growth.

Next steps include progressing new school designs, expanding secondary provision, improving early years access and continuing to develop inclusive SEND provision within mainstream settings.

The Chair expressed disappointment that, although funding had been identified for a SEND school in Cranbrook through DfE's free school programme, Devon County Council had opted to take capital funding instead of progressing the school. He asked what the alternative plans were for SEND provision in Cranbrook, as well as for the use of the land originally identified for the school.

Clarification was sought regarding fair access places. It was explained that these apply when families move into the area during the school year, at which point schools are required to admit a specified number of children in line with the School Admissions Code.

Concern was raised regarding the potential impact of Rockbeare Primary School no longer accepting pupils from Cranbrook from September, following indication from the Head. It was explained that any change to admissions arrangements would require a formal consultation, and any concerns regarding the admission of local children should be raised directly with the school's admission authority.

8 **Cranbrook Town Centre Projects**

Members noted progress on a number of Cranbrook Town Centre projects including land assembly, master planning, the leisure and health campus and cranbox.

Updates included:

- Progress on land transfers to enable key developments, including the Extra Care facility (under construction) and future town centre uses.
- Advancement of plans for a leisure and wellbeing centre, with design work nearing completion, a second public consultation underway and a planning application due to be submitted in June 2026.
- Slower progress on the Integrated Neighbourhood Health Centre, pending confirmation of revenue funding.
- Continued development of the town centre masterplan, aligned with wider growth proposals including Marlcombe.
- Progress on the Cranbox project with planning approval secured and construction expected to begin in summer 2026, subject to land transfer completion.

It was noted that, once current transfers are complete, the Council will hold all remaining undeveloped non-residential town centre land.

9 **Cranbrook, Marlcombe and the wider growth corridor**

The Group received a verbal update and the opportunity to ask questions on the development programme for Marlcombe, the expansions areas and Enterprise Zone sites.

It was noted that a Joint Project Executive Group has been established, with membership including Councillor Paul Arnott and Councillor Todd Olive from East Devon District Council, alongside two Devon County Councillors. The first meeting of the Interim Growth Board, an advisory board that will report to the Project Executive Group, will take place on 6 July.

The officer group is progressing work to understand the various project streams and how these will be taken forward, which will in turn inform the structure, membership and hosting arrangements for the future shared delivery team.

The Council is developing a business case to seek forward funding for key Cranbrook infrastructure, including Category 4 projects, education and health and leisure facilities.

10 **Implementation Plan**

The Group received an updated Implementation Plan setting out the programme of projects for delivery, now including all Category 4 projects.

A query was raised regarding what steps the Town Council would need to take to identify how the funding gap for the Tillhouse project could be addressed. The Corporate Lead for Placemaking and Major Projects advised that the Council had begun reviewing options to bring forward land parcels and welcomed further discussions with the Town Council.

A query was raised regarding the Fire Service and whether they require a Fire Station in Cranbrook.

RESOLVED:

That the Implementation Plan be noted.

11 Community Governance Review

The Group received an update on the Community Governance Review. A further consultation was undertaken earlier this year, and feedback indicated that some residents did not support the proposed changes to the parish boundaries. It was noted that the response rate was low, with some objections relating to development concerns.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the Community Governance Review be noted.

12 Forward Plan

The Group received and noted the current forward plan.

RESOLVED:

That the forward plan be noted.

13 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting 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 on the agenda, is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B).

14 District Heating - decarbonisation and Energy Services Company for the expansion areas.

The Group received a verbal update on the district heating project for the expansion areas. It was noted that proposals are progressing in a policy-compliant manner and, as they are currently at the procurement stage, the matter is being considered under Part B.

RESOLVED:

That the update on options for district heating within the expansion areas be noted.

Attendance List

Officers in attendance:

K Blakey (EDDC)

K Bloxham (EDDC)

T Olive (EDDC)

H Gent (DCC)

V Wright (CTC)

Cranbrook New Community Partners present:

Powell Brown, Project Manager for Brookbanks

Richard Harrison, Land and Planning Director for Taylor Wimpey
Damon Buckle, Technical Director at Persimmon Homes SW

Officers in attendance:

Thea Billeter, Corporate Lead - New Communities, EDDC
Naomi Harnett, Corporate Lead – Placemaking & Major Projects, EDDC
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer, EDDC
Nicola Wilson, Principal Planning Officer, DCC
Andrew Wood, Director of Place, EDDC
Alexandra Robinson, Clerk to Cranbrook Town Council

Councillor apologies:

S Hawkins

Chair

Date: