

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 4 November 2025 at 5.15 pm

Present

Councillors: L Taylor (Leader), D Wulff (Deputy Leader),
J M Downes, G Duchesne, M Fletcher, J
Lock, S Keable and J Wright

Apology

Councillor: N Bradshaw

Also Present

Officers: Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy
Chief Executive (S151)), Maria De Leburne (Director of
Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Simon
Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Paul Deal (Head
of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Jason Ball
(Climate and Sustainability Specialist), Laura Woon
(Democratic Services Manager) and Carole Oliphant
(Housing Policy Officer)

Councillors

Online J Buczkowski, J Cairney, S Clist, G Czapiewski, L G J
Kennedy, C Harrower and B Holdman

Officers Online Carole Oliphant (Housing Policy Officer)

60. **APOLOGIES (00:04:33)**

Apologies were received from Councillor N Bradshaw.

61. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:04:44)**

None received.

62. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:04:50)**

Members were reminded of the need to make declarations of interest where appropriate.

63. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00:05:10)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 October 2025 were **APPROVED** as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Leader.

64. **VARIATION OF TENANCY AGREEMENT (00:05:25)**

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Health on the Variation of the Tenancy Agreement.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The Council had been undertaking a thorough process over the last 12 months to update the Council's standard Tenancy Agreement for all its secure and introductory tenants. To update such an agreement was a major exercise as it impacted most of the Council's residents living in a Council home both current and new.
- The current Tenancy Agreement was last updated in 2016, since then there had been significant changes in legislation and the wider regulatory landscape in addition to major events such as the fire at Grenfell Tower and the Covid pandemic. These had impacted on the Council's operating environment as a social landlord whereby the Tenancy Agreement needed to be updated to reflect the change and numerous recent policy updates.
- Following on from Cabinet approval on 1 April 2025 to commence statutory consultations with tenants under the Housing Act to vary the terms of the Council's Tenancy Agreement, the report presented the results of the consultation and the final draft Tenancy Agreement for approval.
- The consultation and the draft agreement were produced in close partnership with the Council's Legal Services and Mid Devon Housing (MDH) team to ensure it was fit for purpose and fully compliant with the legal requirements. This was important as the Tenancy Agreement was the formal agreement between the Council and each of their residential Council tenants. As such, it underpinned the core relationship with them and was the key basis for the Council's ongoing tenancy management.
- More information on the extensive tenant consultation exercise and the responses were set out in more detail in sections 2 and 3 of the report respectively.
- Subject to Cabinet approval, MDH would plan and implement the introduction of the new terms & conditions set out in the new Tenancy Agreement. This process would vary for a small number of new tenants who had signed up with MDH after the consultation closed in August this year compared to the existing tenants who were able to be involved in the consultation. Once the new agreement was live, then existing tenants would transfer to the new agreement and relevant future tenants would be automatically signed up under the new document until such time as the agreement may need to be reviewed and updated again.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- How was the Council managing the overgrown gardens that also included gardens with rubbish and rodents? It was explained that it was the tenant's

responsibility to maintain their own gardens. Housing Officers would check properties and report appropriately to ensure actions were taken.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Tenancy Agreement attached in Annex A be approved subject to any responses from new tenants signed up after the preliminary consultation ended.
2. Delegated authority be given to Head of Housing and Health (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services) to review the consultation responses from the new tenants and authorise such changes to the new Tenancy Agreement as he considered necessary in the light of any late consultation responses.
3. Delegated authority be given to Head of Housing and Health (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services) to draft and serve the Notice of Variation to existing secure/introductory tenants under section 103 of the Housing Act 1985 to vary the terms and condition of their tenancies so that they were on the terms and conditions of the new Tenancy Agreement.

As recommended by the Homes Policy Development Group.

(Proposed by Cllr J Lock and seconded by Cllr S Keable)

Reason for Decision:

As a registered provider (RP) of social housing, the Council is obliged to comply with the requirements of the Housing Act 1985.

It is good practice to review tenancy agreements on a regular basis to take account of changes to legislation, regulatory requirements, policy and good practice. RPs also need to ensure that those responsible for housing management can rely on a robust tenancy agreement which can be used in support of efficient and effective management of tenancies and the housing stock.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

65. CARBON FOOTPRINT REPORT 2024-2025 (00:13:40)

The Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist on the Council's Carbon Footprint.

The Cabinet Member for Parish and Community Engagement outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The result 2% higher than the 2023-2024 carbon footprint. That increase was down to the climate change impact linked to spending, and the rise in construction spending had the most effect.
- The Council had successfully cut emissions by investing in decarbonising the Tiverton and Crediton Leisure Centres and social housing and by doing this the Council had significantly lowered it's carbon footprint.

- In the Council's Climate Change Strategy: the focus had been on the elements in their control; acting on opportunities to invest; and acting to influence those that the Council did business with.
- The net emissions for elements in the Council's direct control (comprising Council offices and facilities; transport; and offsets) contributed to just under 9% of the 2024/25 overall total footprint.
- The 1,589 tCO₂e figure for 2024/25 was circa 35% lower than the 2,427 tCO₂e figure for the 2018/19 baseline year. (Almost 840 tCO₂e less.)
- Reductions since 2018/19 came from Council offices and facilities (from 1,098 to 705 tCO₂e); and offsets (from 0 to -420 tCO₂e).
- Since 2018/19 fleet impacts had hardly changed, although the Council now served circa 2,500 more households (from 35,650 up to 38,150).
- The team had made rapid progress to replace old social housing with 48 net-zero new-build homes. The procurement relating to those construction projects would show on the Council's 2025-2026 carbon footprint (Scope 3 indirect i.e. supply chain). However, that investment would reduce the annual carbon footprint, in Scope 1 and Scope 2, by approximately 136 tonnes per year.

Discussion took place regarding:

- How the electric vehicles worked operationally and what was the availability? It was explained that vehicles could be charged whilst officers were on call out which would then provide enough charge to get officers to where they would need to be.
- Whether a hybrid vehicle would be more suitable for that line of work? It was explained that this may be a suitable option but that it would also depend on the emissions used and the reduction in the carbon footprint.
- Did the Council have any data from other authorities to compare on the reduction in emissions? It was explained that due to the difference in the operations day to day it would be difficult to compare.
- The purchasing of the Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers and for those to be installed through a trained electrician that worked for the Council. It was explained that challenges may occur as some homes may have complications when installing an EV Charger.
- How were the Council performing in regard to solar panels and air source heat pumps? It was explained that the Council were liaising through the appropriate channels to meet the Council targets.
- The Council was in the top 20% - how many other Council's were part of this?
- Were the electric vehicle serviced locally? It was confirmed that they were serviced locally.

Reason for Decision:

The Council's environmental sustainability duties are underpinned by legislation e.g. Environment Act 2021. All local authorities have obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008 with regard to climate change adaptation (resilience) and mitigation (emission reductions). Full Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

66. DRAFT BUDGET REPORT 2026/27 (00:33:33)

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience on the draft Budget 2026/27.

The Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The update on the 2026/27 draft budget for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, highlighted the forecast shortfalls on the basis of what the Council currently knew, recognising that the Council were not likely to be aware of the full financial context until the funding allocation after the Chancellor's national budget was received.
- To that end, Cabinet had deferred aspects of this report from the last meeting in order to seek greater clarity on the status and deliverability of the proposals put forward from the Policy Development Groups (PDG) that had been categorised as 'amber'.
- As a result of this, the recommendation in the report was not to approve these savings, but to retain them in the budget planning process until this Council had greater certainty and confidence over the budget gaps that remained following upcoming national government statements on the reconfiguring of Council funding allocations. It was further highlighted that the potential of savings in economic development grants was overstated in the previous version that came to Cabinet and would be revised within future reports. This approach continued this administration's commitment to financial responsibility and would allow time to assess the true extent of the funding shortfall before making amendments to budget options based on that position.
- The report also introduced the emerging 2026/27–2030/31 Capital Programme including expenditure profiles for consideration.
- Members were reminded of the ongoing challenges due to significant funding uncertainties prevalent at this time. Further updates were expected before the final budget approval decisions in February 2026.

RESOLVED that:

1. The amber budget options remained as budget planning assumptions until clarity was received following the Government financial settlement announcement and that was **AGREED**.
2. Consideration and comments were given regarding the emerging Capital Programme covering the period 2026/27 to 2030/31 within Appendix 1a and 1b;
3. There remained little clarity on the financial settlement currently and that this was likely to require additional ad hoc updates as and when greater information was known, particularly following the announcement of the Local Government Finance Settlement be **NOTED**.

(Proposed by Cllr J Downes and seconded Cllr S Keable)

Reason for Decision:

By undertaking regular reviews of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, the Council could ensure that the Corporate Plan priorities were affordable. The implications of

the budget gap were set out within the paper. Many areas required greater clarity, particularly around national funding and possible changes to Government Policy.

Note: *Report previously circulated

67. 2025/26 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2 (00:49:52)

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience on the 2025/26 Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring.

The Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The 2025/26 Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring report detailed the current projected General Fund overspend of £156k, a Housing Revenue Account overspend of £745k with narrative explaining the variances.
- The Capital Programme variances including underspends, overspends, and slippage, with recommendations for budget increases due to additional grants and housing stock purchases.
- The report updated Members on the usage of procurement waivers, the social rent corrections, and the ongoing financial risks amid uncertain future funding.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- Providing clarification around the disposal of the derelict social house as referred to within the recommendation. It was explained that it was uneconomic to renovate, the land had development and the Council would seek to sell the land for the maximum price.
- Clarification regarding the Housing Revenue stock and if that was a forecast outturn position or an overspend. It was explained that it was a forecast outturn, however it was in year and changes may happen.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The financial monitoring information for the income and expenditure for the three months to 30 September 2025 and the projected outturn position be **NOTED**.
- b) To recommend to Full Council that the increase to the Capital Programme of £526k in respect of additional Grant funding received (£276k – see par 5.3) and extra budget to further increase the HRA Housing Stock (£250k – see para 5.5) be **AGREED**.
- c) Delegated Authority be given for the Head of Housing and Health in association with the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) to dispose of a derelict social house which was uneconomic to renovate, and where there was no need for such a home and use the capital receipt generated to reinvest in the provision of additional social housing - see para 5.6.
- d) The use of Waivers and Direct Awards for the Procurement of goods and services as included in Section 7 be **NOTED**.

- e) The performance achieved in respect of resolving the Social Rent errors within the Council's direct control and recognise the impact of the delays in responses from partner organisations, as outlined within Section 8 be **NOTED**.
- f) The update on future funding given in paragraphs 9.2 be **NOTED**.

(Proposed by Cllr J Downes and seconded by Cllr G DuChesne)

Reason for Decision:

Good financial management and administration underpin the entire document. A surplus or deficit on the Revenue Budget would impact on the Council's General Fund balances. The Council's financial position was constantly reviewed to ensure it was continued financial health.

Note: *Report previously circulated

68. **2025/26 TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 2 (00:49:25)**
69.

The Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience on the 2025/26 Quarter 2 Treasury Management.

The Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The report provided an update on the Council's treasury performance for the first six months, noting a decline in investment returns due to lower interest rates and reduced cash balances.
- It was proposed that there be a continuation of the current investment policy and outlined revised capital financing requirements and borrowing limits based upon the updated information. This also included an economic commentary from the Council Treasury Advisors forecasting falling interest rates amid inflation and economic uncertainties.

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommend to Council that:

- a) A continuation of the current policy outlined at paragraphs 4.0 – 4.5 be **AGREED**.
- b) The changes to the Capital Financing Requirement, Operational Boundaries and Authorised Limits for the current year at paragraphs 5.4 – 5.5 be **AGREED**

(Proposed by Cllr J Downes and seconded by Cllr G DuChesne)

Reason for Decision:

Good financial management and administration underpin the entire strategy. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy should attempt to maximise investment return commensurate with minimum risk to the principal sums invested.

Note: *Report previously circulated

69. TAX BASE CALCULATIONS REPORT

The Leader of the Council stated that the Tax Base Calculation Report would be deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

70. NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS

The Clerk identified the changes that had been made to the list since it was published with the agenda.

This included the following:

- The Waste Depot remodelling update had been added to the meeting on 2 December 2025.
- Tax Base Calculation Report be deferred to 2 December 2025.

Note: * Key Decisions Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 18.08pm)

LEADER