



A MEETING of the **MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton on Wednesday, 23 July 2025 at 6.00 pm

ALL MEMBERS of the **COUNCIL** are summoned to attend for the purposes of transacting the business specified in the Agenda which is set out below:

[The next meeting is scheduled to be held in Tiverton on Wednesday, 24 September 2025 at 6.00 pm]

Please Note: this meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the Public and Press are able to attend via Teams. If you are intending to attend in person please contact the committee clerk in advance, in order that numbers of people can be appropriately managed in physical meeting rooms.

The meeting will be Hybrid and an audio recording made and published on the website after the meeting

[To Join the meeting online, Click here](#)

Meeting ID: 375 034 509 334

Passcode: ds7Ck72c

STEPHEN WALFORD

Chief Executive

15 July 2025

AGENDA

1 **Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 **Public Question Time**

To receive any questions and or statements relating to any items of the Council powers/ duties or which otherwise affects the District and items on the agenda from members of the public.

3 **Declarations of Interest under the Code of Conduct**

To record any interests on agenda matters.

4 **Minutes** (*Pages 9 - 16*)

To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 7 May 2025.

5 **Chair's Announcements**

To receive any announcements which the Chair of the Council may wish to make.

6 **Petitions**

To receive any petitions from members of the public.

7 **Notice of Motion**

1. Motion 608 (Cllr G Westcott)

The Council had before it a **MOTION** submitted for the first time.

Motion: Anaerobic Digester Plants

Council is asked to note that:

- That the contribution of Anaerobic Digester Plants to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is highly variable;
- That while digestion of on farm wastes reduces escape of greenhouse gases from stored plant wastes, slurry pits etc, industrial scale AD processing requires considerable heavy vehicle transport of feedstock to the plant and digestate away from it for spreading on land;
- That heavy vehicle traffic movements constitute a considerable problem for local residents on single carriageway roads;
- That research shows that AD plants cannot necessarily be expected to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas

emissions (only 1/3 of French AD plants studied did so) and so do not necessarily constitute sustainable development.

Council is asked to support:

Planning officers to prepare a Supplementary Planning document outlining the conditions under which any further applications for Anaerobic Digester plants, or the expansion of existing plants, would be acceptable and contribute to goals for climate change mitigation; and what planning conditions might be required to ensure that this contribution is realised.

[Does anaerobic digestion really help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? A nuanced case study based on 30 cogeneration plants in France – Science Direct](#)

8 Appointment of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

To elect the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of 2025/26.

9 Cabinet- Reports of the minutes held on 17 June 2025 and 8 July 2025 (Pages 17 - 56)

17 June 2025
(Recommendations to Full Council)

1. 2024/2025 Annual Treasury Management Review.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council that the actual 2024/25 Prudential and treasury indicators in this report be approved.

8 July 2025

10 Scrutiny Committee- Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2025- 9 June 2025 (Pages 57 - 70)

14 April 2025

9 June 2025

11 Audit Committee- Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2025 (Pages 71 - 80)

24 June 2025

12 Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2025 (Pages 81 - 86)

17 June 2025

- 13 **Economy and Assets- Policy Development Group - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025** *(Pages 87 - 94)*
- 19 June 2025
- 14 **Homes Policy Development Group - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2025** *(Pages 95 - 104)*
- 3 June 2025
- 15 **Planning, Environment and Sustainability Policy Development Group - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025** *(Pages 105 - 114)*
- 10 June 2025
- 16 **Service Delivery and Continuous Improvements Policy Development Group - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2025** *(Pages 115 - 124)*
- 23 June 2025
- 17 **Licensing Committee - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2025** *(Pages 125 - 128)*
- 27 June 2025
- 18 **Regulatory Committee - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2025** *(Pages 129 - 132)*
- 27 June 2025
- 19 **Planning Committee - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April, 11 June and 2 July 2025** *(Pages 133 - 156)*
- 9 April 2025
- 11 June 2025
- 2 July 2025
- 20 **Standards Committee - Reports of the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2025** *(Pages 157 - 166)*
- 18 June 2025
(Recommendation to Full Council)
1. Advise to Elected Members who may be Victims of Crime

Standards Committee **RECOMMENDS** to Full Council that all members note the procedures and the options available to them in the event of an

incident occurring.

21 **Questions in accordance with Procedure Rule 11**

To deal with any questions raised pursuant to Procedure Rule 11 not already dealt with during the relevant Committee reports.

22 **Special Urgency Decisions**

To note any decisions taken under Rule 16 (of the Constitution) Special Urgency

23 **Questions to Cabinet Members**

To receive answers from the Cabinet Members to questions on their portfolios from other Members.

24 **Members Business**

To receive any statements made and notice of future questions by Members.

Note: the time allowed for this item is limited to 15 minutes.

Guidance notes for meetings of Mid Devon District Council

From 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. The Council will enable all people to continue to participate in meetings via Teams.

If the Council experience technology difficulties at a committee meeting the Chairman may make the decision to continue the meeting 'in-person' only to conclude the business on the agenda.

1. Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at Committee@middevon.gov.uk

They can also be accessed via the council's website [Click Here](#)

Printed agendas can also be viewed in reception at the Council offices at Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6PP.

2. Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership.

The Code of Conduct can be [viewed here](#):

3. Minutes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. Minutes of meetings are not verbatim.

4. Public Question Time

Residents, electors or business rate payers of the District wishing to raise a question and/or statement under public question time are asked to provide their written questions to the Democratic Services team by 5pm three clear working days before the meeting to ensure that a response can be provided at the meeting. You will be invited to ask your question and or statement at the meeting and will receive the answer prior to, or as part of, the debate on that item. Alternatively, if you are content to receive an answer after the item has been debated, you can register to speak by emailing your full name to Committee@middevon.gov.uk by no later than 4pm on the day before the meeting. You will be invited to speak at the meeting and will receive a written response within 10 clear working days following the meeting.

Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible

5. Meeting Etiquette for participants

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.

For those joining the meeting virtually:

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.

- Switch off your camera if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using camera then please state your name)
- Switch off your camera and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called “turn on live captions” which provides subtitles on the screen.

6. Exclusion of Press & Public

When considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act. If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed. They will be invited to return as soon as the meeting returns to open session.

7. Recording of meetings

All media, including radio and TV journalists, and members of the public may attend Council, Cabinet, PDG and Committee meetings (apart from items Media and Social Media Policy - 2023 page 22 where the public is excluded) you can view our Media and Social Media Policy [here](#). They may record, film or use social media before, during or after the meeting, so long as this does not distract from or interfere unduly with the smooth running of the meeting. Anyone proposing to film during the meeting is requested to make this known to the Chairman in advance. The Council also makes audio recordings of meetings which are published on our website [Browse Meetings, 2024 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#).

8. Fire Drill Procedure

If you hear the fire alarm you should leave the building by the marked fire exits, follow the direction signs and assemble at the master point outside the entrance. Do not use the lifts or the main staircase. You must wait there until directed otherwise by a senior officer. If anybody present is likely to need assistance in exiting the building in the event of an emergency, please ensure you have let a member of Democratic Services know before the meeting begins and arrangements will be made should an emergency occur.

9. WIFI

An open, publicly available Wi-Fi network is normally available for meetings held in the Phoenix Chambers at Phoenix House.

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held on 7 May 2025 at 6.00 pm

**Present
Councillors**

G Czapiewski (Vice-Chair), C Adcock,
N Bradshaw, D Broom, E Buczkowski,
J Buczkowski, J Cairney, S Chenore,
S J Clist, L J Cruwys, G Cochran, C Connor,
F J Colthorpe, A Cuddy, G Duchesne,
B Fish, M Fletcher, A Glover, C Harrower,
B Holdman, M Jenkins, S Keable,
L G J Kennedy, L Knight, N Letch, J Lock,
J Poynton, R Roberts, S Robinson, M
Stratton, A Stirling, L Taylor, H Tuffin,
N Woollatt, G Westcott, A White, J Wright
and D Wulff

**Apologies
Councillors**

M D Binks and J M Downes and M Farrell (online)

**Also Present
Officer(s):**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy
Chief Executive (S151)), Maria De Leburne (Director of
Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)) and
Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

318 CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr L Taylor nominated Cllr G Czapiewski for the election as Chair of the District Council for the year 2025/2026: This nomination was seconded by Cllr J Buczkowski.

Upon a vote being taken it was then:

RESOLVED that Cllr G Czapiewski be elected Chair of Mid Devon District Council for the Municipal year 2025/2026.

In accordance with Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972, Cllr G Czapiewski then made a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

319 RETIREMENT OF THE CHAIR

The Chair thanked the retiring Chair, Mr Frank Letch MBE for the way in which he had carried out the duties. There had been many tributes to Frank. His wit, resilience and his humanity would set the bar high as an example to others. There would be a memorial service at 2 p.m. on Friday 16th May in Crediton.

320 CHAIR'S ADDRESS

The Chair addressed the Council and thanked the Members for electing him as Chair.

The Chair had the following announcements to make:

- He had been awarded the privilege of serving as the Chair of Council and he committed to uphold the high standards of office, supporting and representing the residents of Mid Devon and the Council.
- He looked forward to meeting and working with volunteers who provided invisible support within the communities.
- Today, 80 years ago, the war in Europe was ended by the signing of peace agreements. The following day was declared a public holiday in this Country. Tomorrow, across the land, ceremonies would be held to commemorate this event. Flags would be raised, bells pealed, lanterns lit. Whilst there were celebration tomorrow, we should recognise the events that led to the conflagration and learn from history and strive to ensure that the manipulation of truth and tyranny were not allowed to affect us again. The war continued in the Far East, with service personnel returning from Europe being sent to the Far East, and it was not until Friday 15th August 1945 that hostilities ended in that theatre. We would also commemorate VJ Day on Friday 15th August.

321 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors: M Binks, J Downes and M Farrell (online)

Apologies were received from Councillor J Downes as he represented the Council an afternoon tea at Buckingham Palace.

322 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests when appropriate.

Cllr P Colthorpe referred to item 9 the appointments to outside bodies and declared she was the Chair of INVOLVE – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon.

323 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 April were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

324 VICE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr J Lock nominated Cllr S Chenore for the election as Vice- Chair of the District Council for the year 2025/2026: This nomination was seconded by Cllr S Clist.

Upon a vote being taken it was then:

RESOLVED that Cllr S Chenore be elected Vice- Chair of Mid Devon District Council for the Municipal year 2025/2026.

In accordance with Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972, Cllr S Chenore then made a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

325 **CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Cllr E Buczkowski nominated Cllr S Robinson for election as Chair of Scrutiny. The nomination was seconded by Cllr A Cuddy.

Upon a vote being taken, it was then:

RESOLVED that Cllr S Robinson be elected Chair of Scrutiny for the Municipal Year 2025/2026.

Those voting **AGAINST**: Councillor: P Colthorpe, B Holdman, R Roberts, and N Woollatt.

326 **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE, SUB COMMITTEE, WORKING GROUPS AND OTHER INTERNAL BODIES**

The Council had before it a table * setting out the revised allocation of seats on Committees and other Council bodies.

Arising thereon:

Appointment of Committees and Allocation of Seats on Committees and other Council Bodies

The Chair **MOVED**:

(a) That the Council approved the allocation of seats on Committees and other Council Bodies as shown on the schedule;

(b) That Members be appointed to Committees in accordance with the names notified to the Chief Executive by each of the Political Groups represented on the Council, to give effect to the approved allocation of seats in (a) above;

(c) That Members also be appointed to Working Groups and other Internal Bodies in accordance with the names notified to the Chief Executive by each of the Political Groups represented on the Council, to give effect to the approved allocation of seats in (a) above;

(d) That the Chief Executive be authorised to make changes to membership of Committees, Working Groups and other Internal Bodies as may be notified to him from time to time by the relevant Political Group to which those seats had been allocated by the Council.

(e) That the appointments to seats remaining to be filled by ungrouped Members should be made at this meeting.

Cllr N Woollatt **MOVED** seconded by Cllr L Taylor to take up the Ungrouped seat on the Standards Committee.

Upon a vote being taken, the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

Note: *table previously circulated.

327 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The following appointments to outside bodies in accordance with the list as follows were **AGREED** and to remove representation on Tiverton Town Centre Partnership:

Outside Body	Current Representative/s	Representative/s 2025/2026	Appointment Length
Armed Forces Partnership	Cllr C Harrower	Cllr C Harrower	4 years until May 2027
Blackdown Hills National Landscape	Cllr N Bradshaw	Cllr N Bradshaw	Annual
Broadpath Landfill & Hillhead Liaison Committee	Cllr A Glover	Cllr A Glover	Annual
Building Control Joint Committee	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets & Property Services Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets & Property Services Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Annual
Business Forum Mid Devon	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Annual
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets & Property Services	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets & Property Services	4 years until May 2027
Churches Housing Action Team Management Board	Cllr G Cochran	Cllr G Cochran	4 years until May 2027

Culm Garden Village Delivery Board	The Leader Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	The Leader Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Annual
Citizens Advice Torridge, North, Mid & West Devon	Vacancy	Cllr A Stirling	4 years until May 2027
Community Safety Partnership	Cabinet Member for Quality of Living, Equalities and Public Health	Cabinet Member for Quality of Living, Equalities and Public Health	4 years until May 2027
Cullompton HAZ / Town Centre Regeneration Partnership	Cllr S Robinson	Cllr S Robinson	4 years until May 2027
Cullompton Town Team 2 Members	Cllr L Knight Cllr S Robinson	Cllr L Knight Cllr S Robinson	Annual
Dartmoor National Park Authority Forum 2 Members	Cllr C Connor Cllr J Downes	Cllr C Connor Cllr J Downes	4 years until May 2027
Devon and Torbay Housing Advisory Group	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services	Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property Services	4 years until May 2027
Devon Armed Forces Community Well-Being Partnership	Cllr G Cochran	Cllr G Cochran	4 years until May 2027
Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee (formally known as 'Devon Authorities Waste Reduction & Recycling Committee')	Cabinet Member for Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement (plus a deputy)	Cabinet Member for Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement (plus a deputy)	4 years until May 2027
Devon Countryside Access Forum	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for	4 years until May 2027

	Housing, Assets & Property Services	Housing, Assets & Property Services	
Devon Districts Forum	Leader	Leader	Annual
Devon Rail Forum	Cllr J Downes	Cllr J Downes	Annual
Devon & Somerset Metro Board	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration	Annual
LGA General LGA Assembly / Annual Conference	Leader	Leader	4 years until May 2027
Gypsy and Traveller Forum	1. Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration 2. Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets & Property Services 3. Cllr A Glover	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets & Property Services 4. Cllr A Glover	Annual
INVOLVE – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon	Cllr S Robinson	Cllr S Robinson	Annual
Mid and East Devon Children's Centres Advisory Board (2 Members)	Cllr S Robinson Cllr F Letch MBE	Cllr S Robinson Cllr S Chenore	4 years until 2027
Mid Devon Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (hosted by DCC) (2 Members)	Cllr J Poynton Cllr J Cairney	Cllr J Poynton Cllr L Cruwys	Bi-annual
Mid Devon Locality (County) Committee (hosted by DCC) 2 Members	Cllr N Letch Cllr S Keable	Cllr N Letch Cllr S Keable	4 years until May 2027

Mid Devon Mobility (previously known as Tiverton and District Community Transport Association)	Cllr G DuChesne	Cllr G DuChesne	4 years until May 2027
Most Sparsely Populated Councils Group (part of the RSN Rural Services Network)	Cllr G Czapiewski Cllr S Robinson (substitute member)	Cllr G Czapiewski Cllr S Robinson (substitute member)	4 years until May 2027
OkeRail Forum	Cllr J Downes	Cllr M Jenkins	Annual
PATROL (Parking & Traffic Regulations outside of London)	Cllr G Cochran	Cllr G Cochran	4 years until May 2027
PCC Councillor Advocate Scheme	Cllr L Kennedy	Cllr L Kennedy	4 years until 2027
Plastic Free Tiverton	Cllr B Fish	Cllr B Fish	4 years until 2027
Police and Crime Panel for Devon and Cornwall	Cllr G Czapiewski	Cllr G Czapiewski	4 years until May 2027
South West Councils	The Leader	The Leader	Annual
South West Councils Employers Panel	Cabinet Member for People, Development and Deputy Leader	Cabinet Member for People, Development and Deputy Leader	Annual
Team Devon	The Leader	The Leader	Annual
Tiverton Adventure Playground Committee	Cllr B Holdman	Cllr B Holdman	4 years until May 2027
Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life	Cllr L Cruwys	Cllr L Cruwys	4 years until May 2027
Tiverton Town Centre Partnership (3 Tiverton Town Members)	Cllr D Wulff Cllr L Cruwys Cllr A Cuddy		Annual

Westleigh Group	Quarry	Liaison	Cllr J Lock	Cllr J Lock	4 years until May 2027
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328 **SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

The Chair **MOVED** that the Council agree the existing scheme of delegations as set out in Part 3 of the Constitution.

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have been **CARRIED**.

329 **PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS**

The Chair **MOVED** that the following programme of ordinary meetings of the Council for the year 2025/26 be approved:

23 July 2025
24 September 2025
29 October 2025
17 December 2025
18 February 2026
22 April 2026
6 May 2026

Upon a vote being taken the **MOTION** was declared to have be **CARRIED**.

(The meeting ended at 6.45pm)

CHAIR

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **CABINET** held on 17 June 2025 at 5.15 pm

**Present
Councillors**

L Taylor, J Lock, J M Downes, G Duchesne,
M Fletcher, S Keable, J Wright and D Wulff

**Apology
Councillor**

N Bradshaw

**Also Present
Councillor(s)**

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski, L Knight and S Robinson

**Also Present
Officer(s):**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure), Adrian Welsh (Strategic Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery), Haley Walker (Leisure Business Manager), Christie McCombe (Area Planning Officer) and Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

**Councillors
Online**

L Cruwys and G Czapiewski

Officers Online

K Knowles (Operations Manager for Financial Services)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr N Bradshaw.

2. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Barry Warren

SHO13A - Cost of Abortive Zed Pods Capital Projects transferred to Revenue - £455,300. This seems to be the loss of a large amount of money which the Council is burying.

Question 1:

How many projects were aborted?

Question 2:

Why was such a large amount expended before the projects were aborted?

SHO01 - A provision of £234k is shown as Housing Rent Error overcharge, which resulted in more than £7 million being wrongly paid by tenants to the Council.

Question 3:

Is this the cost of the team working on this?

Question 4:

If not, what is this amount for?

It is proposed to transfer money from the Housing Maintenance Fund final reserve to cover both these costs (totalling nearly £700,000).

Question 5:

How can failed Zed Pods projects be classed as Housing Maintenance?

Question 6:

Does this transfer mean that ready money will no longer be available for any housing maintenance emergencies that may suddenly occur?

Question 7:

Isn't this just a way to lower the Housing Maintenance Reserve, so the Council can argue that paying back the full tenant overpayments will threaten the Council's ability to maintain the housing stock?

Contract Decision – Mid Devon Housing Build

This contract for the construction of a pair of semi-detached houses in Cullompton has been put out to tender and Cabinet is now being asked to decide to whom the contract should be awarded.

The Council has gone out to tender for a contract to build these houses which is valued at less than £1 million.

Question 8:

Why did the Council give multiple multimillion pound contracts for house builds direct to Zed Pods without going through this tender process?

Paul Elstone

The construction of a pair of 2-bedroom semi-detached properties at Honiton Road, Cullompton is part of this Council's social housing portfolio. This being Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Project Number 51

Under Financial Implication in the Cabinet Report, it says the Housing Revenue Account budget is £600,000 for this project.

Yet the approved HRA Capital Programme 2025/26 onwards, says that the budgeted cost for this project is £387,000.

And the recent ZED POD modular home value for money benchmarking report, put to Scrutiny Committee, says the total cost of the project is £444,854. A very precise figure and despite the development even being started. I have called the benchmarking report fundamentally and fatally flawed because of some very basic and high value calculation errors.

My efforts to have the report fully reviewed and properly audited so Council Members could ensure best value for money have abjectly failed. A lack of response I am disappointed to say that has become the norm for this Council.

The Honiton Road project does not seem to be anything like value for money, especially so given it is traditional build. That it is not so energy efficient and will not receive Homes England and Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) grant funding. Something a Category 2 MMC panel system build could or would provide.

Given such a wide range of cost figures and figures that have been provided by Council officers for the cost of this project, how can this Cabinet make a fully informed decision.

Question 1:

This to ensure they award a contract that truly offers best value for money for the Mid Devon residents overall?

Question 2:

I have previously raised concerns that not all Members of this Council or the public can properly interrogate the real cost of the Councils HRA projects. This given the way project information was being presented or not presented.

As a result, it was agreed by Cabinet to provide the locations of HRA projects alongside project numbers in HRA Capital Project budget report documentation.

Cabinet also agreed to show previous project expenditure amounts.

This enhanced reporting lasted just one quarter and with the HRA Capital Budget - Appendix 4 Agenda Item no longer showing this level of detail.

Will Cabinet ensure this information is reinstated and in advance of all future Council meetings where HRA project cost information is provided?

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

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

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 April 2025 were **APPROVED** as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Leader.

5. **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION- VERBAL UPDATE**

Cabinet received a verbal update from the Service Delivery Manager on the Digital Transformation update.

The following was highlighted:

- Cabinet had previously approved the digital transformation of the Leisure Service, the leisure management system and leisure application had been implemented.
- The swimming lesson software was in the early stages of implementation and access control was now out to tender.
- The Leisure Service went 'live' with Flow.
- The database of over 12k customers, the data was imported from an old system with only 6 known errors which were easily remedied (for perspective, companies usually imported with around 600 errors).
- The officers were thanked for their work, the delivery team that had made the project possible and who had worked tirelessly to build the system, in a tight timescale, in order to meet the deadline required.
- The new app was launched on Monday 7 April which had been a great success. Customer feedback had been extremely positive and the ease of the new booking journey had been especially well received. To date there had been 3,570 app downloads.
- Lot 2.2, access control, was an ongoing project. A tender process had taken place in April 2025 however there had not been a successful outcome. With only two applications, neither of which were deemed suitable.
- Lot 2.1, course software, was an integral part of the digital transformation for leisure. This system would mainly be utilised for the lesson programme, of circa 2.4k customers, as well as the running of commercial courses.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The application was easy to use and rolled out in good time.

6. **2024/25 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW REPORT**

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience on the 2024/25 Annual Treasury Management Review Report.

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

- Treasury management was a specialist area that required a number of important indicators to be approved.
- The level of capital expenditure for the year and how it had been funded, either through existing resources or through increasing the funding requirement.

- The Council maintained an under-borrowed position, meaning it was able to use reserves, balances and cash flow to meet that funding requirement without the need for external borrowing.
- The report set out the limits for borrowing, showing that the Council was well within them and the timeframes for the repayment of the existing external loans.
- Investments conformed to the approved strategy and there were no liquidity difficulties. Indeed, healthy returns from investments were achieved averaging 4.89%, helping to invest in service delivery.
- All regulations were adhered to, all policies were complied with and no external borrowing was required.

RESOLVED that:

1. The treasury activities for the year be **NOTED**.
2. That Cabinet recommend to Full Council that the actual 2024/25 prudential and treasury indicators in this report be **APPROVED**.

(Proposed by Cllr J Downes and seconded by Cllr J Wright)

Reason for Decision:

Good financial management and administration underpinned the entire document. The Council's treasury position was constantly reviewed to ensure its continued financial health.

Note: *Report previously circulated

7. **2024/2025 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT**

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) and the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience on the 2024/2025 Revenue and Capital Outturn Report.

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

- The net cost of services charged to the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) for 2024/25, subject to Audit Committee.
- The Outturn position for the General Fund was an under spend of £1,547k. This was a major corporate achievement and reflected the hard work and efforts of managers and services during the year.
- The success of securing £33.5m of funding to deliver the Cullompton Relief Road, where previous attempts had failed. This could help facilitate further progress on the Garden Village, J28 enhancement and the reopening of the railway station in Cullompton;
- Increased levels of membership at our leisure centres by over 500 or nearly 9%, driving up income and reducing the £1m subsidy by over £400k;
- Further increased waste collection, both in terms of what was collected and how much collected. This placed the Council as the 11th highest in the country.
- Incredible collection rates for Business Rates (99.8%) and Council Tax (97.6%) – making the Council one of the best in the country.

- Reduced staff turnover and sickness, avoiding recruitment and agency costs previously experienced.
- The HRA position was more challenging due to a number of one off matters that caused an over spend of £1,727k. Those included the implications of the historic rent setting error, the sale of Post Hill and sunk costs on non-viable development sites.
- Despite the HRA over spend, the Council's reserves remained healthy with the General Fund remaining at £2.025m, above the £2m minimum agreed balance as shown in Appendix 3.
- The Capital outturn position showed spend of over £23m, split £8m on General Fund projects and c£154m on HRA housing both existing housing and developing new homes. Of the General Fund spend, £2m was on the initial stages of the Cullompton Relief Road, nearly £1m had been spent on adaptations to housing for disabled residents enabling them to stay longer in their own homes.
- As previously reported, during 2024/25 a historic error was identified in the calculation of Social Rent. Following the Council's self-referral to the regulator, they had issued their judgement which also highlighted the proactive steps being taken to correct the issue. All of the overcharged rents had been corrected and the detailed work required to identify the precise level of tenant refunds was being progressed.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- Clarification around the salary underspend due to the delay in recruitment and delayed usage of contingencies to fund compliance.
- Was the cost of converting St Georges Court final?
- What was driving the deficit in the collection rate forecast?

RESOLVED that:

1. The Outturn achieved in 2024/25 which showed a net under spend of £1,547k (11.8% on the Net Total Expenditure Budget) for the General Fund, and for the Housing Revenue Account an over spend of £1,727k (13.2% on the Total Direct Expenditure Budget) be **NOTED**.
2. General Fund
 - a) The Net transfers to or from earmarked reserves for operational purposes of £792k, as detailed in the General Fund Service Budget Variance Reports shown in Appendix 1a and 1b and summarised in Appendix 3 be **APPROVED**.
 - b) The balance transfer of the £1,547k General Fund underspend to earmarked reserves as detailed in paragraph 3.5.4.4; retaining the balance of the General Reserve at £2,025k; above the minimum recommended level of £2,000k be **APPROVED**.
3. Housing Revenue Account

- a) The net transfers to or from the ring-fenced HRA earmarked reserves for operational purposes of £724k detailed in Appendix 2 and summarised in Appendix 3 be **APPROVED**.
 - b) The £1,727k Housing Revenue Account overspend to be offset with a draw from the ring-fenced HRA Housing Maintenance earmarked reserve be **APPROVED**.
 - c) The updated position on the Housing Rents error recovery programme in paragraph 4.7.1 be **NOTED**.
4. The slippage of £17,068k from the 2024/25 Capital Programme to be delivered in 2025/26 or later years as shown in Appendix 4 be **APPROVED**.
5. The procurement waivers used in Quarter 4 of 2024/25, as outlined in Section 7 be **NOTED**.

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

Reason for Decision:

Good financial management and administration underpinned 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 its continued financial health.

Note: *

- i. Report previously circulated
- ii. Cllr J Lock abstained from voting.

8. **SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (SPF) AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND (REPF): 2024/25 CLOSURE AND 2025/26 DELIVERY**

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy on the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (RESP) and the 2024/25 Closure and 2025/26 Delivery.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The previous Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). Those funding sources replaced funding previously available under the European Structural and Investment Funds.
- The successful delivery of the previous SPF and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) programme between 2022 and 2025 was particularly pleasing given that there were significant delays in the previous Government issuing confirmation of funding which substantially reduced the window for delivery. Clearly, despite short lead in times to delivery from the original Government announcements and the diversity and volume of the grants given, the performance on spend and utilisation was exceptionally strong at 99% spend of the REPF programme and 95% of the SPF programme.
- The high percentage of delivery reflected the hard work and effort invested by the Economic Development Team in proactively managing spend, identifying challenges and slippages and ensuring re-allocation of returned or unutilised funding.

- In autumn 2024 the Government would offer an additional year of Shared Prosperity Funding; subsequently it was announced that there would also be an additional year of Rural England Prosperity Funding. This funding now flowed to upper tier authorities, being administered by the County Council on behalf of the Combined County Authority – although it had been agreed that delivery would continue to principally be directed through the District Authorities.
- The Delivery Plan proposals were developed in consideration of the Council's Corporate Aims and Strategic Objectives, drawing also from the previously prepared investment plans submitted to the Government at the beginning of the UKSPF programme. Some projects were proposed to be taken forward by the County Council and others by the District Council. Those proposals had been the basis of the County Council's submission to MHCLG.
- There were a number of restrictions with regard to these funding streams. Importantly funds needed to be spent and projects delivered by 31st March 2026. There was therefore a very short window for delivery from a relatively standing start, which was particularly challenging for projects that needed other approvals such as planning permission. Mindful of the need to turn around schemes quickly, it was proposed that a small grants panel be established on the same basis that the existing Shopfront Enhancement Schemes were currently assessed and as set out within the report. It was proposed that this panel would be able to convene quickly and would determine grant funding requests up to the value of £30k.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- Those able to apply for funding and the rules around this.
- Some grants required those to bid for them that were complicated, would the Council be able to support those that need help?
- To have more robust communication about the funding to ensure more people were made aware.
- The concerns about the lack of local Members on the funding panel.
- Would the Ward Members be informed to support the application?

RESOLVED that:

1. The proposed Delivery Plan for 2025/2026 of the Shared Prosperity Fund (shown in Appendix 1) be **APPROVED**.
2. The proposed Delivery Plan for 2025/2026 of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (shown in Appendix 2) be **APPROVED**.
3. Delegated authority to the Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, to make non material changes to the Delivery Plans as required to ensure timely delivery be **GRANTED**.
4. Delegated authority to a panel consisting of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, the Director of Place and Economy, and two members of the Economic Development Team to determine grant funding requests under £30k be **GRANTED**.

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

Reason for Decision:

The report refers to external funding of £275,813 of UKSPF funding and £244,959 of REPF funding which had been allocated to the District Council based on a formulaic approach. This funding needed to be spent this financial year. The proposals for this financial year had been developed to maximise opportunities for certainty of spend.

Note: *Report previously circulated

9. **CULLOMPTON TOWN CENTRE RELIEF ROAD- VERBAL UPDATE**

Cabinet received a verbal update from the Director of Place and Economy on the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the following:

- As Cabinet would be aware; there was significant effort and achievement in securing Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) monies from Homes England in order to enable the delivery of the long awaited Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road (CTCRR).
- In securing funding and commencing delivery, the Council was able to begin to address long running infrastructure challenges within Cullompton and enable the delivery of additional homes at North West Cullompton and the first elements of new housing to the east of the M5, at the site of the proposed Garden Village.
- Agreements had now been completed with Homes England and Devon County Council in order to allow the drawing down and utilisation of funding. Devon County Council would also continue to act as the Council's delivery partner (as highways authority) in relation to the CTCRR.
- The first phase of works to enable relocation of the Cricket club had completed through works to deliver the new cricket square.
- Devon County Council had completed the acquisition of several land parcels in order to enable delivery of the road. This included the acquisition of the land required from Tesco. Furthermore, several of those transactions occurred before the end of the last financial year – thereby making good use of the funding available from Homes England within the financial year.
- Discussions continued with affected landowners where land interests or compensation still needed to be acquired or finalised;
- Further works was currently underway in relation to the cricket club – with outfield works to complete the creation of the pitch now underway, and;
- Works to refine and finesse the design and engineering components of the scheme were underway in order to get to a fixed design to allow tendering to occur.
- The intention remained to commence the main body of construction works during 2026 with completion and road opening in 2028. However, earlier enabling works were also expected to occur during this calendar year.
- Members would be aware of the positive news shared via the MP's offices regarding the decision to fund the Cullompton and Wellington railwaystations and looked forward to further information on this cascading down from Department of Transport (DfT) and Treasury in due course.
- Positive decision in relation to the J28 Strategic Outline Business Case by Treasury in order to address congestion issues around the junction and wider

town, but also to unlock the next phase of growth for Cullompton – including further delivery of new homes to the east of the M5 and beyond the current cap of 500 homes.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- The timeframe around the planned works to be completed.
- Any foreseeable delays on the project?
- Clarification about the 500 homes open at Culm Garden Village.
- The proposed plans on the railway station.
- The lack of growth over the last 20 years and this needed to happen now to better the lives of the residents.
- Clarification around the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) on Cullompton railway station and any potential delays.

10. **STAGE 1 CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy on the Stage 1 Consultation Response.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- Area B made up a part of the strategic allocation that lay to the east of Tiverton. The advancement of Area B had stalled until recently when West Country Land started to work proactively across the allocation to secure ownership or options on about 90% of the land making up Area B.
- The Councils planning policy required the completion of a master planning exercise on Area B prior to planning permission. West Country Land had therefore been working collaboratively with the Council to accelerate the production of a masterplan across the area. Together the Council and West Country Land undertook a Stage 1 public consultation between November 2024 and January 2025.
- It set out the number, location and attendance at the consultation events and the number of consultee responses.
- Appendix 1 gave an officer summary of the main issues – set out under the 8 headings asked at the public consultation.
- This report was presented at the Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) meeting on 19 May 2025 at which detailed consideration and discussion was given to the responses made under each of the 8 headings presented at the public consultation.
- A provisional timetable for the next stages in the production of the masterplan were set out in the report including a Stage 2 public consultation on the Area B Masterplan during August / September 2025.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- The configurations of the roads and provisions that were in place.
- No mention of Primary and Secondary School provisions, were they in Area A?

- The Overdevelopment with little consideration for the existing residents of Mayfair and access for those 10 dwellings from Area B not Mayfair.
- The no road traffic access to Mayfair.
- The Completions of the Phase 2 of the A361 road junction.

RESOLVED that:

The comments received at the Stage 1 public consultation (Appendix 1) be **NOTED**.

(Proposed by the Leader)

Reason for Decision:

No budget had been set aside by the Council to support the production of the masterplan. It would largely be funded by the developer including the production of the draft masterplan for public consultation, booking of venues and neighbour consultation.

Note: *Report previously circulated

11. **ACCESS TO INFORMATION- EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

The Leader indicated that discussion with regard to the following item, may require the Cabinet to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 12 12.02 (d) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. This decision was required because consideration of this matter in public would disclose information falling within one of the descriptions of exempt information in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Cabinet decided, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption interest in disclosing the information, outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

It was **RESOLVED** that the meeting remain in Part 1.

12. **CONTRACT DECISION- MID DEVON HOUSING BUILD**

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Health on the Contract Decision - Mid Devon Housing Build.

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

- The results of the tendering of the Honiton Road new development contract for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and to confirm the award of the contract.
- In the Council's Corporate Plan, Mid Devon Housing (MDH) were investing in completing new development projects to provide new affordable homes within its district.
- The Honiton Road scheme was a pair of 2-bed semi-detached properties built on land adjacent to 1 Honiton Road, Cullompton. This property had significant curtilage with the land and property within HRA ownership.

- Access was relatively restricted to the front and side of the property, consequently it was unsuitable for HGV delivery of modular homes and the scheme would be a traditional build with improvements to the existing access to provide off-road parking for the new and existing properties.
- The allocated budget for the work was £600,000.00 with the build-contract tender submissions below this. The additional budget would adequately allow for pre planning and planning costs alongside HRA management and direct on-costs with some project contingency.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- How many houses had been built in the last 2 years.
- Where and what will be the impacts to the neighbouring residents during the development and how will these be managed?

RESOLVED that:

- The new Honiton Road New Development Contract, to be **AWARDED** to Contractor 4.
- Delegated authority to the S151 Officer (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property) to complete the associated Honiton Road New Development Contract be **GRANTED**.

(Proposed by Cllr J Lock and seconded by Cllr M Fletcher)

Reason for Decision:

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for the works is £600,000.00. Further information was provided in the report and as set out fully in Part II Annex A.

Note: *Report previously circulated

13. **NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Cabinet had before it, and **NOTED**, the 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:

- Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Mobility Scooter in Flats Policy had been added to October.

Note: * Key Decisions Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 7.10pm)

LEADER

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	17 June 2025
Subject:	2024/25 Annual Treasury Management Review
Cabinet Member:	Cllr John Downes, Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Jarrett, Deputy Chief Executive (S151)
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	N/A

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To provide Members with a review of activities and the prudential treasury indicators on actuals for 2024/25.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. That Cabinet note the treasury activities for the year.**
- 2. That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that the actual 2024/25 prudential and treasury indicators in this report be approved.**

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2024/25. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
- 1.2 During 2024/25 the minimum reporting requirements were that the full Council should receive the following reports:
 - an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (Council 21/02/2024);

- a mid-year (minimum) treasury update report (Council 18/12/2024);
- quarterly treasury updates included within the Q1 and Q3 financial monitoring reports (Council 04/09/2024 & 23/04/2025);
- an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report).

1.3 The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is, therefore, important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by members.

1.4 This Council confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by Cabinet before they were reported to the full Council. Member training on treasury management issues was undertaken during 2019, with further training being planned in order to support members' scrutiny role.

2. The Council's Capital Expenditure and Financing

2.1 The Council undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:

- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Council's borrowing need; or
- If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

2.2 The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was financed.

Capital Expenditure & Financing	2023/24 Actual £000	2024/25 Actual £000
General Fund		
Capital expenditure	13,778	8,376
Financed in year	3,739	5,088
Unfinanced capital expenditure	10,039	3,289
Funded by Leases	353	3,104
Funded by Internal Borrowing	9,686	184
HRA		
Capital expenditure	16,653	14,732
Financed in year	10,347	7,919
Unfinanced capital expenditure	6,305	6,813
Funded by Leases	106	0
Funded by Internal Borrowing	6,200	6,813

3. The Council's Overall Borrowing Need

3.1 The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR).

3.2 **Gross borrowing and the CFR** - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the Capital Financing Requirement in the preceding year (2023/24) plus the estimates of any additional Capital Financing Requirement for the current (2024/25) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allowed the Council some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs in 2024/25. The table below highlights the Council's gross borrowing position against the CFR, including Finance Leases. **The Council has complied with this prudential indicator.**

	31 March 2024	31 March 2025
Capital Financing Requirement	Actual £000	Actual £000
CFR General Fund	16,252	18,452
CFR HRA	45,973	49,596
Total CFR	62,225	68,048
Gross borrowing position	33,390	33,747
(Under) / over funding of CFR	(28,835)	(34,301)

3.3 **The authorised limit** is the "affordable borrowing limit" required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Council does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2024/25 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.

3.4 **The operational boundary** is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

Borrowing Limits	2024/25 £000
Authorised limit	75,000
Maximum gross borrowing position during the year	33,747
Operational boundary	66,000
Average gross borrowing position	33,569

4. Treasury Position as at 31 March 2025

- 4.1 At the beginning and the end of 2024/25 the Council's treasury (excluding borrowing by PFI and finance leases) position was as follows:

Debt Portfolio	31 March 2024 £000	31 March 2025 £000
Fixed rate funding:		
-PWLB	31,373	29,398
Total debt	31,373	29,398
CFR	60,207	63,692
(Under) / over borrowing	(28,834)	(34,294)
Total treasury investments*	19,000	15,500
Net debt	12,373	13,898

*See 4.3 for a breakdown of treasury investments

- 4.2 The maturity structure of the debt portfolio was as follows:

Debt Maturity Structure	31 March 2024 Actual £000	31 March 2025 Actual £000
Under 12 months	1,975	2,033
12 months and within 24 months	2,033	2,092
24 months and within 5 years	6,463	6,653
5 years and within 10 years	12,101	12,456
10 years and within 20 years	8,802	6,164
20 years and within 30 years	0	0

- 4.2.1. During 2024/25, the Council maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement) was not fully funded with loan debt, as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow was used as an interim measure. This strategy was prudent as although near-term investment rates were equal to, and sometimes higher than, long-term borrowing costs, the latter are expected to fall back through 2025 and 2026. The Council has sought to minimise the taking on of long-term borrowing at elevated levels (>5%) and has focused on a policy of internal borrowing.
- 4.2.2. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances, has served the Council well over the last few years. However, this has been kept under review to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future when this Authority may not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure.

4.3 The Council's investment portfolio as at 31 March was as follows:

Investment Portfolio	31 March 2024 Actual £000	31 March 2024 Actual %	31 March 2025 Actual £000	31 March 2025 Actual %
Treasury investments				
Banks	2,000	11%	0	0%
Local authorities	12,000	63%	9,000	58%
Other Government Organisations	0	0%	1,500	10%
Total managed in house*	14,000	74%	10,500	68%
Property funds (CCLA)	5,000	26%	5,000	32%
Total managed externally	5,000	26%	5,000	32%
Total Treasury Investments	19,000	100%	15,500	100%

*See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of internally managed investments held as at 31 March.

4.4 The value shown in the above table for the Council's CCLA investment is the amount paid by the Council on share acquisition. This differs to the carrying amount in the year end accounts of £4,544k (£4,458k in 2023/24) as there is a requirement to carry the investment at fair value. The fair value of the fund will continue to change over the longer term, and so this decrease in value may only be temporary in which case it would not be realised as a loss to Council funds.

4.5 During 2021/22 the Council made two loans totalling £2,175k to Redlands Primary Care to help fund the construction of a new NHS hub in Crediton. These loans are being repaid in quarterly instalments over a period of 27 years. During 2024/25 a top-up loan of £127k was issued, taking the total outstanding back to £2,175k. Further quarterly repayments have since been received, leaving a balance of £2,120k outstanding at 31 March 2025.

Investment Portfolio	31 March 2024 Actual £000	31 March 2024 Actual %	31 March 2025 Actual £000	31 March 2025 Actual %
Non-treasury investments				
Crediton NHS Hub (Redlands Primary Care)	2,048	100%	2,120	100%
Total non-treasury investments	2,048	100%	2,120	100%

5. Borrowing Outturn

- 5.1 **Borrowing** – due to high interest rates on new borrowing, and counterparty risk on temporary investments, no borrowing was undertaken during the year.
- 5.2 **Borrowing in advance of need** – the Council has not borrowed more than, or in advance of its needs, purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed.
- 5.3 **Rescheduling** – no rescheduling was done during the year as the average 1% differential between PWLB new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates made rescheduling unviable.
- 5.4 As at 31 March 2025, the Council had outstanding loans of £29,398k with PWLB, paying a weighted average interest rate of 2.91%. £26.6m of this relates to funding the purchase of the Housing Stock in 2012 following a change in regulations for HRA's.

6. Investment Outturn

- 6.1 **Investment Policy** – the Council's investment policy is governed by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC – now MHCLG) investment guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by the Council on 21/02/2024. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties, and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data from our treasury advisers (MUFG Corporate Markets, previously Link Asset Services).
- 6.2 **The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Council had no liquidity difficulties.**
- 6.3 **Investments held by the Council** – the Council made a total return of £1,348k from investments in 2024/25 against a budget of £1,595k. This can be broken down as follows:
- The Council maintained an average balance of £21.2m of internally managed funds.
 - The internally managed funds earned interest of £1,037k (£456k of which was transferred to HRA) giving an average rate of return of 4.89%.
 - The comparable performance indicator is the average overnight SONIA¹ rate, which was 4.8979%.
 - The Council held £5m invested in Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) property funds earning dividends of £227k (4.54%) in 2024/25.
 - Interest received from Redlands Primary Care amounted to £78k in 2024/25.

¹ Sterling Overnight Index Average - [SONIA interest rate benchmark | Bank of England](#)

- Interest of £5k was received from HMRC in year due to delays in paying one of the Council's monthly VAT claims.

7. Other Issues

7.1 IFRS 9 Fair Value of Investments

- 7.1.1. Following the consultation undertaken by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government [MHCLG] on IFRS 9, the Government has extended the mandatory statutory override for local authorities to reverse out all unrealised fair value movements resulting from pooled investment funds to 31st March 2029, with the exception of any new pooled investments from 1st April 2024. This impacts on the Council's CCLA property fund, meaning that the cumulative fair value movement of -£456k will continue to be held separate from the General Fund in an unusable reserve until 31st March 2029.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 2024/25 has seen interest rates start to fall in response to the Bank of England beginning to cut Bank Rate. This, along with an increase in internal borrowing to help fund the Capital Programme, has had an impact on the Council's investment returns, finishing the year £247k below budget.
- 8.2 The Council continued its under borrowed position, effectively utilising its balances to avoid any new borrowing during the year. It also complied with all internal policies agreed by the previous Full Council and all requirements under the CIPFA Code of Practice.

Financial Implications

Good financial management and administration underpins the entire document. The Council's treasury position is constantly reviewed to ensure its continued financial health.

Legal Implications

Authorities are required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code when carrying out their duties under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Risk Assessment

The S151 Officer is responsible for the administration of the financial affairs of the Council. Implementing this strategy and the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management manages the risk associated with the Council's treasury management activity.

Impact on Climate Change

The General Fund, Capital Programme and the Housing Revenue Account all contain significant investment in order to work towards the Council's Carbon Reduction Pledge.

Equalities Impact Assessment

No equality issues identified for this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

Maximising our return from all associated treasury activities enables the Council to support current levels of spending in accordance with our Corporate Plan.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 03/06/2025

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 03/06/2025

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 03/06/2025

Performance and risk: Dr Stephen Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 03/06/2025

Cabinet member notified: Yes.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Kieran Knowles, Operations Manager for Financial Services

Email: kknowles@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 24(4624)

Background papers: Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 (Council 21/02/2024) & Treasury Mid-Year Review 2024/25 (Council 18/12/2024)

Appendix 1: Investment Portfolio

Internally managed investments held as at 31 March:

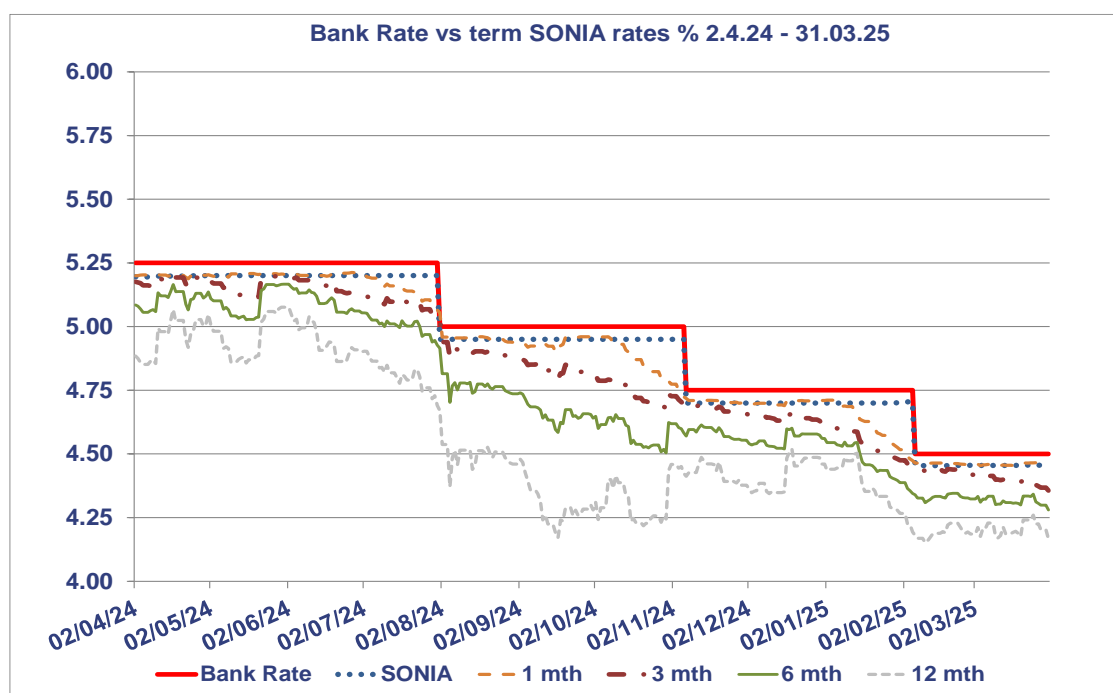
Bank/Building Society/Local Authority/PCC	Term		Fixed Interest Rate %	31/03/2023	31/03/2025
	From	To		£000	£000
City of Liverpool	29/09/2023	31/05/2024	5.70%	2,000	
Surrey County Council	26/10/2023	26/04/2024	5.55%	2,500	
NBK International PLC	02/11/2023	02/05/2024	5.55%	2,000	
Surrey County Council	15/11/2023	15/05/2024	5.55%	2,500	
Eastleigh Borough Council	20/11/2023	20/05/2024	5.55%	3,000	
Central Bedfordshire Council	19/01/2024	19/04/2024	5.45%	2,000	
London Borough of Waltham Forest	03/09/2024	03/06/2025	4.85%		3,000
Uttlesford District Council	07/11/2024	07/08/2025	5.05%		3,000
Chesterfield Borough Council	09/12/2024	09/06/2025	5.60%		3,000
DMO	27/03/2025	01/04/2025	4.45%		1,500
Total				14,000	10,500

Appendix 2: Market commentary provided by our Treasury Advisors (MUFG Corporate Markets, previously Link Asset Services)

The strategy for 2024/25

Investment strategy and control of interest rate risk

The following chart shows how Bank Rate and SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average) rates have changed during the year.



Investment returns remained robust throughout 2024/25 with Bank Rate reducing steadily through the course of the financial year (three 0.25% rate cuts in total), and even at the end of March the yield curve was still relatively flat, which might be considered unusual as further Bank Rate cuts were expected in 2025/26.

Bank Rate reductions of 0.25% occurred in August, November and February, bringing the headline rate down from 5.25% to 4.5%. Each of the Bank Rate cuts occurred in the same month as the Bank of England publishes its Quarterly Monetary Policy Report, therein providing a clarity over the timing of potential future rate cuts.

As of early April 2025, market sentiment has been heavily influenced of late by President Trump's wide-ranging trade tariffs policy. Commentators anticipate a growing risk of a US recession, whilst UK GDP is projected by the Office for Budget Responsibility to remain tepid, perhaps achieving 1% GDP growth in 2025/26.

Looking back to 2024/25, investors were able to achieve returns in excess of 5% for all periods ranging from 1 month to 12 months in the spring of 2024 but by March 2025 deposit rates were some 0.75% - 1% lower. Where liquidity requirements were not a drain on day-to-day investment choices, extending duration through the use of "laddered investments" paid off.

That is not to say that investment choices were straight-forward. Concerns over rising inflation after the Autumn Statement in October led to reduced expectations for Bank Rate to fall. Indeed, the CPI measure of inflation is expected to reach c3.75% by the autumn of 2025, which could provide for some presentational issues for a Bank whose primary mandate is to ensure inflation is close to 2% on a two-to-three-year timeframe. At the end of March, only two further rate cuts were priced into the market for 2025 (4% at December 2025). A week later and sentiment has changed dramatically in the wake of the equity market sell-off to the extent that markets now expect three Bank Rate reductions between May and December 2025 (Bank Rate to fall to 3.75%).

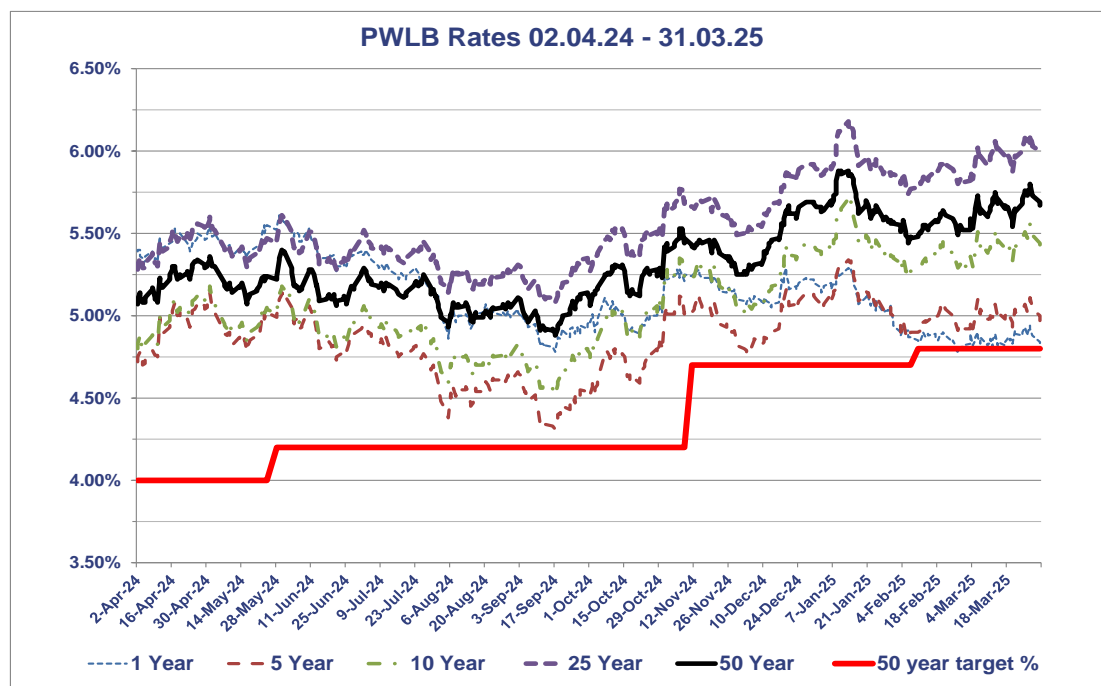
Borrowing strategy and control of interest rate risk

Interest rate forecasts initially suggested gradual reductions in short, medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2024/25. Bank Rate did peak at 5.25% as anticipated, but the initial expectation of significant rate reductions did not transpire, primarily because inflation concerns remained elevated. Forecasts were too optimistic from a rate reduction perspective, but more recently the forecasts, updated from November 2024 onwards, look more realistic.

At the start of April 2025, following the introduction of President Trump's trade tariffs policies, the market now expects Bank Rate to fall to 3.75% by the end of December 2025, pulling down the 5- and 10-year parts of the curve too.

This should provide an opportunity for greater certainty to be added to the debt portfolio, although a significant fall in inflation will be required to underpin any material movement lower in the longer part of the curve.

PWLB rates during 2024/25 are illustrated by the following chart:



	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
Low	4.77%	4.31%	4.52%	5.08%	4.88%
Date	26/02/2025	17/09/2024	17/09/2024	17/09/2024	17/09/2024
High	5.61%	5.34%	5.71%	6.18%	5.88%
Date	29/05/2024	13/01/2025	13/01/2025	13/01/2025	09/01/2025
Average	5.14%	4.86%	5.07%	5.56%	5.32%
Spread	0.84%	1.03%	1.19%	1.10%	1.00%

The following table shows forecast interest rates over the next three years:

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 10.02.25													
	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28
BANK RATE	4.50	4.25	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
3 month ave earnings	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
6 month ave earnings	4.40	4.20	4.20	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.40	4.20	4.20	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.60
5 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.00
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40
25 yr PWLB	5.80	5.70	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	5.00	4.90	4.90	4.80
50 yr PWLB	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.60	4.50

PWLB rates are based on gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through HM Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. The main influences on gilt yields are Bank Rate, inflation expectations and movements in US treasury yields. Inflation targeting by the major central banks has been successful over the last 30 years in lowering inflation and the real equilibrium rate for central rates has fallen considerably due to the high level of borrowing by consumers: this means that central banks do not need to raise rates as much now to have a major impact on consumer spending, inflation, etc. This has pulled down the overall level of interest rates and bond yields in financial markets over the last 30 years. Indeed, in recent years many bond yields up to 10 years in the Eurozone turned negative on expectations that the EU would struggle to get growth rates and inflation up from low levels. In addition, there has, at times, been an inversion of bond yields in the US whereby 10-year yields have fallen below shorter-term yields. In the past, this has been a precursor of a recession.

However, since early 2022, yields have risen dramatically in all the major developed economies, first as economies opened post-Covid; then because of the inflationary impact of the war in Ukraine in respect of the supply side of many goods. In particular, rising cost pressures emanating from shortages of energy and some food categories have been central to inflation rising rapidly. Furthermore, at present the Fed, ECB and Bank of England are all being challenged by levels of persistent inflation that are exacerbated by tight labour markets and high wage increases relative to what central banks believe to be sustainable.

Gilt yields have been volatile through 2024/25. Indeed, the low point for the financial year for many periods was reached in September 2024. Thereafter, and especially following the Autumn Statement, PWLB Certainty rates have remained elevated at between c5% - 6% with the exception of the slightly cheaper shorter dates.

At the close of 31 March 2025, the 1-year PWLB Certainty rate was 4.82% whilst the 25-year rate was 5.98% and the 50-year rate was 5.67%.

Regarding PWLB borrowing rates, the various margins attributed to their pricing are as follows: -

- PWLB Standard Rate is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
- PWLB Certainty Rate is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80bps)
- Local Infrastructure Rate is gilt plus 60bps (G+60bps)
- HRA Borrowing rate is gilt plus 40bps (G+40bps)

There is likely to be a fall in gilt yields and PWLB rates across the whole curve over the next one to two years as Bank Rate falls and inflation (on the Consumer Price Index measure) moves lower.

As a general rule, short-dated gilt yields will reflect expected movements in Bank Rate, whilst medium to long-dated yields are driven primarily by the inflation outlook.

The Bank of England is also continuing on a process of Quantitative Tightening. The Bank's original £895bn stock of gilt and corporate bonds will gradually be sold back into the market over several years (currently c£623bn). The impact this policy will have on the market pricing of gilts, while issuance is still markedly increasing, and very high in historic terms, is an unknown at the time of writing.

The Economy and Interest Rates

UK inflation has proved somewhat stubborn throughout 2024/25. Having started the financial year at 2.3% y/y (April), the CPI measure of inflation briefly dipped to 1.7% y/y in September before picking up pace again in the latter months. The latest data shows CPI rising by 2.6% y/y (March), but there is a strong likelihood that figure will increase to at least 3.5% by the Autumn of 2025.

Against that backdrop, and the continued lack of progress in ending the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as the potentially negative implications for global growth as a consequence of the implementation of US tariff policies by US President Trump in April 2025, Bank Rate reductions have been limited. Bank Rate currently stands at 4.5%, despite the Office for Budget Responsibility reducing its 2025 GDP forecast for the UK economy to only 1% (previously 2% in October).

Moreover, borrowing has becoming increasingly expensive in 2024/25. Gilt yields rose significantly in the wake of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, and the loosening of fiscal policy, and have remained elevated ever since, as dampened growth expectations and the minimal budget contingency (<£10bn) have stoked market fears that increased levels of borrowing will need to be funded during 2025.

The table below provides a snapshot of the conundrum facing central banks: inflation pressures remain, labour markets are still relatively tight by historical comparisons, and central banks are also having to react to a fundamental re-ordering of economic and defence policies by the US administration.

	UK	Eurozone	US
Bank Rate	4.50%	2.5%	4.25%-4.5%
GDP	0.1%q/q Q4 (1.1%y/y)	+0.1%q/q Q4 (0.7%y/y)	2.4% Q4 Annualised
Inflation	2.8%y/y (Feb)	2.3%y/y (Feb)	2.8%y/y (Feb)
Unemployment Rate	4.4% (Jan)	6.2% (Jan)	4.1% (Feb)

The Bank of England sprung no surprises in their March meeting, leaving Bank Rate unchanged at 4.5% by a vote of 8-1, but suggesting further reductions would be gradual. The Bank of England was always going to continue its cut-hold-cut-hold pattern by leaving interest rates at 4.50% but, in the opposite of what happened at the February meeting, the vote was more hawkish than expected. This suggested that as inflation rises later in the year, the Bank cuts rates even slower, but the initial impact of President Trump's tariff policies in April 2025 on the financial markets underpin our view that the Bank will eventually reduce rates to 3.50%.

Having said that, the Bank still thinks inflation will rise from 2.8% in February to 3.7% in Q3. And while in February it said "inflation is expected to fall back thereafter to around the 2% target", this time it just said it would "fall back thereafter". That may be a sign that the Bank is getting a bit more worried about the "persistence in domestic wages and prices, including from second-round effects". Accordingly, although we expect a series of rate cuts over the next year or so, that does not contradict the Bank taking "a gradual and careful" approach to cutting rates, but a tepid economy will probably reduce inflation further ahead and prompt the Bank to cut at regular intervals.

From a fiscal perspective, the increase in businesses' national insurance and national minimum wage costs from April 2025 is likely to prove a headwind, although in the near-term the Government's efforts to provide 300,000 new homes in each year of the current Parliament is likely to ensure building industry employees are well remunerated, as will the clamp-down on immigration and the generally high levels of sickness amongst the British workforce. Currently wages continue to increase at a rate close to 6% y/y. The MPC would prefer a more sustainable level of c3.5%.

As for equity markets, the FTSE 100 has recently fallen back to 7,700 having hit an all-time intra-day high 8,908 as recently as 3rd March. The £ has also endured a topsy-turvy time, hitting a peak of \$1.34 before dropping to \$1.22 in January and then reaching \$1.27 in early April 2025.

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MINUTES of a MEETING of the CABINET held on 8 July 2025 at 5.15 pm

**Present
Councillors**

L Taylor, D Wulff , J Lock, J M Downes,
G Duchesne, M Fletcher, S Keable and
J Wright

**Apology
Councillor**

N Bradshaw

**Also Present
Councillor(s)**

L G J Kennedy

**Also Present
Officer(s):**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Maria De Leiburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Lisa Lewis (Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure), Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Tristan Peat (Forward Planning Team Leader) and Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

**Councillors
Online**

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski and M Farrell

Officers Online

Lisa Turner (Planning Officer from Blackdown Hills National Landscape)

14. APOLOGIES (04:30)

Apologies were received from Cllr N Bradshaw.

15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (04:40)

Barry Warren

In paragraph 1.9 two schemes for MMC modular homes to be installed in Willand: Fir Close, 1 unit underway for completion in November 2025] and Somerlea, 7 units due to commence August 2025.

The Parish Council and some residents are aware that public money, their money, has been spent already on these projects but they can see nothing other than a fenced area in Fir Close which, has been like it for nearly two years. No sign of it being underway.

Question 1:

When are we going to see some positive progress on site?

It was raised at a Parish Council meeting that MDDC have made payments of over £1.1million to Zed Pods for the Somerlea development with nothing to show for it on site. The main concern was about what safeguards were in place for public money should the company fail. As the result of concerns raised, one of our Ward Councillors asked a number of questions to try and obtain facts. The answer conveyed from an officer contained the following:

“There are contractual obligations, as is the case with most development projects irrespective of the contractor, where staged payments are made. Nonetheless, through drawing down a contract via the South West Procurement Alliance (SWPA) framework there are additional protections for all parties whereby our funds are not released until key milestones on delivery are signed off.”

Question 2:

According to accounts seen monies have been paid to Zed Pods - so what key milestones on delivery have been ‘signed off’ and by whom?

In May 2025 the accounts appear to show six payments to Zed Pods in relation to Somerlea namely;140k; 103k; 110k; 140k;103k;103k and 37k.

Question 3:

What is the detail of each of these payments please? Generalisation such as ‘contractual obligations’ will not answer the question.

In 2024/25 so far £1,139,000 has been paid up front to Zed Pods. The risk assessment on page 368 of your bundle refers to the detail being covered in the report. Nowhere does it clearly address what protection the Council has for these monies should Zed Pods fail to deliver on the contract.

Question 4:

As risk owner, will the Chief Executive recognise that there is a potential risk to the Council and include the potential risk in the Corporate Risk report?

Paul Elstone

After the massive financial losses and losses still being incurred due to the 3 Rivers debacle, It is reasonable for the Mid Devon Residents to expect that business plans, budgets and supporting detail would be scrutinised to a completely new level and by this Administration and its various Committees. I contend that the required level of scrutiny is not happening. The Modular Home Value for Money Benchmarking report being a case in point.

This report references two external projects, and which form the major part of the conclusion being projected that the ZED POD's modules are the best value for money. Namely a development at the former Eastleigh Post Office and the other at New Kingsland, Bristol

Reference – Eastleigh Post Office.

Question 1:

Are Cabinet Members fully aware that the report is based on the following and factually incorrect information?

That it's a development of 28 flats with retail units under. A development made up of 2 separate apartment blocks. It is not 10 flats as the report projects.

That the value for money Appendix 'B' does not even get simple subtractions correct for the Eastleigh development this when deducting the £1,050,000 grant funding.

That the net cost should be £1.78 million not £2.7 million as stated. This seriously corrupting the bench marking results.

Question 2:

Are Cabinet Members fully aware that the report is based on the following and factually incorrect information?

Reference – Bristol New Kingsland.

That the net cost calculation is based on a Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) or Liveable Area. They are the same thing of only 900 square meters. It is not. The true area is 1,350 square meters as the detailed drawings previously provided to you show.

That the net cost per square meter is in fact £2,482. It is not £3,742 as the report says. A huge difference, a reduction of 50%. Yet again very seriously corrupting report results.

That the report says its Traditional Build. It is not. It is a MMC panel system Category 2 development.

Given these facts the Bristol MMC Development is Best Value and by any reasonable measure and not as the Value for Money Report attempts to present.

Question 3:

Will this Cabinet now "tear up" the value for money benchmarking Annex B report this given in the clearest of terms it does not represent fact. It is fatally flawed.

That instead arrange for a proper and fully independent value for money benchmarking exercise to be undertaken and to Royal Institute of Chartered Surveys (RICS) standards?

The Leader stated that Mr Warren and Mr Elstone would receive a written response to their questions. The Leader noted that the Cabinet had received and read the email from Mr Elstone in regards to the Value for Money item on the agenda.

16. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (12:00)**

All Cabinet Members referred to item 9, Value for Money report and declared they had received correspondence from a member of the public in relation to this item.

17. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (13:40)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 June 2025 were **APPROVED** as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Leader.

18. **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25 (14:04)**

Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager and the Head of People, Performance & Waste on the Annual Performance for 2024/2025.

The Head of People, Performance & Waste outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- This was the first annual Performance Report on the Council's Corporate Plan. It provided performance information for the 2024/25 financial year. The accompanying appendices were structured according to the five themes of the Corporate Plan.
- Section 2 of the covering report provided performance analysis on a theme by theme basis, with the focus on the Corporate Plan performance indicators.
- Further information on the performance against the aims and objectives detailed in the Corporate Plan was provided in Appendix 1 to 5.
- Appendix 6 contained the performance dashboards for Quarter 4. Those contained 100 measures highlighting how services were performing across the Council, and those indicators that were part of the Corporate Plan were highlighted in yellow text.
- The Performance Dashboards had also been reviewed by the relevant Policy Development Groups (PDG's) and the Planning Committee.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- The increase in applicants on Devon Home Choice and there were 57 affordable homes built in Mid Devon with a target set at 94, what were the reasons for not reaching the target?
- How did bio diversity net gain work and how the developers were using those effectively and what were the percentages?
- In Quarter 4 the Pannier Market percentages decreased was this the period after Christmas and were the Council helping with incentives to drive the

economy during those times and in addition to maintaining good level of traders?

- Some of those that were not on target were close. Discussions over the last financial year had been staff turnover and staff sickness at meetings.
- In regards to the waste collections of residual waste, collections and comparisons over the last four years had improved year upon year.

Reason for Decision:

Corporate Plan priorities and targets were managed and scrutinised on a regular basis using appropriate performance indicators as detailed in the report.

Note: *Report previously circulated

19. CORPORATE RISK REPORT (29:00)

Cabinet had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager and the Head of People, Performance & Waste on Corporate Risk.

The Head of People, Performance & Waste outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The Council's current corporate risks with their updated position as of May 2025. Those were the risks which had been identified that may be most likely to impact the Council meeting its objectives.
- This report was produced quarterly and presented to Cabinet for Members scrutiny, comment and feedback.
- At paragraph 2.1 of the report there was a summary table of the 16 corporate risks that the Council was currently managing.
- A risk matrix or heat map was presented at Appendix 1 showing the relative position of the corporate risks. In Appendix 2 of the report, further details were provided for each risk in a standard template.
- Any significant changes to the Risk Register since it was last reported to Cabinet were listed in the covering report, at paragraph 2.3.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- The mitigation around the CR2.7 established supply chain risk management and CR5.3 supply chain management both mitigate the same risk but different functions given the risk extended beyond IT risk such as property maintenance, building suppliers and waste collections. Should these be recorded separately in the future to protect the vulnerabilities and to be recorded and monitored in one place?
- CR17 the Severe Weather Emergency recovery was the amber rating sufficient enough following recent news relating to Texas.
- Culm Garden Village and Infrastructure CR1a and CR1b had there been an update on Junction 28 and the risk around the building works starting in the key area?
- Discussion on the significant housing need had been made available at Junction 28.
- The support of the Economy Growth & Regeneration team and the significant expansion for the town, plus the re-opening of the Cullompton Railway Station.

- For the Council to make their representations known in regards to Junction 28.

Reason for Decision:

Effective risk management was crucial to enable the Council to mitigate risks to achieving Corporate Plan priorities.

Note: *Report previously circulated

20. MEETING MANAGEMENT (49:40)

The Leader **MOVED** that he would be bring forward the following Agenda Items:-

- (i) 10– Waste Depot Remodelling to the next item.

21. WASTE DEPOT REMODELLING (50:00)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) Officer on the Waste Depot Remodelling.

The Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvements outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- The Environment Agency (EA) announced it was consolidating its permitting rules, with the aim of streamlining permitting processes and aligning them with modern standards. These changes would come into force on 19 June 2026.
- To comply with and meet the new requirements some significant changes were required to the Waste Depot; the main changes were the certain elements of Waste and Recycling required storing securely undercover with appropriate fire protection and security.
- Therefore the Council must ensure the depot had sufficient capacity and space to ensure service delivery was legally compliant. The Council were proposing a reconfiguration and expansion of the operation and new buildings to house the materials.
- This would enable the Council to build on and sustain the excellent performance it had achieved over the last two years, with Mid Devon now in the top 5% of national performance. With extra storage capacity, the depot would also be able to consider adding additional recycling streams in the future to add to its current collection portfolio. A report would be submitted to the Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group (PDG) in September 2025 which would then come to Cabinet where future potential recycling options could be considered.

Discussion took place regards to:

- Would those changes outlined allow the provision to start the nappy trial?
- The good news about the ability to take more recycling, were there any ideas of those additional items.
- Some of the issues were around the size of the lorries and the amount that they could take.
- How much extra capacity with this investment?
- For the future proof does this include the growth in housing?

- If the Council were able to meet the deadline, could some of the trials be brought forward?
- Would there be any impact on the existing service delivery during construction work?
- Had the staff been consulted with regards to this proposal in regards to their thoughts?
- Was it correct that the recycling lorries would be weighed in and out at the recycling centre?
- Why were the full costs not included within the report? It was clarified that the full costs were included, but the specific recommendation for the office block was because it was a key decision on its own and the first stage of the process. Any other specific elements that were a key decision would be brought back to Cabinet for approval. How cost effective was this Council in regards to the other local authorities?
- With the extra capacity how much was this in percentages and in comparison to other authorities?

RESOLVED that:

1. Delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) to progress the works as planned. Noting that, any subsequent specific spend or contractual awards in line with key decisions thresholds would be brought back to Cabinet for agreement.
2. The purchase of a new Modular Office complex, to be specified, up to the value of £250k be **AGREED**.
3. The alignment of the leases of the various existing units to end on the same date as that recently agreed for the new car park site – 7 November 2039 be **AGREED**.

(Proposed by Cllr J Wright and seconded by Cllr M Fletcher)

Reason for Decision:

The EA published legal guidance that Waste and Recycling services need to both abide to and meet for its collection services to be permitted and carried out. Recycling services that do not comply with this guidance may be disrupted.

Note: *Report previously circulated

22. ADOPTION OF THE BLACKDOWN HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN (1:14:38)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy on the Adoption of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic and Regeneration outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- Part of Mid Devon district was situated within the area covered by the Blackdown Hills National Landscape (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 required that the Council, together with other relevant local authorities, produced a Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape and reviewed it at intervals of no more than five years. The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership had performed this duty on behalf of this Council and the other relevant local authorities, which included Somerset Council and East Devon District Council.
- The Management Plan blended national and local priorities and sought to address them in a way that was right for the Blackdown Hills – the landscape, environment, and communities to ensure the very special character of the area was conserved and enhanced for future generations.
- It included a vision, sets out four main themes, each with objectives, guiding principles, policies, targets and priority actions.
- A draft management plan was previously reported to the Planning Policy Advisory Group on 22 July 2024 and the Cabinet on 15 October 2024 (Minute 70) and was subject to an 8 week public consultation from January to March this year.
- Following the public consultation an amended draft of the Management Plan was reported to the Planning, Environment and Sustainability Policy Development Group (PDG) meeting on the 10 June 2025, which endorsed the recommendations in this report.
- Approval was being sought for this draft version as the Chair Foreword, National Landscape Partnership Commendation and pictures were to be added to the final version. Those additions had no material significance to the substance of the document.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan (Appendices 1, 2 and 3) be **ADOPTED**.
2. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Place and Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to approve any editorial changes made to the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan.

(Proposed by Cllr S Keable and seconded by Cllr G DuChesne)

Reason for Decision:

There were no direct financial implications from the public consultation and the adoption of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan. The Council made a grant funding contribution each year to the host authority, Devon County Council, to support the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership.

Note: *Report previously circulated

23. **VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT- TRADITIONAL VERSUS MODULAR BUILDS (1:20:37)**

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Housing and Health on the Value for Money Report and Traditional Versus Modular Builds.

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

- This was a key, well evidenced report setting out the strategic, policy and value for money context regarding this Council's successful, on-going Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) development programme which had a focus on high-quality, good-value housing that apply modular, modern-methods of construction (otherwise known as MMC).
- The benefits of the Council's modular MMC approach were clearly articulated through the report and supporting annexes, and included important benchmarking information in the context of traditional build and other MMC affordable housing schemes of different types, within the district and regionally.
- The benefits were not only represented through net development costs that compared well to other, sometimes lower specification, build types, but through ability to provide housing that met local needs at pace.
- Feedback from the Council's tenants living in those modular homes had been very positive overall and the completed schemes to date had been widely accessed by other local authorities, registered providers and most recently the Homes England Director of the Affordable Homes Programme as exemplar projects. It was important not to lose sight of the fact these were decent homes, providing essential accommodation where most required for those in priority housing need, who maybe care experienced and may also be homeless.
- The report had received a thorough discussion and debate through both the Homes Policy Development Group (PDG) and Scrutiny Committee in recent weeks who had both supported the report recommendation. Furthermore, each project put forward for Homes England funding was subject to their external, assessment of viability and value for money (VfM) assessment which was further welcome assurance.
- Value for money social housing was vital if the Council were to continue setting an example locally, regionally and indeed nationally in the Council's approach to tackling the housing crisis that was impacting our communities.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- The progress that had been made on providing Social homes houses.
- In regards to the Willand builds and whether there was a completion date on the Somerlea builds?
- The achievement was remarkable, however the concerns about the government housing targets that were being set, as an authority could this Council push back to the Government?
- It was positive that the change of rules from Government around the Right to Buy Scheme.
- Did the Value for Money account for whole life cost such as ongoing maintenance, energy performance and refurbishment.
- The ZED pods seem to exceed the minimum standards in terms of energy performance and carbon emission, could officers provide more details on the expected utility savings and were these monitored.
- Offsite manufacturing and bench marking across the Country and would the efficiency help aim to meet the targets in the corporate plan.

- Whether it was 18 months to complete a traditional build.

RESOLVED that:

1. Cabinet continued to adopt an HRA development programme with a focus on delivering MMC, modular net-zero social housing where possible and viable as part of the Council's future Housing Strategy as recommended by the Homes Policy Development Group.

(Proposed by Cllr J Lock and seconded by Cllr J Wright)

Reason for Decision:

Homes were a strategic theme with specific objectives to increase the delivery of quality designed, well built homes across the housing market to meet identified needs and building of energy efficient and low carbon homes.

Note: *Report previously circulated

24. COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (1:41:00)

Cabinet had before it a report * from the Head of Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement on the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Quality of Living, Equalities and Public Health outlined the contents of the report with particular reference to the following:

- This was a revised Communication and Engagement Strategy and the accompanying Media and Social Media Policy, which had been developed by the Communications Manager in collaboration with the Head of Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement, and came to Cabinet following endorsement by the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group.
- Those documents supported the Council's commitment to ensuring that communications were effective, inclusive, and transparent, delivering value for money while ensuring residents could easily interact with and understand the work of the Council. They aligned with the Corporate Plan, the Council's values, and its responsibilities under the Single Equality Scheme.
- The strategy promoted a digital-first approach, but with continued support for multiple channels to ensure accessibility for all residents, regardless of how they choose to engage with the Council. This included ensuring that the Council's website and all digital content meets current accessibility standards.
- Since the last update in 2023, the Communications Team had made strong progress across a wide range of service areas. They had supported major elections and civic events, delivered a refreshed presence at the Mid Devon Show, and expanded use of the "Let's Talk Mid Devon" engagement platform, which had attracted nearly 600 new registrations and almost 19,000 visits, with a 20% engagement rate.
- Social media continued to grow, with over 2,300 new followers in the past year, and the e-bulletins now reached over 14,000 subscribers. Two full resident surveys had been carried out, with the proportion of respondents who felt informed about the Council's work increasing significantly. The team has also led or supported communications for a number of priority initiatives,

including Active Mid Devon and the ongoing review of the Council's website content.

- Looking ahead, the strategy provided a strong foundation for communications through the period of Local Government Reorganisation, with an emphasis on keeping residents informed and confident in how to access services throughout any changes. It was anticipated that the Communications Strategy, and accompanying policies would be revised again in three years (or sooner if required) to coincide with any reorganisation.

Discussion took place with regards to:

- What provisions were in place for those residents that were in a rural location or had no internet connection and how would the Council engage effectively?
- How would the Council communicate with those that were not on social media?
- The traditional methods of communication such as hard copy, drop in sessions for those individuals that could attend.
- Did the Communication Team share posts on social media platforms?
- Did the Council share posts on other community's social media pages?
- How does the Council communicate out and sign up with the newsletters.
- Sharing good news stories on the recent achievements of the Council in the post with the yearly Council tax letter that residents received.
- To remove the reference From "Chairman" to "Chair" in the Policy.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the reviewed Communication and Engagement Strategy and the Media and Social Media Policy as recommended by the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group be **ADOPTED**.

(Proposed by Cllr D Wulff and seconded by Cllr G DuChesne)

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that the Councils customers, staff, members and stakeholders were informed about Council services, news and changes through appropriate and varied channels.

Note: *Report previously circulated

25. NOTIFICATION OF KEY DECISIONS (1:58:00)

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

This included the following:

- Data Protection Policy had been added to September 2025.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) & Environment Information Regulation (EIR) Policy had been added to September 2025.
- Memorial Benches and Memorial Trees had been added to October 2025.

Note: * Key Decision report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 19:14pm)

LEADER

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 14 April 2025 at 5.00pm

Present

Councillors

L G J Kennedy (Chair)
G Westcott (Vice-Chair), D Broom,
E Buczkowski, A Cuddy, G Czapiewski,
M Farrell, C Harrower, B Holdman, L Knight,
R Roberts and S Robinson

Also Present

Officers:

Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Buczkowski, S Keable and J Lock

Officers Online

Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

98 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chair informed the Committee that he would be bringing forward Agenda Item 5 - Chair's Announcements as the first item to be discussed on the agenda.

99 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0:04:24)**

The Chair asked for a minute's silence as a mark of respect to their colleague Councillor Frank Letch MBE who passed away on Tuesday 8 April 2025.

A minute's silence was held.

The Chair had no other announcements to make.

100 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0:06:26)**

There were no apologies.

101 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0:06:40)**

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

102 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0:06:54)**

There were no public questions.

103 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0:07:06)**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 17 March 2025 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

104 **DECISIONS OF THE CABINET (0:7:44)**

The Committee **NOTED** that none of the decisions made by the Cabinet at their meeting on 1 April 2025 had been called in.

105 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (0:07:57)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, the Scrutiny Committee Chair's Annual Report * for 2024/2025.

This report along with all other Chair's reports for 2024/2025 would be presented at full Council on 23 April 2025.

The Chair thanked Members of the Committee and officers for their help and support throughout the past year.

Members of the Committee thanked the Chair and Vice Chair for their work this year and particularly for bringing South West Water before the Committee.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

106 **WORK PROGRAMME (0:11:24)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** the *Forward Plan and the *Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

The Clerk identified the changes in the Work Programme since publication of the agenda:

- The Community Safety Partnership Annual Report would come before the Committee on 9 June 2025.
- The Report on Housing Repairs and Maintenance would move to the meeting on 8 September 2025.
- The report coming before the Committee on 14 July 2025 entitled 'Housing Strategy' was wrongly titled, the report coming to the Scrutiny Committee would be called 'Value for Money and Best Practice in Mid Devon Housing Modular Social Housing Delivery Report' and reflected what the Committee had requested.
- Quarterly Freedom of Information Dashboards had been repositioned within the programme to suit when the data for each quarter would be available.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Six months after South West Water had visited there should be a review to ascertain how far the issues raised had been resolved. If the issues remained outstanding then South West Water should be invited back before the Committee within 3 months after the 6 month review. It was **AGREED** to add this to the Work Programme.
- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was requested that the Committee were flexible to bring LGR at short notice as the need arose.

Note: the *Forward Plan and the *Scrutiny Committee Work Programme were previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 5.27 pm)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on 9 June 2025 at 5.00 pm

Present

Councillors

S Robinson (Chair)
C Adcock, D Broom, E Buczkowski,
G Czapiewski, M Farrell, C Harrower,
L Knight, J Poynton, R Roberts and
G Westcott

Apology

Councillor

A Cuddy (online)

Also Present

Councillor

J Lock

Also Present

Officer(s):

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Lisa Lewis (Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement), Ewan Girling (Senior Information Officer) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Buczkowski, A Cuddy, G Duchesne, M Fletcher,
A Glover, L Taylor and D Wulff

Officers Online

Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

1 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (0:04:06)

The Chair of the Committee invited nominations for the election of a Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/26.

RESOLVED that Cllr G Westcott be elected Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and Seconded by Cllr R Roberts).

2 **START TIME OF MEETINGS (0:05:43)**

The Committee **AGREED*** to meet at 5.00pm for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

(Proposed by Cllr L Knight and seconded by Cllr E Buczkowski)

Note: *Cllr R Roberts voted against.

3 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (0:11:20)**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Cuddy who joined the meeting on-line.

4 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chair brought forward Item 7 Chair's Announcements.

5 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0:12:20)**

The Chair thanked her Colleagues for voting her into the position of Chair and mentioned:

- The Liberal Democrats had appointed one of their own to the position of Scrutiny Committee Chair because they believed that this arrangement had worked for the past 2 years and so it should continue.
- The Scrutiny Committee were there to service the needs of the widest Mid Devon community. What would be important was to find consensus in decision making.
- The core of the Committee's work should be to dig down into the roots of issues that came before them – to ask the most searching of questions that they could – in order to establish what the truth was.
- There were some hefty and important agenda items through the next 10 months – not least of which was decentralisation and local government reorganisation. Tasks that now resided with the County Council would need to be appropriately shared between the Unitary Authorities that were to be created – whilst still ensuring that the existing District Council carried out their duties to the best of their abilities.
- Parish and Town Councils would have a huge part to play, in any new models, so the Council needed to work even more closely with them, and to more fully understand their key concerns and issues.
- Utility companies and their failure to meet the demands of new developments, in servicing what was needed, and in future proofing, would need the Committee's Scrutiny. Serious concerns over infrastructure, needed to come well in advance of development, may well need the attention of the Scrutiny Committee, plus roads, schools etc. actually being built, rather than being on approved plans and then not being delivered.
- How did the Council move towards Net Zero by their target date of 2030 most effectively?
- New Planning Laws were now in place, with building challenges that were pretty daunting, and very worrying for us in a rural county that also needed farm land from which to feed our country's inhabitants. Developers were sitting on tracts of land that they owned, not building on it. The District was challenged, in physical geographical terms, by exactly where it was going to

be possible to build new homes in mid Devon. The District had so much beautiful and important landscape that cried out to be cared for, not built upon. By contrast it also had a huge demand for more social housing, in particular, but the Committee must never lose sight of what their residents most wanted, which was safe, economical to run, homes of their own, where they felt safe and secure and part of a community.

- Those residents from the District who chose to come and join Scrutiny Committee meetings, to prod at decisions the Committee were in the process of making, were welcome. They, should be accepted as ‘critical friends’ to the Council – taking the time, as they did, to read documents, talk to fellow residents, and to have the courage to come here and express their views. The Chair thanked them for their commitment to working with the Council, not against it, to find the correct solutions for residents.
- The Chair wanted the Committee to move forward, not backwards, in their endeavours, and asked that the Committee refrained from any attempt to dig up the past, beyond having lessons to learn from mistakes made, and also from successes achieved.
- Generally, the Committee’s agenda would include an item on decisions from Cabinet – it had been omitted, deliberately from this meeting, since Cabinet had not met since the last Scrutiny meeting.

6 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (0:20:01)**

No declarations were declared under this item.

7 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (0:20:23)**

N Quinn Regarding Agenda Item 9: The FOI Annual Report for 2024-25.

Paragraph 3.2 of this report, describes the partially upheld Decision Notice by saying: *“information was considered subject to legal professional privilege, but two of the five individual names redacted would have had a reasonable expectation of their name being placed in the public domain”*.

I think that this sentence could be considered as “Economical with the Truth”.

It says the some redactions were allowed and the release of two names was ordered - but that is not all...

It does not say that the Council was also ordered to release additional, wrongly redacted, information - or that 78 pages of information was released, on the advice of the Commissioner, prior to the Decision Notice being issued.

I have it on good authority that the request for a report was made in May 2024, but the Council said *“it was all exempt”*. When asked to review, the Council maintained that nothing would be released.

A complaint was sent to the Information Commissioner, who contacted the Council about how the request had been handled.

The Council then released:
a 14 page report (with some redactions);

a 38 page Appendix (with minor redactions);
a 24 page Appendix (with very minor redactions);
and a 2 page Appendix (with no redactions at all).

Then in February 2025, after a total of nine months, the Decision Notice was issued.

Question 1: Does the Committee consider that this sentence, in the report, accurately reflects that 99% of the requested information was released?

Question 2: Does the Committee consider that this report informs Members of the problems that the public can have in obtaining information from this Council?

Question 3: Does the Committee consider it acceptable that a requester has to call in the Information Commissioner and wait nine months, in order to get 99% of the information requested?

The Chair thanked Mr Quinn for his questions and stated that he would receive a response within ten working days.

Barry Warren Regarding agenda items 8 and 9.

Firstly Madam Chair may I please compliment the Head of Digital Transformation & Customer Engagement for the positive intentions set out in the report and I hope that they are progressed and achieved and will therefore make the whole system so much more available and transparent to members and the public.

Question 1. Is the time schedule set out in paragraph 3.1 in agenda item 8 report still considered to be achievable?

Moving to item 9, I must declare an interest in the cases set out at paragraphs 3.3 and 3.5 and the questions I now raise would benefit from an answer but I would hope that in researching the answer the officer could assure members that lessons could be learned to prevent a repeat of the issue in the future.

Question 2. In the case at 3.3 the original request was for two documents and the response made no reference to one of them. A review was sought and again that document was not dealt with. Why was this request for a document completely ignored twice?

After the intervention of the Information Commissioner the ignored document appeared before the release of his final decision on the main document. Redactions were made to the main document contrary to the instruction of the Information Commissioner and the Council applied to a Tribunal to retain the redactions. The Tribunal did not take its full course as there was no point since the information redacted was elsewhere in the report unredacted.

Question 3. What procedures are being put in place to ensure that more care is being taken over understanding the requests made and ensuring all matters raised are addressed rather than some being ignored?

The case referred to in 3.5 resulted in the Information Commissioner issuing a Decision Notice for compliance by MDDC who did not fully comply with it. The case has been referred back to the Information Commissioner and given a new reference. I am aware that the Information Commissioner's Office has contacted MDDC and a new Decision is still awaited.

Question 4. How will this case be reported to Scrutiny Committee as it is not closed at this stage?

The Chair thanked Mr Warren for his questions and stated that he would receive a response within ten working days.

Paul Elstone – Regarding Agenda Item 10 Modular Home Value for Money Benchmarking Report.

I feel certain the Housing Officer will provide this Committee with a raft of reasons as to why he considers this Council's investment in Zed Pod's modular homes has provided net best value and come across as convincing when doing so.

I maintain a position Benchmarking Report being used to justify this position is fundamentally (fatally) flawed.

I hope you all have taken the opportunity to read the document plus attachments I have provided well in advance, and which details these fundamental flaws.

Question 1

The net cost calculations per square metre show that the Bristol Category 2 MMC development is by far the best value.

That the net cost per square metre of the Croft Estate – Sandford Development is 66% more expensive. Shapland Place is 58% more expensive.
This when everything including grant funding is normalised.

The gross Internal floor area for the Bristol Development is 1,350 square metres yet the report calculation only equates to 900 square metres.

There are similar and very major calculation errors for the Eastleigh development seriously impacting the accuracy of the value for money benchmarking results.

Please explain the full reason for the 900 square metre calculation error. An error which seriously distorts benchmarking results?

Question 2

This Council has a recent history of making disastrous financial decisions and related to Housing Projects.

3 Rivers including but not limited to St George's Court

Post Hill - Land acquisition and disposal.

Knowle Lane - Land acquisition.

Answers to questions asked at a Parliamentary Committee on the 4th March this year stated the following:

"I have just come out of a meeting yesterday looking at Councils use of MMC and what the barriers were. They had a pretty negative view. Almost all council development people around the table had tried and were not going to do it again".

Also, and I again quote "we've been bitten. We are not doing that again". This with regard to build cost, financial exposures plus build quality.

I contend this Council has already been 'bitten' and by both cost and quality. That it has not given full consideration to its financial exposures.

Why does this relatively small council with limited technical resources plus financial reserves think it can deliver something very different compared to larger Councils and in doing so guarantee there will not be yet another financial mistake? A disaster.

Question 3

My final question and one Chair I hope you will allow me to complete uninterrupted given it relates to health and well-being concerns for infants, the infirm and the elderly.

I have previously raised concerns about the potential of high temperature, overheating risk, at the Shapland Place development. Concerns which have been dismissed.

Concerns raised given resident's experiences at a Zed Pod development in Bristol and after internal temperatures of over 36 degrees C being reported.

At the Homes PDG meeting a Shapland Place resident and who is a single parent with a young child advised that they had already suffered uncomfortable temperatures as high as 30-degree C. Even feeling it necessary to fix a thermometer to an internal wall.

High temperatures this despite them opening windows. Windows known to have limited cross air (cooling) ventilation capacity.

With an internal temperature of 30 degrees C in May what will it be in a July or August heatwave?

It may not be commonly known but room temperatures above 22 degrees C have been attributed to sudden infant death syndrome.

The Report Table at paragraph 2.3 states Zed Pods “Meet or Exceed Overheating standards” Why is this stated if the Council does not have the proof of compliance in its possession?

The Chair thanked Mr Elstone for his questions and stated that he would receive a response within ten working days.

8 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0:33:11)**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 14 April 2025 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

9 **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DASHBOARD FOR 2024/25 QUARTER 4 (0:33:49)**

The Committee received and **NOTED** the Freedom of Information (FOI) Dashboard* for 2024/25 Quarter 4.

The Head of Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement presented the Freedom of Information Dashboard for 2024/25 Quarter 4.

The following was highlighted:

- The Information Commissioner had closed two cases in the quarter, one was not upheld and the other was partially upheld and the relevant disclosures made.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The format for the disclosure logs to provide responses had now been agreed, it was currently in testing and would be available by the end of June 2025.
- An alert would be sent using social media, general communications and the Council’s website, letting members of the public know that the format of the disclosure logs had been amended.
- The work to update the publication scheme to allow the public to more easily locate information already publicly available was work in progress but should be available in late September 2025.

Note: * Dashboard previously circulated.

10 **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024-25 (0:38:20)**

The Committee received and **NOTED** the Freedom of Information Annual Report* for 2024-25.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The 22 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests that had been received and not responded to were all for Devon County Council (DCC) and were passed on to DCC.
- There was a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the Council which stated the Council had to respond to requests within 20 days.

- The Lessons Learned Log was not available to Councillors or members of the public.
- The link on the Council website to FOI logs, referred to the number of clear working days (final column) that it took the Council to respond to the request. If a figure was marked zero it meant that the Council had responded the same day.
- The distinction between Environmental Information Requests (EIR) and FOI Requests and whether it was possible to separate the two types of request on the dashboard.
- A request to Benchmark FOI and EIR requests against other comparable Councils in Devon.
- FOI and EIR were two legislative frameworks with different origins that aimed to serve a similar purpose. FOI being of UK origin and EIR being of European Union origin. FOI covered the vast majority of information that was held and processed by the Council. EIR was designed to cover information that fell into environmental elements. In general terms; information that related to land, water, flora, fauna, air or air quality. The definition was quite broad and could cover information that was vicariously linked. For example the financial details of a business that affected the environment could if requested fall under EIR or FOI.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

11 **VALUE FOR MONEY AND BEST PRACTICE IN MID DEVON HOUSING MODULAR SOCIAL HOUSING AND DELIVERY REPORT (0:52:32)**

The Committee had before it a report * from the Head of Housing & Health providing it with the strategic and policy context supporting the delivery of modular (modern methods of construction, MMC) social housing in Mid Devon.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The report had been considered at Homes Policy Development Group on 3 June 2025.
- The report provided strategic and policy context supporting the delivery of modular, modern methods of construction, (MMC), Social Housing in mid Devon. It provided further information in respect of value for money relative benchmarking with traditional and other types of schemes. It also set out the wider context in terms of the benefits of the programme with regard to regeneration, zero carbon, added or social value and sustainment of the Council's tenancies.
- Benchmarking was very difficult for construction projects; no two schemes were the same.
- This fair benchmarking exercise included external information supported by independent and authoritative sources such as Homes England, Other information came from publicly available sources, for example planning documents.
- Typically the Council's Zed Pod schemes were around 6 units in size, vying for brown field sites. Therefore, the wider schemes that had been used to benchmark had been selected to be as similar as possible in that context with regard to scale and the type of location.

- When it came to external grant requirements, external grant funding requirements with Homes England and the wider Ministry of Housing were very robust and independent.
- Section 5 of the report (Benchmarking) was a summary of one of the annexes which set out the data in more detail. The report tried to be as transparent as possible, and showed gross costs for the schemes as well as net costs after introductions for grants that had been awarded, for example, under the full homes programme. It was the cost to the Council that mattered, so the net cost was the most valid benchmark.
- The reduced cost to the Council was achieved by bringing forward the types of schemes the Council did, at the specification they were producing in relation to the Zed Pod modular schemes or similar, that way the Council were able to draw down that extra grant funding to bring down the net cost to the Council.
- Table 1 within the report showed how the schemes benchmarked in relative terms; almost all of the schemes were either in the top five or top seven of those two comparators.
- With regard to the Kingsland scheme in Bristol, whichever figure that was used in terms of metres squared for development, that scheme still fell within the bottom end of value for money in the table.

Consideration was given to:

- Homes England did not release the benchmarking data they used. The qualitative feedback from Homes England had been that the schemes this Council put forward were at the higher end of the value for money assessment.
- Some of the funding that the Council were very successful in securing was tailored towards specifically problematic sites, like the Brown Field Land Release Fund. That was there because the Government knew that those sites were viability challenged, they knew that they were problem sites and they knew that unless they intervened in them to support and give funding then, they would not come forwards because the viability did not work.
- The value for money element had three aspects: the cost net; the value to add to Mid Devon and the value add to UK Plc. Developing the building industry locally was one of the big benefits. Decreased carbon emissions, nationally improved household insulation, national adherence to building regulations.
- When MMCs, were discussed it would be useful to mention the category: complete build, partial build etc.
- Concerns with regard to the overheating of modular properties. The Council had only had one poor experience in the schemes that had been brought forward so far. Two factors had been identified; one there was an issue between two different people in the house adjusting the temperature, one person wanting it very high the other person wanting it a bit lower, the Council had also identified a potential fault with one item, which meant the heating was on a little bit too much and engineers were due to visit to remedy the fault
- A lot of the concern went back to one report in respect of one of the early Bristol schemes that Zed Pods put together and it was down to misinformation, in that one particular tenant misunderstood how the heating should be used. There was a lesson there for Bristol Council and for Zed Pods around how Council's on board new tenants, because the heating systems were a little different. As a result of that, a completely new tenant pack had been designed.

- Had any mid Devon building companies been approached to tender for the construction of those types of buildings? Unfortunately, at the moment with the approved procurement frameworks that the Council had to access for those type of projects, none of the companies on those frameworks were local companies. However, the Council had received approaches from a couple of companies which were starting up locally and were showing an interest in modular or forms of MMC building whereby the Council had supported them and, the Council had guided them in terms of how the procurement process worked, the quality control mechanisms that had to be in place to be awarded on a framework. Alternatively the Council would encourage working with some of the broader national manufacturers to see a manufacturing base in the southwest if that was possible.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

- a) The report be **NOTED**.
- b) Cabinet continues to adopt an HRA development programme with a focus on delivering MMC, modular net-zero social housing where possible and viable as part of the Council's future Housing Strategy.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Note: (i) * Report previously circulated.

(ii) Cllr Broom was unable to vote to as he had left the meeting room during the discussion of the item.

12 **WORK PROGRAMME (1:20:54)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** the *Forward Plan and the *Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

Members were requested to put any items for the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan on a Scrutiny Committee work proposal form and submit it to the Clerk.

Suggestions made for the Work Plan were:

- Rural Transport for Colleges and Places of Education.
- Local Government Reorganisation (to confirm this was a standing item – confirmed on the next July meeting).
- Cullompton and Wellington Train stations.

Note: the *Forward Plan and the *Scrutiny Committee Work Programme were previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 6.24 pm)

CHAIR

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **AUDIT COMMITTEE** held on 24 June 2025 at 5.00 pm

Present

Councillors

L Knight (Chair)
E Buczkowski, C Connor, G Czapiewski,
L G J Kennedy, R Roberts and A Stirling
(Vice-Chair)

Apologies

Councillors

D Broom, M Farrell, B Fish and B Holdman

Also Present

Councillor

C Harrower

Also Present

Officers

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Kieran Knowles (Accountant) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Buczkowski and J M Downes

Also in

Attendance

Jo McCormick (Devon Assurance Partnership) and Jennifer Whitten (Independent Person)

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2025/2026**

RESOLVED that Cllr L Knight be elected Chair of the Audit Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2. **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR 2025/2026**

RESOLVED that Cllr A Stirling be elected Vice Chair of the Audit Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3. **APOLOGIES**

The following apologies were received:

- Cllr D Broom who was substituted by Cllr C Connor.
- Cllr M Farrell who was substituted by Cllr L G J Kennedy
- Cllr B Fish
- Cllr B Holdman

4. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following questions were received from members of the public:

Mr Barry Warren

My questions are prompted by item 9 on your agenda.

According to paragraph 1.1: 'It is reviewed at least quarterly by Heads of Service and the Leadership Team and updated as required.'

Question 1.

Are any elected Members involved in deciding what is included in the 'risk matrix, and any comments attached to any item?

A relevant bullet point in paragraph 2.3 is 'CR9a: Reputational Impact of 3 Rivers was removed in May 2025. The company undertook no operational activities in 2024/25 and was formally dissolved on the 26 November 2024 and all assets/liabilities were transferred to the Council during the 2023/24 financial year. As such it has been decided that this corporate risk can now be removed. Any updates on the assets transferred to the Council will be made in the standard financial performance reports received by the Cabinet.'

Question 2.

Who decided this removal please?

Question 3.

Is there a written minute or note of a meeting when this decision was made?

At the Audit Committee Meeting on the 3rd of December 2024 it is minuted "It was felt that the reputational damage regarding 3 Rivers would last for a long time. Dissolution of the company was but one event in a long series of events. There were still unsold properties to deal with.'

It was agreed that the Head of Finance, Property and Climate Resilience would report back the comments made by the Committee to the Leadership Team and that the risk would be reviewed, removing reference to the closedown risk and focusing on the remaining reputational risk.

Question 4.

The matrix in Appendix 2, page 28 of your bundle shows that the 'Risk Owner' is the Chief Executive. Is it considered that the actions now being proposed or undertaken are in accord with the intention or spirit of the agreement recorded on the 3rd of December 2024?

Question 5.

Are Members really convinced that the reputational damage caused by 3 Rivers can be removed by transferring properties to the Council? They were bought by the Council for millions of pounds – not transferred.

Question 6.

Properties at Bampton have not been all sold and there are price reductions. Land at Knowle Lane was overpriced and remains unused. St. George's Court is still not completed and let with questions around structural surveys. All these monies could be earning interest for the Council but are not. Are Members satisfied that this is not causing 'reputational damage' to the Council?

Mr Paul Elstone

Question 1

This Administration has spent and intends to spend tens of millions of pounds on modular social housing but there is no entry on the Corporate Risk Register covering this.

I have provided all Audit Committee Members with a document that reveals other Councils have been "bitten" by failing modular build companies.

The consequences have been raised in both House of Commons and House of Lords Select Committees.

This Council has placed large orders and made large stage payments to their MMC Supplier ZED PODS, but I could not find any reference to any risk assessments or possible failure mitigation.

I understand that ZED PODS have never built any modules, they subcontract out both module construction and installation.

ZED PODs until relatively recently had major modular build contracts with a company called Impact Modular.

A company now in Administration - with the Administrator attempting to recover their outstanding debts including from the ZED PODs shareholders.

ZED PODS are now using a company called Dragon Heart Homes to build the modules. This is a newly formed - start up - Company and which took over Impact Modular's factory facilities in Peterborough.

In view of the size of the monetary commitment and the apparent lack of risk/mitigation assessment; will this Audit Committee firmly recommend that this Councils MMC Social Housing plans be added to the Corporate Risk Register?

Question 2

The removal of the 3 Rivers Reputation Risk item from the Corporate Risk Register is premature.

This Council purchased a number of assets from 3 Rivers in March 2024 for vast sums of public money and has had to impair a lot of that money.

This Administration approved the purchase of 5 Haddon Heights properties, for £3.135 million, which have not sold and are now being written down by £264,000 and the purchase of land at Knowle Lane, for £3.66 million, which was immediately impaired by £2 million and lies unused.

The loss of investment interest income on the total of £6.8 million for the past 15 months is around £424,000.

A total loss so far to this Councils General Fund near to £700,000 - and currently increasing by around £28,000 per month.

In simple terms if this loss had not been incurred, it would have meant there was no need for this Administration to increase leisure centre car parking fees or Council Tax at all this year - let alone to the maximum 3 percent.

3 Rivers is still impacting Council finances and reputation.

Will this Audit Committee accept that it would be a major reputational issue to try and hide this by removing this from the Risk Register?

Mr Nick Quinn

Agenda Item 10: Draft Statement of Accounts:

Specifically the Annual Governance Statement, which starts on page 197 of your papers.

Question 1

Paragraph 1.2 states "Previous weaknesses highlighted within prior Value for Money conclusions have been addressed through the closure of the arm's length company and the ongoing work to refund the overpayment of rent arising from the historic error in the calculation". The Council had previously said it intended to limit the refund of overpayments to a maximum of 6 years; does this unqualified statement on the refund indicate that the Council now intends to refund tenants with all of their rent

error overpayments, or should the statement be altered to read “some of the overpayments”?

Question 2

Paragraph 4.2 sets out a number of principles. Principle A states: “Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law”. Will Audit Committee agree that limiting the refund of tenant overpayments does not demonstrate adherence to the main principle of “Behaving with Integrity and a Strong Commitment to Ethical Values”?

Question 3

I believe paragraph 5.2 deliberately understates the size and impact of the Housing Rent Errors. The use of the phrase “for a number of years” does not adequately describe the considerable 22 year period that this had been going on, and describing it as “this isolated error” really does not come near to properly describe wrongly setting the rent of 2,800 properties for every week of those 22 years. This was not an ‘isolated’ error - it was 3,203,200 errors, amounting to millions of pounds! Will Audit Committee please ask that paragraph 5.2 is reworded in order to properly reflect the seriousness of this error?

The Chair provided a response to Mr Quinn’s questions by stating the following:

Thank you for your questions Mr Quinn – obviously these are the draft accounts and Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which have been made public and will be subject to rigorous audit by our external auditors prior to returning back to the Committee for formal approval. I am currently content with how our officers have prepared these documents in compliance with the necessary financial and legal requirements governing the completion of local authority accounts. I can confirm that we will consider your comments either during this evening’s debate on our draft accounts and the AGS or at a subsequent meeting when we finally approve them.

In respect of the questions raised by Mr Warren and Mr Elstone, the Chair stated that as the questions had not been received in advance, a written response would be provided within 10 working days and appended to the minutes of the meeting.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2025 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

6. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No interests were declared under this item.

7. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair thanked his colleagues for electing him.

8. **START TIME OF MEETINGS**

It was **AGREED** to continue to commence Audit Committee meetings at 5.00pm for the remainder of the municipal year 2025/2026.

9. **CORPORATE RISK REPORT (00:21:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager and the Head of People, Performance & Waste reviewing the Corporate Risk Register.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The report presented the Council's current corporate risks with their updated position as of May this year. These were the risks which were most likely to impact the Council meeting its objectives.
- At paragraph 2.1 of the report, there was a summary table of the 16 corporate risks that the Council was currently managing. The risk matrix or heat map showed the relative position of the corporate risks. Appendix 2 of the report provided further details for each risk in a standard template.
- Any significant changes to the risk register since it was last reported to the Committee were listed in the covering report at paragraph 2.3.
- An audit conducted by Devon Assurance Partnership had reached the opinion of 'Reasonable Assurance' when considering the Council's approach to risk management.
- Risk reference CR9A: 'The reputational impact of Three Rivers', had been removed in May 2025. The company undertook no operational activities in 2024/25 and was formally dissolved on the 26th of November 2024. All asset liabilities were transferred to the Council during the 2024 financial year. As such, it has been decided that this corporate risk could now be removed. Any updates on the assets transferred to the Council would be made in the standard financial performance reports that were received by the Cabinet.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The appendices detailed the mitigating actions in relation to each risk. The Committee was encouraged to add to the Risk Register if they considered it necessary.
- The risk rating in relation to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was currently quite high at 20. It was explained that this was due to the fact that LGR was not in the Council's control to determine. A number of proposals were emerging and these would be evaluated by the Government. The Council was blind to what the final outcome would be. Consequently there was a risk to ongoing service delivery.
- The importance of engaging with town and parish council's at every step of the LGR journey.
- Cyber Security was perhaps the most significant risk the Council faced. The Council had recently received a national Government Cyber Security Audit which had resulted in a detailed action plan in terms of what the Council needed to do. The Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) stated that he would be happy to share the details of this action plan with the Committee but it would need to be under Part II arrangements due to the obvious nature of the

subject matter. The Council was also networking with national and local partners regarding this issue to ensure best practice.

- Whether it had been too premature to remove the 'Reputational Risk of 3 Rivers' from the Risk Register? It was explained that the company was now dissolved and now presented the Council with a property risk that could be managed by regular quarterly reports to the Cabinet where the risks were discussed in depth. The question was asked as to whether those reports could come to the Audit Committee. It was stated that they could or at least the relevant paragraphs could be appended to the Corporate Risk Register which was presented to the Audit Committee at every meeting.
- The Risk Register 'belonged' to Members and could be amended or added to as appropriate.
- The risk rating in relation to the Cullompton Relief Road had been lowered slightly due to the recent receipt of funding and the commencement of works albeit in the very early stages.
- Regarding the Social Housing Rent Error the Committee were informed that a meeting had been held with the Regulator for Social Housing that day and that they had seemed very reassured with the direction of travel.
- As a general rule, if something was outside of the Council's control, it increased the risk rating.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

10. **DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2024/2025 (00:48:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the draft version of the annual Statement of Accounts to Members which had been published on the website and presented for external audit.

The Committee were provided with a presentation which provided a high level introduction to understanding the Financial Statements and the Annual Governance Statement. It also included pertinent points with regard to the role and function of the Audit Committee in discharging its duty with regard to the annual accounts. It also referenced, timeframes, key accounting policies and the annual audit.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Figures in the draft accounts in relation to Property Services and Public Health areas. It was explained that there had been a significant underspend in these areas due to maintenance plans having slipped and some large unbudgeted S106 receipts. However, these monies would be transferred to reserves until those projects were ready to be delivered.
- The level of reserves had increased. It had been a very good year in terms of Business Rates collection. This 'smoothing reserve' provided the Council with a helpful buffer should the Government change the rules regarding Business Rates in the future.
- The Social Housing Rents Error showed a loss in the draft accounts of £1.8m which had been well recorded. It was confirmed that this did not include the officer costs of the team appointed to manage the action plan in relation to this. At the moment these costs were able to be managed within budget.
- The way vehicle leases were required to be shown had changed therefore this looked very different from last year.

- It was confirmed that the Council held a detailed Assets Register and assets were required to be valued externally every year so that the correct values were recorded.
- There appeared to be quite a big swing in the provision of services figure in the cash flow statement. The Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) stated that he could append detailed information on this to the final accounts brought before the Committee at their next meeting.
- It had been a good year as far as the accounts were concerned in that there had been no key changes, the Council had not taken on new business and there had been an underspend on the General Fund. There had been close to budget monitoring reports given to the Cabinet which had allowed the Council to build up of reserves. This was against a backdrop of uncertainties and challenges ahead with regard to Government funding and LGR.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

11. **DEVON ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP INTERNAL AUDIT END OF YEAR REPORT 2024/2025 (01:32:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Devon Assurance Partnership (DAP) presenting the Annual Internal Audit Report for 2024/2025.

The following was highlighted in the report:

- The report provided a summary of their work for the year.
- Their overall opinion for the year was one of 'Reasonable Assurance'.
- Follow up work had been necessary in the Building Control area as the opinion had still been one of 'Limited Assurance'.
- Much progress had been made since their report had been written in May.
- Some work which had been planned for 2024/25 had had to be deferred until 2025/26, some of the reasons for this were down to the level of available resources within DAP itself.
- Appendix 1 contained a summary of the audits which had taken place since the last Audit Committee in March 2025.
- One 'high' audit recommendation remained outstanding and 9 'medium' recommendations had also slipped the timescales for completion.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Audit recommendations needed to be followed up and progressed by the Council not DAP.
- Up to date explanations needed to be provided and the Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer) stated he would chase this up with the relevant managers.
- It was extremely rare for DAP to give a 'Substantial Assurance' Audit Opinion. There had not been one in recent years. 'Reasonable Assurance' opinions were the most common.
- Where dates had been revised for completing an audit recommendation this needed to be shown in an extra column so that it was clear for the Audit Committee to see what the latest position was.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

12. **DEVON ASSURANCE PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL COUNTER FRAUD RESILIENCE AND ASSESSMENT REPORT (01:48:00)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Devon Assurance Partnership (DAP) providing the Annual Counter Fraud Resilience and Assessment Report.

The following was highlighted:

- DAP were currently in the process of recruiting a new fraud expert and the successful candidate would be introduced at a future meeting of the Audit Committee.
- DAP had recommended that the Council go through a self-assessment process in relation to fraud. That process had now taken place and no issues of concern had been identified.

It was requested by the Independent Person (IP) that the revised Fraud Policy be shared with the Committee and that the Code of Conduct also made reference to fraud. This was **AGREED**. Reciprocally, it was requested that the IP shared any good practice she was aware of with the Committee so that processes and policies could be tightened up where necessary.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

13. **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

The items already listed in the Work Programme for the next meeting were **NOTED**.

In addition it was requested that a standing item be added to the agenda for each meeting regarding an update on the Social Housing Rents Error situation.

(The meeting ended at 6.56 pm)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a MEETING of the COMMUNITY, PEOPLE & EQUALITIES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 17 June 2025 at 12.30 pm

Present

Councillors

B Holdman (Chair)
S Chenore (Vice-Chair), D Broom, A Cuddy,
M Farrell, A Glover, L Knight and H Tuffin

Apologies

Councillors

C Harrower and L G J Kennedy

Also Present

Councillors

G Czapiewski, J Lock and S Robinson

Also Present

Officers:

Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Jane Lewis (Communications and Engagement Manager), Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Policy Research Officer)

Councillors

Online

G Duchesne and D Wulff

Officers Online

Harriet Said (Public Health Team Leader (Commercial)) and Dr Stephen Carr (Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2025/26

RESOLVED that Cllr B Holdman be elected Chair of the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr S Chenore be elected Vice Chair of the Community, People and Equalities Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3 START TIME OF MEETINGS FOR 2025/26

It was **AGREED** that the start time for meetings for the remainder of the municipal year continue to be at 12.30pm on Tuesday afternoons.

4 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr L G J Kennedy and Cllr C Harrower who was substituted by Cllr L Knight.

5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

Members were reminded that interests could be declared at any point during the meeting.

6 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

7 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (0:09:48)**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 March 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

8 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (0:10:36)**

The Chair thanked Members of the Group for their support and encouragement. The Chair also thanked the Clerk for his work during the previous year.

9 **COMMUNITY ALCOHOL PARTNERSHIP (0:11:19)**

The Regional Adviser for the Community Alcohol Partnership for South West England was unable to attend this meeting. This item was deferred to the next meeting.

10 **MEETING MANAGEMENT (0:12:05)**

The Chair brought forward the item on the Public Health Food Safety Service Plan to the next item on the agenda.

11 **PUBLIC HEALTH FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN (0:13:00)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** a *report from the Head of Housing and Health.

The following was highlighted:

- This was an Annual Report regarding the strategy of the Food Safety Team within the Public Health team.
- The Food Safety Service Plan set out how the Service would meet its statutory responsibilities around food safety.
- The Central Authority responsible for food in the United Kingdom was the Food Standards Agency, Mid Devon District Council were the 'competent authority' working on their behalf. The Council had to meet the Food Standards Agency's chief requirements and the plan set out how that service was delivered.

- There were nearly 1,000 registered food premises in the district.
- 750 of those establishments are in scope of the food hygiene rating scheme being scored between 0 and 5.
- 134 new businesses registered with the Service last year which meant that the base line of this work was growing by 2.5 businesses per week.
- 90% of the premises that the Food Service worked with were in a good category. The Council was one of only two districts in Devon with no premises in the zero category – those that were in urgent need of improvement. Overall, the rating of the businesses were improving so the Council's Food Service's interventions were very effective. The team had taken 100 premises through an improvement in their food rating.
- Only two thirds of the inspections or interventions that the Food Standards Agency required of the team during 2024/2025 were met. This was indicative of the lack in staffing resources and staff changes over the year, there were currently only 2.5 full time equivalent members of staff who were competent to carry out those inspections. A plan for the future staffing of the team was being developed. Meanwhile, an external food contractor was being used to carry out some inspections.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The difference between those premises that were registered and those that were required to have a food hygiene certificate was explained by the fact that certain businesses were exempt from the scheme. They were the ones that were classed as low risk, those perhaps who sold other items and a little sealed confectionary, or producers, manufacturers and distributors – all were excluded from the scheme as they did not sell directly to the consumer and that was what the food hygiene rating scheme was designed for.
- The number of additional staff required to visit all the premises the Food Standards Agency (FSA) required of the Council and meet their targets? It was confirmed that overall possibly 1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) member of staff may be needed possibly split between 0.5 FTE in a senior food role and 0.5 FTE in a lower regulatory role. Those were statutory duties for which the Council received no funding by way of cost recovery. The resourcing issue was not just affecting the Council, it was nationwide, therefore, the FSA was looking into a cost recovery model for permitting or licensing businesses.

Note: *Report previously circulated.

12 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD- QUARTER 4 (0:28:48)

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the * Performance dashboard for quarter 4 from the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager.

The following was highlighted:

- Measures that were part of the Corporate Plan were shown in yellow text on the dashboard.
- New subscribers to “Let’s Talk Mid Devon”, was showing as red, there were 162 subscribers in the year against a target of 400. However, there were

8,886 visits to the platform, 948 contributions and an engagement rate across the year of 14.1%.

- Food Service Inspections were Red rated, however, performance had increased from quarter 3 and was approaching performance levels from Quarter 1 and Quarter 2.
- Private water supply sampling was also below target and staff were being trained and accredited to undertake private water supply work.
- The PDG had slightly underspent its budget for the year 2024/25.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Let's Talk Mid Devon was a new platform for the Council and perhaps the target for registrations had been a little ambitious. Engagement was probably more important and customers may have been put off engaging due to having to register first. That would have to be looked at, perhaps allowing some interaction but if a customer wanted full interaction then they would need to register possibly to enter service specific forums.
- Feedback from the Residents Survey was put in a report which went to the senior leadership team and on to Cabinet. Then press releases were sent out thanking those who responded and directing those interested, to the report with statistics. Other surveys were service specific and the results went to those Teams.
- Digital surveys were generally the Council's default approach, however, alternative formats were made available at request.
- Private water supply sampling was below target, this was partially due to requirements placed on the Council in terms of staff taking samples being accredited. That training had taken staff away from front line duties and hence the target had not been met but that should improve over the next year.

Note: *Performance Dashboard previously circulated.

13 COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (0:39:19)

The Group had before it a *report from the Head of Digital Transformation and Customer Engagement providing information on the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

The Communications and Engagement Manager highlighted the following:

- The revised Communications Strategy had been revised from the previous one, two years ago. Minor changes had been made to reflect changes over the two year period.
- The Communications Team had taken over the communications for Active Mid Devon the re-branded Leisure service.
- The Council were at the early stages of investigating how they could use Artificial Intelligence (AI) safely.
- Appendix 2 was the Media and Social Media Policy which included some useful Do's and Don'ts regarding social media.
- There had been nearly 19,000 visits to the "Let's Talk" platform and over two years a 20% engagement rate.
- There were 25,000 followers on the social media channels.
- The team had 14,000 subscribers to their E Bulletin.

Discussion took place regarding:

- What protection was built into the system to avoid the misuse of AI? It was explained that a separate AI policy relating to staff use of AI had recently been presented to the Cabinet limiting its use at this stage. As the Council were at the early stages of understanding how AI might be used a separate policy would come through the Council in due course.
- Only a few officers were registered to use Co-Pilot as a trial at the moment.
- Whether a review period in three years' time was too long bearing in mind the advances in technology. It was explained that so far as the AI policy was concerned the review period was every six months, there was no reason, if it was necessary, why the Council could not look at other social media channels in the interim. The reason why the review was timed for three years was to tie in with Local Government Reorganisation.
- Misinformation management in terms of AI would not just sit with the Communications Team but with other service areas across the Council. There was of course the possibility that increased automation could reduce workloads.
- The Communications Team had been reviewing the content of the Website and removing out of date content. There had been a hope to put a business case together for a new website in 18 months' time but now with Local Government Reorganisation this is being reviewed.
- The Toolkit for Emergency Training and Emergency Planning included some pre-approved messages for cyber-attack and for flooding. An Emergency Planning day was coming up where further ideas were expected. A survey would be sent to town and parish clerks to be circulated to their communities asking them to give individual responses.
- Information about Local Government Reorganisation was and would be available on the website for all to read.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

The content of the reviewed Communication and Engagement Strategy and the Media and Social Media Policy be approved.

(Proposed by the Cllr A Glover, seconded by Cllr L Knight.)

Note: *report previously circulated.

14 **VOLUNTARY SECTOR NETWORKING EVENT UPDATE (0:52:40)**

The Clerk to the Committee gave a verbal update regarding the proposed Community and Voluntary Sector Networking Event and highlighted the following:

- Invites had been sent out to various funding organisations suggesting that this event would be held in late July 2025.
- The response back had been poor with only one invitee able to attend, others were unable to attend due to finance, staffing and holidays.
- A decision had been taken to move the event back to the 22 October 2025 to see if that was a better fit with funders and fresh invites were about to be sent out.

- Invites would not be sent out to the Voluntary Sector and Community Groups until it was known what could be offered to them.

The Group were content with progress so far and with the revised date in October.

15 **WORK PROGRAMME (0:55:01)**

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the *Work Programme.

Items to note:

- The speaker from the Community Alcohol Partnership who was unable to make this meeting would attend at the September meeting of the Group.
- An offer from the Chief Executive Officer of the local Citizens Advice to come and discuss their work was accepted and timetabled for the meeting in September 2025.

Discussion took place regarding:

- It was suggested that the Licensing Team could be invited to the talk from the Community Alcohol Partnership in September.
- The Vagrancy Act and changes to decriminalise rough sleeping would be separate to the Council's own Homelessness Policy and its Unauthorised Encampment Policy. It was not expected that there would be any conflicts between those policies.

Note: *Work Programme previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 1.31 pm)

CHAIR

MINUTES of a MEETING of the ECONOMY & ASSETS POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 19 June 2025 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

J Cairney, G Cochran, M Farrell,
B Holdman, L Knight, J Poynton, R Roberts,
A Stirling and M Stratton

Apology

Councillor

J Buczkowski

Also Present

Councillors

G Duchesne, S Keable and S Robinson

Also Present

Officers

Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Adrian Welsh (Strategic Manager for Growth, Economy and Delivery), Luke Howard (Environment and Enforcement Manager), Linda Perry (Economic Development Officer) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

E Buczkowski, A Glover and L Taylor

Officers Online

Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property Services and Climate Resilience) and Darren Beer (Manager of Street Scene and Open Spaces)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr G Cochran be elected Chair of the Economy & Assets Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr M Farrell be elected Vice Chair of the Economy & Assets Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr J Buczkowski who was substituted by Cllr B Holdman.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from members of the public.

5 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

The following interests were declared:

- Cllr J Cairney declared a personal interest in that he was also a member of another local authority.
- Cllr B Holdman declared a personal interest in that he had been contacted by a resident regarding the Car Parking item on the agenda.
- Cllr L Knight declared a personal interest in that he had a car parking permit with Mid Devon District Council.

Members were reminded that any interest/s could be declared at any point during the meeting.

6 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

7 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair had the following announcements to make:

- He thanked colleagues for electing him as Chair of the Policy Development Group.
- He also thanked the outgoing Chair, Cllr J Downes, for his lengthy service as the Chair of this Group.
- He would like the Group to discuss Assets more closely from now on, especially the transfer of any Assets in the run up to Local Government Reorganisation. He would like the Group to receive a presentation on that at some point in the near future and for the town and parish perspective to be born in mind.

8 **START TIME OF MEETINGS**

It was **AGREED** that the start time for meetings for the remainder of the municipal year continue to be at 5.30pm on Thursdays.

9 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q4 (00:15:00)

The Group were presented with, and **NOTED**, a slide * showing performance in the Economy & Assets area.

The dashboards aimed to give an 'at a glance' understanding of how services were performing in terms of performance measures, finance and risk. Any measures that were also part of the Corporate Plan were listed in yellow text.

The indicators were presented with current performance, the annual target and a RAG (red/amber/green) rating to indicate whether or not the Council was on track to meet its target. Overall performance was presented in a pie chart which combined the RAG ratings for both the performance and the finance measures.

The following indicators were currently showing as amber or red:

- The Pannier Market occupancy was showing as amber. This had slipped just behind target in quarter four, however, the period of January to March tended to see the lower occupancy at the market. It was a seasonal trend and a quieter trading period.
- The PDG outturn was at red and this was due to a significant underspend which was mainly related to maintenance. This had gone back into earmarked reserves to fund future maintenance. The under spend reflected that the asset base was in a relatively good condition. Condition surveys were in place and future planned maintenance would increase.
- Car parking income was showing as amber and this was slightly down mainly due to lower than predicted permit income during the year. The Pannier Market income was also showing as red with the income being £21k behind target.
- Capital programme slippages were at red. There were nine projects that related to this PDG and two of those had slipped. One was a building management system for Phoenix House which was currently being scoped and the Cullompton Relief Road which was now well under way after securing funding.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Was there anything that could be done to make the Pannier Market warmer in the winter months? It was explained that whilst this was challenging, funds had been put aside next year to see what could be done to improve this.
- Two significant storms had affected two planned events which had had a negative effect on income figures. This had been extremely unfortunate but had been unavoidable. In addition to this a number of permanent units had been vacant, however, the Group were reassured that they were now fully occupied which reflected well for the coming year. Some of the staffing costs had also been recently reduced. The Group expressed the desire to see this move in a positive direction to be reflected in the Dashboard presented to the next meeting.
- A Pannier Market Strategy Review was underway and would be led by the Market Team. Updates would be brought to the Group which would include footfall data.

- Whether the Council could recover any empty property business rate reliefs? It was explained that this would depend on what this was for, whether it was mandatory or discretionary relief. Clarification on this would be provided to the Group after the meeting.

Note: (i) * Slide previously circulated.

(ii) Cllr B Holdman declared a personal interest in that he was Chair of the Allies Group which occupied one of the Pannier Market units.

10 CAR PARKING (00:30:00)

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of People, Performance and Waste and the Environment & Enforcement Manager presenting the views of the Car Park Consultative Group and requesting that the Policy Development Group considers these alongside any recommendations it may choose to make to the Cabinet about the structure of fees from 2026/2027 onwards. It also provided the opportunity to make onward recommendation to the Cabinet on the advance notification of Christmas Car Parking, as recommended by the Consultative Group.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- **Parking Tariffs:** The Car Park Consultative Group had looked at different models from neighbouring authorities, some of whom had cheaper tariffs for longer stays as the Group wished to encourage longer stays in the town centres. After some discussion, the Group had settled on an inflation based rise which had not been done since 2023/24. Inflation was at 2.5% for 2024/25 and was estimated to be 3.2% for 2025/26. A 5% rise would see 10p added to all tariffs across the piece. This fell within the remit of the Section 151 Officer to implement.
- **Permits:** The Group had put forward new ideas to make the take up of permits more attractive to the public. These were set out within the report. The incentivised scheme was an area the Consultative Group had asked officers to consider in order to fill the vacant spaces in the Multi Storey Car Park. The introduction of a day permit was at the request of many users who did not have a need for the night element. This showed that the Group had listened to the customer base and had strived to deliver solutions that better served users needs.
- **Free Christmas Parking:** The report set out five free Saturday parking days in the run up to Christmas 2025 to support the public, local business and the high street. These were extremely popular with residents particularly when combined with community events including the Christmas light switch on.

Discussion took place regarding:

- There were significant cost pressures on the service with contractors increasing their prices (for example cash collection agents) and an inflationary rise was felt to be the fairest way forward after much deliberation.
- It was reiterated that the proposed 5% rise to parking tariffs would be over a 2 year period.
- The Consultative Group had looked at various other models including those used by neighbouring authorities, frontloading charges in order to make longer

stays more attractive and they had listened to residents and proactively sought feedback from them.

- Was it worth asking traders when were their peak times etc.?
- The difficulties involved in gathering real time data. The District Council did not have the equipment available to it as the County Council did, such as vehicle number measuring equipment.
- The possibility of rounding proposed figures up or down to make them more sensible to the customer paying by cash.
- Car parks were regularly checked for non-compliance and procedures were considered fairly robust. Enforcement information was regularly reported to the Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement PDG.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

- i. The views of the Car Park Consultative Group be noted.
- ii. A 5% inflation rise be applied across all pay and display tariff bands and that this be factored into the budget setting process for 2026/2027.
- iii. It agrees to five dates for free parking in the lead up to Christmas 2025.

(Proposed by Cllr M Farrell and seconded by Cllr J Poynton)

Reason for the decision

This report aligned with the Corporate Plan to deliver sustainable parking options within communities. Therefore, supporting economy and growth within the district.

Notes: (i) * Report previously circulated.

(ii) Cllr L Knight requested that his abstention from voting be recorded.

11 PRESENTATION ON THE BUSINESS SURVEY (00:52:00)

The Group received and **NOTED** a presentation by the Economic Development Officer providing information in relation to the recent Business Survey. This included the following key points:

- The Business Survey was a new initiative for 2025.
- It was hosted on the 'Let's Talk Mid Devon' platform.
- It had been open for six weeks from March through to April 2025.
- There had been 96 visits to the webpage - 34 completed questionnaires – representing all business sectors - highest from the retail sector.
- The survey wasn't all questions – it included information about, and signposting to, business support and information.
- Key challenges to business growth had been identified as: increases in business costs and a reduction in consumer spending/ sales income, town centre decline, poor internet/ Wi-Fi (speed) and the suitability of premises.
- What could be improved to help businesses in Mid Devon? Some solutions were: business guidance and support, better road and transport links, repairs to pot holes and pavements (by Devon County Council), review of Business Rates, better and/or cheaper car parking, improved premises availability & cost and better internet & Wi-Fi availability & quality (another DCC initiative)
- In terms of what was already happening this included: one-to-one discussions with a number of the responding businesses, a business newsletter, the

sharing of business views with relevant services and with new programmes coming through UKSPF – for example, 'PROSPER 2'. Also collaborative events and work streams with relevant services, Business Rates drop-ins and Green Enterprise Grants

- 'Visit Mid Devon' promoted the Mid Devon brand, provided a network for local visitor economy businesses, included a focus on town centres and curated all that Mid Devon had to offer.
- There was also the 'Love Your Town Centre' programme.

Consideration was given to:

- The high demand for small business premises.
- The use of planning enforcement powers when land was used inappropriately. Two enforcement officers were now working very hard in this area. Members needed to report instances causing concern.
- There were undoubtedly challenges with planning legislation but the Economic Development Team did engage with land owners on a frequent basis.

The Chair encouraged the Group to read the recently published documents in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

12 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM UPDATE REPORT (01:15:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Place and Economy updating Members on projects and activities undertaken by the Growth, Economy and Delivery Team during the last couple of months.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- All that had been achieved in the last three years regarding the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund including, the Tiverton Work Hub, the Field to Fork campaign, various workshops, the Mid Devon Destination web page and a number of other significant campaigns that had been regularly reported on to this Group. Analysis had shown that 99% of the available funds had been spent which was excellent.
- Looking forwards, the Cabinet had recently approved a number of schemes for the future allocation of Prosperity Funds. There would need to be a very quick turnaround time this time, with the Government stating that all monies needed to be 'spent' by 31 March 2026. The format was slightly different this time round and there were tight restrictions, for example, the same business would not be able to be helped twice. Regular updates would be provided to the Group. The amount that would be allocated was significantly reduced this time round.
- Other activity undertaken by the Team over the past 3 months, as listed in the report, was summarised.

Consideration was given to:

- It was hoped that a similar type of 'Prosper Programme' would continue under the new arrangements.
- It was also hoped that the Devon Agri. Tech Alliance would continue.
- Various programmes under the Visitor Economy umbrella would continue.

- The Pannier Market Strategy Review would continue.
- The 'Employment Skills' programme was hoping to be extended.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

13 **WORK PROGRAMME DISCUSSION FOR 2025/2026 (01:34:00)**

The Group had before it the draft work programme * as it currently stood together with a slide ** which was shown at the previous meeting listing the emerging themes and streams of potential work heading in the Economy & Assets direction over the next 12 months and beyond.

The Group considered this information and a discussion took place regarding:

- The need to add the Pannier Market Strategy Review to the Work Programme.
- Update on internet provision within Mid Devon – what was being done to improve it?

It was **AGREED** that these two items be added to the Work Programme for the Policy Development Group for the coming year:

Note: * Work Programme and ** Emerging Theme slide previously circulated.

14 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:56:00)**

The items listed in the Work Programme for the next meeting were **NOTED**.

In addition to this the following was requested to be on the agenda for a future meeting of the Group:

- Community Asset Transfer update and presentation
- An update on the situation with the Cullompton and Wellington Railway Stations

(The meeting ended at 7.15 pm)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 3 June 2025 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

A Glover (Chair)
C Adcock (Vice-Chair), J Cairney,
S Chenore, G Czapiewski, C Harrower and
H Tuffin

Apology

Councillor

N Letch

Also Present

Councillors

J Lock, S Robinson and D Wulff

Also Present

Officers

Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Mike Lowman (Operations Manager for Housing), Sophie Richards (Customer Manager, Mid Devon Housing), Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Buczkowski, S J Clist, G Duchesne and L G J Kennedy

Officers Online

Dr Stephen Carr (Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager), Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience) Carole Oliphant (Housing Policy Officer) and David Parker (Democratic Services & Research and Policy Officer)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr A Glover be elected Chair of the Homes Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr C Adcock be elected Vice Chair of the Homes Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr N Letch.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following public questions were asked:

Mr Barry Warren

My observations and questions are prompted by item 12 on your agenda.

The report is prepared by the Head of Housing and Health.

Question 1

Is this the report which he told the March 2025 meeting he was going to present to give further reassurance that the Zed Pod developments were value for money and for people to be assured that right homes were being provided at the right cost?

After he had advised of his proposed actions the then Chair of this committee said “Make it as robust as possible to counter the little group of difficult people.”

Question 2

Is the report robust as required when there is manipulation of facts or the full truth is not being told?

An example of this is contained in paragraph 1.8 of the report where it states – “It is also worth noting that MDDC has also been instrumental in enabling the delivery of other affordable housing units within the district - for example the 70 new properties at Post Hill.” There are those who know the full story behind this site where a deal was done with the original developers to acquire the land for a 3 Rivers project that did not materialise and the land has been sold by MDDC at a loss of some £1.4 million. If the developers had built the houses as part of the original development some would already have been lived in for the past 3 years.

Question 3

Is this an example of due diligence and value for money?

The report gives information of grant funding which has been obtained which is excellent news for the MDDC finances.

Question 4

Is it correct for this grant monies to be deducted from a build cost to make costs per square meter of floor space look cheaper than it really was?

In true 'Yes Minister' comedy script the following appears on page 145 of your papers: Space standards – all residential schemes meet the nationally described space standards. As the formal Principal Designer and developer, Zed Pods are responsible for incorporating this into each building design and this is checked by MDDC Development Control at Planning Approval stage to ensure the minimum standards are met. Post-completion, as built measurements have been taken at several schemes to further verify compliance.

Question 5

This suggests that as built measurements have not been taken at all schemes. Which ones have not been so measured?

Mr Paul Elstone

My questions relate to Agenda Item 12.

Modular Home Value for Money Benchmarking Report.

A report which I fully consider is fatally flawed this including with some very basic maths errors plus factual errors that seriously distort results.

I have provided Committee members with a copy of a document plus attachments, and which I hope you have had the opportunity to read. A document I believe once scrutinised fully validates my statement.

Question 1

The report represents that the Bristol New Kingsland development as a high cost development this when compared to this Councils ZED POD's modular projects.

The factual information available shows something very different.

The gross square meter cost for the Bristol development is three thousand four hundred and seven pounds (£3,407)

ZED POD - Croft Estate, Sandford, development cost five thousand five hundred and ninety pounds £ 5,590 or 64% higher.

Shapland Place – Tiverton cost £5,103 or 50% higher

St Andrew – Cullompton cost £4,689 or 36% higher

And astoundingly while not mentioned in the report, Fir Close - Willand will cost £8,108 or 136% higher.

These cost fully exposing the accuracy and therefore validity of the Value for Money data you have been presented with

Why are the financial numbers in the report so very different from fact?

Question 2

Why does the report say that the Bristol Development is Traditional Build when the evidence says it's built with MMC structures and using robotics?

Question 3

Why does the report indicate that the Bristol Development is not as energy efficient than it really is and as the available evidence shows. Even having Passive House design components?

Question 4

How reasonably can the Eastleigh former Post Office development be considered as a Value for Money point of reference?

A four (4) story high block, built using a mix of traditional and modules, even with a lift.

Very importantly a development that has two commercial units on the ground floor. This as shown in the document provided to this committee?

Question 5

The benchmarking makes use of grant funding in various forms to reduce the apparent ZED POD development cost. Grant funding that in most instances could and should be applied to the external developments used as the reference this to normalise the quoted development cost.

Grants if applied to the Bristol development cost calculations it would further and substantially prove that this Councils ZED POD development schemes are not providing the anything like "Best Value" and by any reasonable measure.

Will this Committee accept that the data they have been provided with in the report is fundamentally (fatally) flawed and therefore defer making any recommendations to Cabinet based on its content, this until fully scrutinised?

The Chair stated that as the questions had not been received in advance, written responses would be provided within 10 working days and attached to the minutes.

5 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No interests were declared under this item.

Members were reminded that interests could be declared at any point during the meeting.

6 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

7 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair had no announcements to make.

8 START TIME OF MEETINGS

It was **AGREED** that the start time for meetings for the remainder of the municipal year continue to be at 2.15pm on Tuesday afternoons.

9 INTRODUCTION OF THE CO-OPTED TENANTS TO THE COMMITTEE (00:14:00)

The Chair welcomed and introduced the three new Co-Opted Tenants to their first meeting.

The three tenants were:

- a) Ian Henwood
- b) Marc Jones
- c) Thomas Sixsmith

Each of the Tenants provided a brief introduction to themselves and explained why and how they had become interested in being Co-Opted representatives on the Group.

It was explained that whilst the Co-Opted Tenants would not have any voting rights when it came to recommending policy to the Cabinet it would be extremely useful to the Group to receive their views and perspectives on policies and issues that affected tenants.

10 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD FOR QUARTER 4 2024 - 2025 (00:22:00)

The Group were presented with, and **NOTED**, two slides * showing performance information in the Mid Devon Housing area both under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the general Fund (GF).

The dashboards aimed to give an 'at a glance' understanding of how services were performing in terms of performance measures, finance and risk. Any measures that were also part of the Corporate Plan were listed in yellow text.

The indicators were presented with current performance, the annual target and a RAG (red/amber/green) rating to indicate whether or not the Council was on track to meet its target. Overall performance was presented in a pie chart which combined the RAG ratings for both the performance and the finance measures.

General Fund

- The Outturn relating to the General Fund was showing an under spend due to the late Homelessness Prevention Grant of £241k being received in 2024/25. Without that the service had slightly overspent, hence Red RAG status.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- MDH Delivery of new Social Housing - Red and New net-zero properties (also at Red) - There had been delays to live projects, as well as difficulties awarding contracts for some projects which had contributed to this. The data only included homes when they were available for occupancy. As such there should be a significant rise at the start of this new financial year as more homes became available for occupation, such as at St George's Court.
- Market delivery of new affordable homes Year To Date (YTD) was showing as Red. This was an annual performance indicator and detailed the gross number of affordable housing units built or created across the district. This represented the overall housing market's creation of affordable homes. The target would be revised alongside the new Local Plan.
- Complaints responded to within Complaints Handling Code timescales was Amber. There was 100% compliance in Q4, Q3, and Q2. The only underperformance was back in Quarter 1, when 3 complaints were not responded to within the code timescales.
- HRA – Outturn was showing as Red. This was for a number of reasons including the Post Hill development; costs of viability studies for developments which had not proceeded; and the costs of converting St. George's court into accessible housing.
- HRA – Tenant Income (Outturn) - This related to the reduction in rent in 2024/25 following the correction of the rent formula.
- HRA – Capital Outturn was showing as Amber. Spend was relatively close to the budget being within 5%. There were some projects under and over spending. The over spends generally related to Right-to-buy buybacks.
- HRA – Capital Slippage % of development projects (current) was showing as Amber. 10 out of 42 projects had slipped – again relatively good and quite common for capital projects. This was offset to a degree with 5 projects accelerated from future years.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Delivery of Social Housing – was this total or YTD? Could figures not reflect if they were year totals or work in progress? It was explained that the figure showing was the outturn figure for last year. It would be misleading to include properties that were acquired or developed but not yet available for letting, when these were fully online the numbers would be included. This was not a linear issue but would be shown in stages.
- Complaint Response Time target 100% - was that reasonable? It was explained that this was a mandatory code from the Housing Ombudsman and had been in place for the last three years for Housing. That Housing therefore had had time to embed procedures to deal with this and therefore aiming for the 100% target was achievable.

- MDH specific tenant engagement events (YTD) was shown as 206 with a target of 100. It was confirmed this was a typo and would be corrected, however the outturn was still above target.
- Two year's worth of data under the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures would be needed before a target could be set in relation to 'MDH Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord'.
- ASB reports were dealt with on a case by case basis. The Council had an ASB policy and toolkit to assist in tackling this issue. It could be time consuming and challenging with many factors to take into account.
- It was confirmed again that eviction was the very last resort with all other avenues having been explored.
- Reference to indices of multiple deprivation could be helpful in analysing and assessing ASB cases but this was a complex area.
- The Ombudsman would always look at the Council's policies in relation to complaints issues or ASB to check that the Council had done what it said it would do in the policy.
- It was confirmed it was not unusual for capital projects to slip.

Note: * Slides previously circulated.

11 **MID DEVON HOUSING COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT 2024 - 2025** (01:01:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report and appendices * from the Head of Housing & Health providing annual information in relation to the handling of complaints by Mid Devon Housing.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- This was necessarily a large report since the Ombudsman required the Council to demonstrate that Members had seen it and to meet the statutory Complaints Handling Code. The report provided a window into what the Council was getting right and what it was getting wrong.
- The report demonstrated that the Council was handling complaints well, in a timely fashion and that the numbers of complaints had dipped slightly. The service proactively encouraged complaints and when received worked hard to identify common themes and areas.
- Most complaints related to repairs as was to be expected given the volume of service requests. Officers held a monthly complaints and performance meetings and sought to capture lesson's learned to improve the service where it could.

Discussion took place regarding:

- It was confirmed that every single complaint was logged, however, if for example a complaint was made that a repair had not been undertaken but that every effort had been made by officers to visit the property at an agreed time but had been refused entry, then that part of the complaint would not be upheld.
- Equality Impact Assessments could be tightened up and more thoroughly considered prior to policies affecting tenants being written rather than being considered at a later stage in the process.

- Lessons Learned - this list did not include common lessons learned such as improving communications, compliance with policy and procedure or staff/contractor relations, the question was asked as to why not? It was confirmed that whilst not listed, these factors were always considered.
- All complaints opened were shown as closed within the report, did this mean none were carried over as it suggested there were no problems? It was explained that some complaints were not an issue for the Council to deal with but were referred to the Ombudsman and in general the Council did not have long term outstanding complaints, all matters having been dealt with wherever possible.

Note: * Report and appendices previously circulated.

12 **VALUE FOR MONEY AND BEST PRACTICE IN MID DEVON HOUSING MODULAR SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY (01:31:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Housing & Health providing it with the strategic and policy context supporting the delivery of modular (modern methods of construction, MMC) social housing in the Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) development programme.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The report dealt with some of the misconceptions regarding modular schemes. The report recognised the variety of different schemes that could be undertaken, not just modular but also more traditional methods of construction. The report provided a clear reference point moving forwards.
- The beginning of the report set out the key strategic position of the Council in terms of the national housing crisis.
- The Corporate Plan stated strong aspirations regarding a housing development programme. The Council had to try and navigate various Government funding schemes which were more orientated towards modern methods of construction and attempts to move towards net zero carbon emission.
- Limiting costs to the Council was a significant factor in determining build methods.
- The Council faced challenges in terms of infrastructure, utilities, economies of scale and the types of sites available for development. There were sometime planning schemes to consider as well as biodiversity, draining and flooding issues, all specific to individual sites.
- No two sites were the same making bench marking very difficult.
- When looking at net costs the Council's schemes were benchmarking well.
- Other factors the Council needed to consider were the speed of construction, the quicker a property was built the quicker it could be rented out as well as the effect of construction on other tenants and neighbours.
- Accommodation needed to be sympathetic to the surrounding area.
- Feedback had been very positive. Modular builds could be a benefit to tenants in terms of lower energy costs.
- This same report would be on the Scrutiny Committee agenda for 9 June 2025.

Consideration was given to:

- Future proofing – and the 60 year Building Regulation rule. It was explained that this regulation was the same for traditional builds as well as modular. It was exactly the same standard.
- Could the components of the Social Value Impact be measured? It was agreed it was very difficult to analyse the benefits to using prisoners for example in the construction process as a means of trying to ensure non-re-offending by providing trade skills.
- Was there a distinction between savings for MDDC and savings for residents?
- MMC were not automatically cheaper, however, at present it was not automatically a cheaper way to build homes. MMC required a constant pipeline, a repetition of product, and thus relied on economies of scale or highly localised manufacturing efficiencies and flexibility in order to generate ever-more efficient returns. Thus, larger scale projects and a consistent pipeline would mean eventual, more significant cost savings, but as it stood today, the industry was not at that scale. The Council had built or intended to build 93 MMC properties. What was the scale required?
- One of the tenants was able to provide first-hand experience of living in a Zed Pod modular home describing it as 'spacious' and 'perfectly sized'. Overheating was an issue and it would be nice if it could be designed to have more windows but on the whole the positives outweighed the negatives and as tenants they would score it 8/10.
- The relationship between the Council and Zed Pod Ltd was on a contract by contract basis. The Council was open to looking at other types of development and contractors if necessary.
- The Council had considered adding modular extensions to existing housing stock particularly when considering adaptations, however, there were challenges with the planning process and the groundworks needed to be right in order to proceed.
- It was confirmed that one of the scheme due to be completed later in the year would provide 10 new modular builds providing wheelchair access. The service tried very hard to marry up particular needs with available and future properties. Meeting local need was a priority.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

- a) The report be **NOTED**.
- b) The Cabinet continues to adopt an HRA development programme with a focus on delivering MMC, modular net-zero social housing where possible and viable as part of the Council's future Housing Strategy.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Notes:

- (i) * Report previously circulated.
- (ii) Cllr G Czapiewski abstained from voting and requested that this be recorded.
- (iii) Cllr S Chenore left the meeting at 16:15pm and was not therefore present during the vote.
- (iv) Cllrs Cairney and Adcock were unable to vote to as they had left the meeting room during the discussion of the item.

13 MID DEVON HOUSING (MDH) SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT FOR Q4 AND OUTTURN FOR 2024-2025 (02:37:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Head of Housing & Health providing a quarterly update to Members on activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing (MDH) including some relating to enforcement. It also provided some indication of the final outturn expected at the end of the year.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- When a property was left as a void, if necessary, it needed to be brought back up to the Decent Home Standard in order to be re-let and for a number of reasons this sometimes took time.
- Not all tenants could be forced to have non-safety related upgrades.
- It was confirmed that certain checks needed to be made legally, for example, gas safety checks.
- There were all kinds of voids but overall it was important to remember that there was a 97% occupancy rate.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

14 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The items already listed in the work programme for the next scheduled meeting were **NOTED**. The Group were informed that the Housing Strategy may need to slip until later in the year as the Government were due to issue an important update in relation to housing in the coming months and this would affect the direction of the MDH Strategy.

(The meeting ended at 16.56 pm)

CHAIR

MINUTES of a MEETING of the PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 10 June 2025 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

B Fish (Chair)
G Cochran (Vice-Chair), C Adcock,
G Czapiewski, C Harrower, B Holdman and
A Stirling

Apologies

Councillor

A Glover

Also Present

Councillors

C Connor, M Fletcher, S Keable and S Robinson

Also Present

Officers:

Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Paul Deal
(Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Jason
Ball (Climate and Sustainability Specialist) and Angie
Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski, G Duchesne and M Farrell
and G Wescott

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Cllr B Fish be elected Chair of the Planning, Environment and Sustainability Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED that Cllr G Cochran be elected Vice-Chair of the Planning, Environment and Sustainability Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3 START TIME OF MEETINGS

It was **AGREED** that the start time for meetings for the remainder of the municipal year continued to be at 5.30pm.

4 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Cllr A Glover sent her apologies with Cllr B Holdman substituting.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions were received from the one member of the public attending the meeting:

Andrew Moore

Chair – I refer to items 11 and 14 on the agenda (relating to the Cabinet Member's Report and Items for the Next Meeting, which includes budget).

This is a 'Policy Development Group' and you are charged with 'in-depth analysis of policy', although I can't see much recent evidence of that. With a newly elected Chair, now halfway through your 4-year term, and with new information coming to light, I suggest it's time to (revisit and) challenge the Council's Climate Policy.

The Cabinet Member's Strategy has a broad-brush plan to save 45% of the tCO₂e under the Council's direct control; what about the rest? That's just 13% of the Council's Service Area. In 6 years, there has been a reduction against the average of those contributions of just 77 tCO₂e or ½ %, and at what cost to the public purse? Members; are you confident that the plan will deliver your goals for the Council, and that it is value for money against suggested climate impact costs?

Or is there really much point anyway? That Council Service Area is a tiny 1.8% of the 910k tCO₂e for the district's emissions: 99.75% is not controlled by the Council. The UK total is around 530 million tCO₂e, that's about 1% of the global figure, which is about 3% of total CO₂ entering the atmosphere. The Council's impact is trivial to the point of meaningless.

I challenge you to step back even further. Is the Net Zero objective even valid? Are we really in an 'emergency'? The climate is undeniably changing, but it always has. However, the suggested root cause is not as obvious as originally thought, model predictions are proving unreliable, possible impacts are often sensationalised, and our ability meaningfully to do much about it extremely doubtful. There are some very well-regarded academics and specialists now speaking out against the accepted narrative – some would say dogma. Public sentiment is also changing.

To even suggest this is a heresy to those charged with delivering action, often provoking simplistic reaction and unthinking dismissal. People don't like having their beliefs (and jobs) threatened. However, this Committee has a duty to put confirmation bias aside, dispassionately and openly look 'in depth' at policy and analyse its suitability, considering all currently available information. You cannot, surely, just turn up once a quarter for routine update meetings when it's clear that some fundamental questions should be asked. That would be a complete failure of your responsibilities.

So, my final question is this. Will this Policy Development Group undertake a thorough and prompt review of Mid Devon District Council's Climate Change Policy, independently challenging all aspects of the commonly accepted narrative against increasingly emergent counter opinions? And if not, why not?

The Chair stated that as the questions had not been received in advance, written responses would be provided within 10 working days and attached to the minutes.

6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests where appropriate.

No interests were declared under this item.

8 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair thanked the Group for electing him as Chair.

He reminded Members of the need to remain seated during agenda items that required a decision. If Members left the meeting room or made a drink they would be asked to abstain from voting on that item.

9 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q4

The Committee were presented with the *Performance Dashboard for Quarter 4 2024/25. The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The purpose of the report was to give an at a glance understanding of how services were performing in terms of performance, finance and risk.
- Measures that were part of the Corporate Plan were listed in yellow text.
- The overall performance was presented in a pie chart and combined a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating to indicate if the performance was on track or not.
- The Planning, Environment and Sustainability PDG outturn was shown as amber due to a small overspend. This related to a mixture of increased staffing, mainly agency and costs across building control, enforcement and planning which was largely offset by underspends against the staffing establishments.
- Building control income was marginally lower than forecast and showing as amber largely due to the depressed housing market.
- The two indicators for capital projects were showing as red. This related to one project to install electrical vehicle charging points, which was in the final stages of being scoped.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- The position of recruiting permanent staff. It was explained that the Council was in a better position than neighbouring authorities. However it was incredibly difficult to recruit professionals with specific qualifications especially for planning enforcement and building control. There were very few competent and qualified building control surveyors. The Council would

continue to seek to address the issue and raise the challenges with Government bodies.

- The employment of apprentices. It was explained that the Council had a centralised apprenticeship programme and were engaging with colleges and local businesses. The Economic Development Team had facilitated a business forum where colleges were invited to talk to local businesses to address the skills gap as there were very few skilled trades which was presenting a challenge in terms of local contractors and suppliers particularly for house building.
- The slippage on capital projects with regard to electrical vehicle (EV) charging and where and when they would be installed. It was explained that initially the costs were part of the Council's budget to top up charging points within the Council's car parks over and above the Levi scheme run by Devon County Council. However the Council were looking to switch this to be community based and working with Town and Parish Councils where EV points could be provided in village halls etc and would be engaging with them to look at partnership proposals.

Note: * Performance Dashboard previously circulated.

10 **BLACKDOWN HILLS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Group had before it a report * from the Director of Place and Economy considering the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- Part of Mid Devon District was situated in an area covered by the Blackdown Hills National Landscape formerly known as an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 required that Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) along with other relevant authorities produced a Management Plan for the Blackdown Hills National Landscape to be reviewed at intervals of not more than 5 years.
- The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership had performed this duty on behalf of MDDC and the other relevant authorities which included Somerset Council and East Devon District Council. The Partnership was led by officers at Devon County Council with some involvement from officers of other local authorities.
- The Management Plan blended national and local priorities and sought to address them in a way that was right for the Blackdown Hills, the landscape, environment and communities to ensure the special character of the area was conserved and enhanced for future generations.
- This included a vision which set out four main themes, each with objectives, guiding principles, policies, targets and priority actions.
- A draft Management Plan was previously reported to the Planning Policy Advisory Group in July 2024 and Cabinet in October 2024 and was subject to an 8 week public consultation from January to March 2025.
- The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Partnership had now received confirmation from Natural England that the Management Plan met the statutory requirements and had broadly followed the guidance for preparing a

strategy for the management of the national landscape and that it represented good practice.

- Natural England commended the level of detail in the plan and recommended that some sections could be shortened or moved to an appendix annex. The Partnership had taken those comments into consideration and had agreed that a supporting summary document could be prepared to explain the content and purpose of the management.

Tim Youngs, Manager at Blackdown Hills National Landscape also highlighted the following:-

- The document, when complete would be web-based showing images and videos.
- The main sections included place, people, nature and climate.
- Places would include sustainable land use, farming, forestry, planning, infrastructure and the historic environment.
- Nature would include habitat restoration, connectivity, species conservation and ecological networks which would link to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Devon and Nature Recovery Plans.
- Climate links to Mid Devon's Climate Plan and the Devon Carbon Plan which addressed climate change mitigation and adaptation through nature based solutions.
- Blackdown Hills was important for storing carbon and it currently stored 7 million tonnes of soil carbon. Working with landowners was a priority to ensure that carbon remained locked up.
- Many of those areas were really important for biodiversity.
- The Framework had 10 targets which fed from the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan and the Blackdown Hills was one of the protected landscapes charged with delivering ambitious targets.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether the delegated authority to approve editorial changes would dramatically change the document. It was explained that those changes would be points of small technical detail to ensure consistency throughout. It would not affect the policies or the actions outlined.
- The low uptake with land managers adopting nature friendly farming and whether this was due to the lack of finance or that the land was not suitable? It was explained that the area was environmentally sensitive and there was a shortage of farm advisory input and that a trainee had been recruited to help fill the gap as there was more work to be done. A farm facilitation group had been set up with approximately 140 members which was farmer led. They were working at setting up workshops and training to raise awareness.
- Carbon storage and how to increase it by sharing information with farms to help them change the way they work.
- Whether any other areas could be promoted as a national landscape. It was explained that this was not a quick piece of work but something that could be aspired to.
- Flood prevention and the planting of trees to help absorb significant amounts of water and working with the farming community to ensure measures were being taken.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:-

1. The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan (Appendices 1, 2 and 3) is adopted.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to approve any editorial changes made to the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note *Report previously circulated.

11 CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a report* from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change which was presented by the Climate and Sustainability Specialist.

The following was highlighted within the report:-

- A Biodiversity Action Plan was in place and goals were being implemented including an early stage review of Council land management and opportunities to enhance nature. “No Mow May” had just finished and work was being undertaken to maximise biodiversity opportunities.
- The Council were considering the potential to enhance the conservation status for key areas such as local nature reserves.
- The Planning Team were now recording the number of consents with enhancement and biodiversity net gain secured.
- The Devon wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy was being formulated which would have implications for strategic local planning and planning decisions. A Consultation would be carried out later this year. On-line resources would be available to help everyone play a role in nature recovery.
- A presentation on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy would be taking place at the next meeting of the Planning Policy Advisory Group on 8 July 2025 to view the draft recommendations. It was suggested that all Members attend.
- The Climate Change Strategy and Climate Action Plan had been launched at the end of 2024 and early progress on the Action Plan was very positive.
- An additional Project Manager was now in post to help deliver sustainability projects and had begun a feasibility report for solar power projects.
- The Council had recently responded to a consultation by the Local Government Association (LGA) asking whether there should be a statutory duty for climate change. A positive response had been sent to the LGA stating that the Council were keen for a statutory duty due but it must be supported by funding for climate related projects, partnership and programmes.
- Work was being undertaken with good community engagement around the Climate Change Strategy to cultivate partnership work opportunities with residents and businesses. The Council were also engaging with partners to

support climate adaptation, including nature based solutions to improve resilience to deliver some local workshops which were being run through the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Team.

- More expressions of interest for the Green Enterprise Grants had been submitted than in the last round for grants between £500 and £5,000 for small and medium sized enterprises.
- Grants would be funded by £30,000 from the Council's Climate Sustainability budget which would drive local investment and attract more funding to help reduce emissions.
- Further partnership initiatives were being looked at to bring in further grant funding to projects and partnerships across Devon and to help prepare for the launch of the first Mid Devon Climate Forum which would hopefully take place over the summer.
- The Net Zero Advisory Group would review its Terms of Reference this year.
- A table was provided to the Group which gave a simple overview of engagement across the themes of the Climate Change Strategy.
- Potential projects included working with farmers to enable soil protection and flood alleviation.
- Work continued with other groups to identify shared priorities and aimed to look at ways to support people and help them to develop their bids or help to work with others.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Promoting the work being done and how people could get involved. It was explained that the Climate Forum being launched later this year would help to promote the important work being undertaken. However wider messaging would be ramped up especially on social media and closer work with Town and Parish Councils with perhaps a presentation at the State of District Debate. Also to work with Town and Parish Councils on the Emergency Action Plans.
- The projects that the Green Enterprise Grants embraced. It was explained that it was in the early stages of expressions of interest. No bids had yet been received however it ranged from replacing sets of lightbulbs to solar panels and efficiency of water and energy use.
- Whether there were annual targets of how to progress towards Net Zero. It was explained that targets were in the Corporate Plan and every year a Climate Action Plan would be reviewed.
- The potential to offer support and advice to Town and Parish Councils.
- Whether the Council worked with Devon County Council (DCC). It was explained that the Council did work alongside DCC as part of the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership to bring together and deliver the Devon Carbon Plan and climate adaptation. This work was undertaken alongside a whole range of other partners in how to develop energy systems needed for Devon and fit in with the Regional Energy Strategic Plan.
- Work with Exeter University looking at the landscape capacity for solar and offshore wind.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

12 PLANNING SUMMARY REPORT

The Group had before it, and **NOTED** a report* from the Director of Place and Economy summarising activity undertaken in relation to planning matters.

The report summarised the actions from the proceeding months in relation to planning matters. The following updates were included within the report:-

- (i) Development Management
- (ii) Building Control
- (iii) Conservation
- (iv) Planning Enforcement

Discussion took place regarding:-

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and whether developers would be encouraged to use solar panels and heat pumps. It was explained that the Council were awaiting further reiteration of the NPPF and once received this would give the Council a clearer mandate. Once it was published it would be applicable immediately.
- The problems recruiting Planning Enforcement Officers and the concerns of Town and Parish Councils regarding planning enforcement. It was explained that the Council had invested further funding into enforcement and had demonstrated a commitment to enforcement. There were 2 Planning Enforcement Officers (one of which was from an Agency) dealing with a significant amount of live enforcement cases. The post had been advertised several times with a significant market supplement however there had been no viable candidates. In the meantime the Council would continue to use Agency Staff.
- The review of Conservation Areas. It was explained there was a commitment from the Council to develop a forward plan of areas to be reviewed.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

13 WORK PROGRAMME

The Group had before it and **NOTED** the Work Programme * for the Planning, Environment and Sustainability Policy Development Group.

The Chair informed the Group that there may be a Special Meeting of the PDG in August and asked Members to inform the Clerk if they were away during that time.

Note: * Work Programme previously circulated.

14 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The items already listed in the work programme for the next scheduled meeting were **NOTED**.

The Chair asked the Group whether the use of anaerobic digesters should be referred to the Scrutiny Committee.

It was explained that a Scrutiny Proposal Form would need to be submitted. However, this had been a topic at a previous Scrutiny Committee meeting. Clarity would need to be given regarding what was different this time and to outline the required achievements.

(The meeting ended at 7.35 pm)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a MEETING of the SERVICE DELIVERY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held on 23 June 2025 at 5.30 pm

Present

Councillors

J Buczkowski (Chair)
M D Binks, M Farrell, B Fish, C Harrower
(Vice-Chair), Stratton and J Poynton

Apologies

Councillors

M Jenkins and L Knight

Also Present

Councillors

F J Colthorpe, G Czapiewski, G Duchesne, J Wright and
B Holdman

Also Present

Officers

Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Matthew Page (Head of People, Performance & Waste), Paul Deal (Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience), Andy Mackie (Leisure Services Manager), Darren Beer (Operations Manager for Street Scene), Luke Howard (Environment and Enforcement Manager) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

E Buczkowski and M Fletcher

Officers Online

Dean Emery (Head of Revenues, Benefits & Leisure)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr J Buczkowski be elected Chair of the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr C Harrower be elected Vice Chair of the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr M Jenkins.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

5 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

6 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th March 2025 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

7 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair had no announcements to make.

8 **START TIME OF MEETINGS**

It was **AGREED** that the start time of meetings for the remainder of the municipal year continue to be at 5.30pm on Monday evenings.

9 **PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q4 (00:08:00)**

The group were presented with, and **NOTED**, two slides * showing performance information in the Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement area.

The dashboards aimed to give an 'at a glance' understanding of how services were performing in terms of performance measures, finance and risk. Any measures that were also part of the Corporate Plan were listed in yellow text.

The indicators were presented with current performance, the annual target and a RAG (red/amber/green) rating to indicate whether or not the Council was on track to meet its target. Overall performance was presented in a pie chart which combined the RAG ratings for both the performance and the finance measures.

The following red and amber ratings were highlighted:

- Household waste collected was showing as amber, with the service reporting 300.3 kilogrammes of residual waste collected per household, just 300 grams over target. The performance represented a decrease from the amount of waste collected in 2024, which was almost 308 kilogrammes per household.
- Household recycling rate was showing as amber which was just behind target.
- It was noted that Mid Devon District Council was one of the highest performing authorities when it came to recycling.
- Missed bin collections were showing as amber, narrowly missing a very stretching target of nought.

- The public survey engagement rate was showing as red. This survey was now being run against a small number of new processes on the Customer Relationship Management system and only since August 2024. Performance continued to increase with each quarter towards target.
- 'Households on chargeable garden waste' was showing as amber. It was usual to see a seasonal trend in this performance indicator. So whilst performance was behind target, the number of subscribers may trend upwards in the summer months.
- Agency spend was showing as red. Additional agency staff had been required to ensure the smooth operation of the waste service, but these costs were more than offset by savings in salaries. Spend was lower than in previous years.
- The two finance indicators that related capital projects were both showing as red. The under spend reflected the slippage in 12 of 19 projects, particularly in Leisure and Waste. Within Leisure, there were delays in infrastructure projects due to sequencing of projects and the need to tender works. Within Waste, the delay was due to the long awaited clarification of the change in Environment Agency permit regulations.
- Showing as green was the financial out turn position which was under budget. This related to a number of factors, but notably additional income from Active Mid Devon, increased memberships and also increased recycling collected. There had also been cost savings through staffing and lower maintenance costs.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The reduction in staff turnover figures which may, in part, be due to the benefits of working for this authority which had good terms and conditions.
- Increased benefits of recycling including the positive effect upon income.
- Slippage of capital projects in the area of Leisure. It was explained that this was due to having to time projects so that they did not lead to a loss of income, for example, changing room improvements needed to be timed so that they did not coincide with the school holidays. It was further explained that every authority had capital slippage. Timetables were always estimated in advance and there could often be issues with contractors and tendering processes.
- The survey engagement target being very optimistic. Targets should be challenging but also achievable.

Note: * Slide previously circulated.

10 LEISURE SERVICE UPDATE (00:22:00)

A verbal update on the Leisure Service was provided by the Operations Manager for Leisure. This included the following information:

- The Leisure Service was proud to have finished the financial year ahead of target not only financially but in participation numbers as it placed a lot of focus on getting the community active.

- July would see the first of three wellbeing walks being trialled in Crediton, Cullompton and Tiverton, with a view to giving potential volunteers confidence to lead walks themselves.
- Two junior park runs had been approved and funding was currently being sought.
- The service was currently out to tender for the access controls which formed an essential part of the digital transformation project. These would help the service manage entry, making the leisure centres more secure and provide better data around participation numbers.
- The opening hours at Active Tiverton had been extended freeing up space in the afternoon to offer more family swimming time.
- A student campaign was running currently and 57 had been sold in June so far.
- The summer campaign would be live soon which offered families the chance to use the facilities for 6 weeks of the summer holidays for just £60, it was a really popular offer last year and had been built upon again this year.
- The carers initiative had been launched on the 1st May, offering unpaid carers under the age of 18, free access to leisure facilities, and adult carers discounted use. The Leisure Centres were now officially registered as 'carer friendly'.
- The launch of the new App had already seen 3570 downloads and additions to the app were being worked on which would further enhance the experience and customer journey. The app would really be at its most beneficial when the access controls were in place, making entry into the centres quick and seamless.
- A recent latent demand report which provided far more information than the service had previously had, this enabled it to identify visually where members were coming from, what quartile of the index of multiple deprivation they were in and therefore helped to ensure services were affordable and accessible to those areas. A leisure database report titled 'the state of the industry' showed the market penetration national average for local authority leisure providers was 4.8%, Mid Devon's leisure service was above this with an average of 7.12% penetration rate.
- The Pool changing rooms project at both pools was now complete and the service had had very positive feedback on it. Customers had commented on what an excellent investment this was, making swimmers feel safer as they walk around.

Consideration was given to:

- Some concern with access issues and users having to queue to sign in. It was hoped the increased use of the digital membership card would ease this situation and reduce the burden on the front of house staff as well as the users. This was an improving situation.
- The pleasing work being undertaken with regard to the carer's initiative. Connections were being made with local groups which would help to promote the offer.
- It was hoped that the summer campaign for families would lead to people signing up longer term having developed a 'habit' or 'routine' in the summer months.

11 WASTE AND RECYCLING OPTIONS (00:34:00)

The Group had before it a report * from the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces and the Head of People, Performance and Waste detailing the results of a three month trial collecting unusable metal pots and pans in an area of the District.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- A trial was conducted between the 28th February 2025 and the 23rd May 2025 to assess both the feasibility of collecting pots and pans made of aluminium stainless steel and their subsequent collection rates from households as part of the Council's routine recycling collections.
- Two separate trials were conducted, one in an urban area in Willand involving 453 properties and one in a rural area, Uffculme, involving 346 properties.
- The results of the trial confirmed that collecting pots and pans via household recycling routes was operationally feasible, however, engagement had been limited.
- The trial was useful to understand potential participation rates across the district. It showed that residents initially used the service actively, primarily to dispose of old items. However, usage dropped significantly after the first few collections. This suggested that long term use may be lower than initial uptake, making it difficult to predict future usage levels across the district. This though, did highlight the importance of communication and how the Council needed to regularly remind residents of its services and how residents could use and access those services.
- The street scene service could collect residents, pots and pans as additional collection services if required with very limited or minimal extra associated cost to the Council and increased recycling should still lead to enhance income through the new EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) scheme.
- In conclusion, the trials gave a useful operational insight and demonstrated that there was not a consistent demand pattern for the collection of pots and pans across the district. Therefore, it was envisaged that rolling out this provision across the district should be delivered within current capacity, however, future additional collection materials will need to be appraised both on the understanding that adding pots and pans into recycling activity will place a slight additional pressure on the operation.

Discussion took place regarding:

- A trial regarding the collection of nappies would be considered in the future.
- The importance of regularly reminding residents what they could and could not recycle.
- The impact on the recycling centres.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

- Permanent collections of unusable metal pots and pans are introduced across the District from a specific date supported by an effective communications plan and resident correspondence.

(Proposed by Cllr B Fish and seconded by Cllr C Harrower)

Reason for the decision

This report identified with the Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement section of the Corporate Plan for 2024-2028, and in particular 5.2 – *We will increase our recycling services, enabling our communities to achieve even higher levels of recycling.* Supporting and enabling customers to recycle and reduce residual waste contributed to Mid Devon District Councils' commitment to the Devon Climate Emergency.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

12 UPDATE ON BIN-IT 123 (00:44:00)

The Group received a verbal update on Bin-It 123 from the Head of People, Performance and Waste and the Operations Manager for Street Scene and Open Spaces.

This included the following information:

- Performance statistics gave a lot of cause for celebration. The Council had come 12th and 9th out of 197 district councils respectively for its recycling and residual tonnage that put us in the top 6% of all councils for its recycling rate and top 5% for the least residual tonnage placed out for collection per household. In addition the Waste Service was shortlisted for the LGC Environmental Award and although it didn't win it was a great achievement to get shortlisted and more importantly testament to the excellent service that it provided day in and day out to residents. Congratulations were due to all operatives and to the wider street scene team.
- The challenge was now to move from a message of compliance to greater recycling and there was a number of ways that the service was looking at how to do this particularly around engaging with residents to further increase their recycling and reduce residual tonnage.
- One of the ways Bin-It 123 had worked was by the capturing of hearts and minds and motivating the community to do it. Involvement with town and parish representatives has been key. Site tours, including the infamous opening of the black bag to show food and plastic and all sorts of other things including paper cupboard that should be in the proper recycling container, radio adverts and a lot of other different work as well had been undertaken.
- An open workshop was held a several weeks ago to talk about future appetite and direction. There were some really good ideas from Members including stickering of recycling containers. The service needed to look at how it enhanced its permanent education resource using a team of recycling advisers. A reassessment of enforcement would be undertaken to potentially bring in more stringent practise utilising new strategies, for example, CCTV.
- The service needed to ensure it was effectively positioned to take the above challenges forward. There were a number of external challenges on the service at the moment including Environment Agency regulations which basically stipulate what the service needed to store waste and recycling in cab technology, new EPR funding arrangements, managing collection of plastics and other materials from March 2027 and all of this work was underway.

- The communication strategy was really important including messages to emphasise to the district not only the importance of recycling but also the individual responsibility and contribution to this environment mission so that every household had an opportunity to contribute to reducing its carbon footprint.
- The more that was recycled, the more income that the Council received and therefore this not only made the running of the service cheaper, but also allowed it to invest more money into other areas and other services which was vital.
- Local Government Reorganisation provided an excellent opportunity for the Council to speak to its neighbouring authorities about their own collection practise and the education enforcement and resident engagement strategies that they use and which Mid Devon may want to look at and utilise.

Consideration was given to:

- The importance of keeping an open mind with regard to how the service could be run in the future having assessed how it was run by other neighbouring local authorities, for example in East Devon and other models used in Wales. Financial pressures needed to be borne in mind as well as having an understanding of the different 'types' of geographical area's.
- The need for greater recycling and an aspiration to do away with the black bin altogether at some stage in the future.

The Chair requested that the Group's thanks and congratulations be forwarded to the entire Street Scene Team for their impressive achievements and continued hard work.

13 **ENVIRONMENT AND ENFORCEMENT END OF YEAR REPORT (01:01:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Head of People, Performance and Waste and the Environment and Enforcement Manager providing an overview of the Environment and Enforcement service performance over the financial year 2024/2025.

The following was highlighted in the report:

- The service was moving in a positive direction and performance statistics were showing good results.
- Significant time was spent talking to residents trying to resolve issues.
- The team had recently met and discussed ideas for the future. There had been positive engagement from the whole team and many ideas and suggestions generated for the service moving forwards.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Only 14 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued which seemed quite low. Fly tippers were often quite 'savvy' and left little evidence behind.
- The service had adopted some different measures as to how it dealt with fly tipping now. Some smaller cases were dealt with through littering legislation freeing up time to deal with the bigger cases.

- It was confirmed that all reported instances of fly tipping were triaged by the team.
- The Council incurred a 2.4% banking fee for using Ringo. Most customers were moving to a digital form of payment now.
- The advice was that any householders using or employing a company or individual to dispose of house clearance materials should check that the people/person involved were properly certificated.
- Legislation was currently passing through Government to streamline existing powers.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

14 WASTE DEPOT REMODELLING PRESENTATION

The Head of Finance, Property & Climate Resilience provided the Group with a high level briefing on the Waste Depot Remodelling.

This included the following information:

- The Environment Agency had announced changes to regulations on 18 December 2024:
 - Consolidating 24 standard rules permits into 8 new standard rules permits.
 - Coming into force on 19 June 2026.
- The new permit which affected MDDC was 4. SR2022 No 4: Non-hazardous waste recycling with asbestos, hazardous batteries, cable, and WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electric Equipment recycling) storage. Currently the dry recycling side was covered by several waste exemptions, and only the waste transfer station (black bags, food waste and green garden waste) required an environmental waste permit. There was an operational requirement to increase the storage capacity. Regarding new initiatives, MDDC was financially recognised for its recycling performance.
- Minimum work required would include:
 - Providing covered storage for recycle bales.
 - Ensuring the fire detection system (thermal imaging etc), fire suppressant (sprinkler system etc) and water containment / management (bundling / drainage) was adequate.
 - Raising wall heights for the current bays in the Transfer Station.
 - Creating a sample testing area.
 - Whilst undertaking this work a number of other works could be completed to improve the efficiency of the site and enable it to be fit for purpose for the medium term.
- Other works to be undertaken:
 - Given the scale of the requirements, plus ensuring future proofing, the site had been expanded – a new unit on the business park had been secured, enabling:
 - The car park had to be moved into the new unit.

- Moved the offices into the old car park and welfare block to the current weighbridge location, to make space for extension and expansion of storage capacity.
 - Move the Grounds Maintenance area into the old car park to enable the replacement and relocation of the weighbridge and fuelling station.
 - Relocate the washdown area.
 - Relocate the bin storage area, potentially releasing a small unit currently being used and saving money.
 - Altering the traffic route / control system accordingly and overnight storage of vehicles.
 - Separately to this project, a new baler was being acquired.
- A number of photographs and maps were shown to the Group illustrating the proposals.
 - A table showing the timeline was also shown with an estimated operational date of June 2026.
 - A list of costs were shown with the estimated total being in the region of £1,550k - £1,750k.
 - Details regarding the Project Team and frequency of meetings were also relayed to the Group.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The need to future proof proposals for a 15 year period at least.
- Having spoken to other Waste Managers elsewhere in the region, officers were confident there would be need for a depot in this area of Devon following Local Government Reorganisation.
- The confidence of the public needed to be maintained.
- There was minimal cost difference in providing new office facilities as opposed to a 'retrofit'.

The information was **NOTED**.

15 **WORKSHOP FEEDBACK / WORK PROGRAMME IDEAS FOR 2025/2026**

The Group had before it a draft work programme for 2025/2026 * and were invited to consider what they would like to add to this for the next 12 months. The Group were reminded of the workshop they had had on 14th May 2025. The notes from this workshop had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Group were assisted in their deliberations by the officers present and discussion that had already taken place during the meeting.

It was **AGREED** to add the following to the work programme:

- A Waste and Recycling paper considering a town and parish council 'league table' for recycling, what was next for Bin-It 123 and a recycling communication strategy.

- A better understanding of 'latent demand' in the leisure area and a recirculation of the Social Value Report.
- A 'deep dive' into the customer satisfaction surveys and the use of Members as Digital Advocates.
- In the Bereavement Services and Parks & Open Spaces – a better understanding of the different roles across the different layers of local government, who has responsibility for what and what could be done to smarten up the street scene.

Note: * Draft work programme previously circulated.

16 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

The items listed in the work programme for the next meeting were **NOTED**.

(The meeting ended at 7.15 pm)

CHAIR

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **LICENSING COMMITTEE** held on 27 June 2025 at 10.30 am

Present

Councillors:

J Cairney (Chair)
J Buczkowski, A Cuddy (Vice-Chair),
D Broom, F J Colthorpe, J M Downes,
G Duchesne, S Keable and L G J Kennedy

Apologies

Councillors:

L J Cruwys, M Jenkins and J Lock

Also Present

Councillor:

Cllr G Czapiewski

Also Present

Officers:

Deborah Sharpley (Legal Services Manager), Harriet Said (Team Leader (Commercial), Public Health), Thomas Keating (Specialist Lead (Licensing) Officer) and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR (00:03:00)

The Chair of the Council invited nominations for the election of a Chair for the municipal year 2025/2026.

RESOLVED that Cllr J Cairney be elected as Chair of the Licensing Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR (00:06:24)

The Chair of the Licensing Committee invited nominations for the election of a Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr A Cuddy be elected as Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3 **START TIME OF MEETINGS (00:08:01)**

It was **AGREED** that the start time of meetings for the remainder of the municipal year continued to be at 10.30am.

4 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:08:27)**

Apologies were received from Cllr L Cruwys, Cllr M Jenkins and Cllr J Lock.

5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:08:54)**

There were no declarations of interest received.

6 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:09:09)**

There were no members of the public present and no questions were asked.

7 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (00:09:30)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 2 October 2024 were agreed as a true record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

8 **LICENSING UPDATE REPORT (00:10:06)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Team Leader, (Commercial), Public Health of the Licensing Act Policy Review.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The contextual data contained within the report presented the number and types of licenced premises within the District.
- The Licensing Team dealt regularly with existing licensed premises in relation to amendments, variations and transfers.
- A large number of Temporary Event Notices (TEN) were issued and those continued to increase over the years.
- Temporary Event Notices were shared with the Police and the Environmental Health Team and they were the only two entities able to raise concerns. If concerns were raised then the TEN would be considered by a Licensing Sub-Committee.
- The Safety Advisory Group (SAG), which was co-ordinated by the Council and made up of representatives from the Licensing Team, Public Health, Emergency Services, Highways and various other organisations. The role of the Group was to advise and give guidance to event organisers regarding safety, risk and controlled measures. The Group did not have legal powers.
- A total of 24 event organisers attended SAG meetings where licensing related matters would have been raised and advised upon.

- The Licensing Team had attended several site visits to conduct inspections. One of which had been a visit to Shobrooke Park which had been a joint inspection with Devon and Cornwall Police and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.
- A site visit had also taken place at the Mid Devon Show Ground to consider licensable activities as well as a wider public health remit.
- Due to staffing pressures there had been a decrease in the number of licenced premises inspections undertaken. There was currently a Licensing Officer vacancy however this was being covered by an agency individual due to being unable to recruit directly.
- The structure of the team was currently being reviewed to ensure future capacity and resilience. In the meantime any complaints received were being prioritised accordingly.
- There had been a total of 4 Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings which had taken place in 2024/2025.
- Martyn's Law received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025. The Act was intended to strengthen security and protect people from terrorist events.
- Qualifying premises would need to take some form of action depending on their size and venue capacity for which there was a tiered approach.
- The implementation and enforcement of the legislation would sit with the Security Industry Authority (SIA).
- The new legislation expected regarding tobacco and vapes to help towards committing to a smoke free generation by the Government.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- The Safety Advisory Group and the responsibility of event organisers.
- The benefits of attending a site visit when a Licensing Sub-Committee considered a Licenced Premises Application.
- The process for applying for a Temporary Event Notice.
- Clarification that when Committee Members left the room or made a drink during an agenda item that they would need to abstain from voting on that agenda item only.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 11:11am)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **REGULATORY COMMITTEE** held on 27 June 2025 at 11.30 am

**Present
Councillors:**

J Buczkowski, J Cairney, D Broom,
F J Colthorpe, J M Downes, G Duchesne,
S Keable and L G J Kennedy

**Apologies
Councillors:**

L J Cruwys, M Jenkins and J Lock

**Also Present
Councillor:**

Cllr G Czapiewski

**Also Present
Officers:**

Deborah Sharpley (Legal Services Manager), Harriet Said (Team Leader (Commercial), Public Health), Thomas Keating (Specialist Lead (Licensing) Officer) and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR (00:03:10)

The Chair of the Council invited nominations for the election of a Chair for the municipal year 2025/2026.

RESOLVED that Cllr J Cairney be elected as Chair of the Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR (00:04:39)

The Chair of the Regulatory Committee invited nominations for the election of a Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/2026

RESOLVED that Cllr A Cuddy be elected as Vice Chair of the Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

3 START TIME OF MEETINGS (00:06:02)

It was **AGREED** that the start time of meetings for the remainder of the municipal year continued to be at 11.30am.

4 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:07:32)**

Apologies were received from Cllr L Cruwys, Cllr M Jenkins and Cllr J Lock.

5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:07:53)**

There were no declarations of interest received.

6 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:08:10)**

There were no members of the public present and no questions were asked.

7 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (00:08:17)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 2 October 2024 were agreed as a true record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

8 **REGULATORY UPDATE REPORT (00:08:45)**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED** a report * from the Team Leader, (Commercial), Public Health of the Regulatory Update Report.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- There had been a significant decrease in the number of Licensed Hackney Carriage vehicles across the district. No particular reason had been identified as to why that was the case
- A total of 27 taxi inspections had taken place between January and March 2025. This was lower than previous years mainly due to delaying inspections until the revised Taxi Policy had come into effect on 1 January 2025 as well as staffing pressures.
- There were a total of 48 animal related licences which included cat and dog boarding, day care, dog breeding and hiring out horses.
- Currently this work was undertaken by an external contractor as a specific qualification was required under the current legislation to carry out those visits. However 2 members of the Licensing Team were undertaking that qualification.
- There was a joint Environmental Health and UK Health Security Agency initiative which looked at a type of micro-organism, Pseudomonas Aeruginosa, which was a common bacteria found in the environment. It existed harmlessly on the surface of the skin but once the skin was broken it could cause serious infections of the skin, soft tissue and bloodstreams. Symptoms included respiratory and urinary infections and was difficult to treat.
- There had not been any outbreaks in Mid Devon however 19 samples had been taken from 3 different premises. The organism was found in one of the premises and after following officer advice and guidance on cleaning practices, following resampling, the results had returned satisfactorily.

- An agency member of staff had joined the Licensing Team this week who was helping with the workload whilst the team considered a new structure to deliver the core functions.
- There had been a total of 3 Regulatory Sub-Committee Hearings which had taken place in 2024/2025.
- Training had been provided to license holders specifically looking at Safeguarding and Disability Awareness to comply with the new Taxi Policy requirements with training having to be undertaken every 3 years. A total of 99 licence holders had attended to date.
- A minor change had been made to the Taxi Policy under delegated authority from the Head of Housing and Health, as the Policy had limited the ability to license a third row of seats in the back of a vehicle. As this would have had a significant impact on public transport across the district this had now been changed.
- A number of vehicles did not meet the exact dimensions that the Policy had specified for the size of the cab. This had been adjusted to remove the defined sizing requirements from the Policy itself and use more of a subjective assessment of space and comfort. The dimensions would sit outside of the Policy and would be referred to in the event of complaints for concerns about a vehicle.
- A review of the taxi tariff had been requested. A piece of work would be initiated to establish if the wider trade wished for a review.
- A project was planned to take place during 2025/2026 to review the licensing approach to residential caravan sites. This would be a joint piece of work between Licensing and Environmental Health.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether the Council had any zoo licences or licences that were exempt. It was explained that the Council did not have either.
- The taxi rank in Tiverton being used by members of the public. It was explained that this was a matter for Devon County Council Highways to resolve.
- The amount of dog litters to be classed as a dog breeder. It was explained that detailed guidelines were outlined by the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Note: * Report previously circulated.

9 REVIEW OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE LICENSING POLICY (00:44:13)

The Committee had before it a report * from the Specialist Lead (Licensing) Officer for the review of the Animal Welfare Licensing Policy.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The Animal Welfare Regulations 2018 were published which changed the way animal related businesses were inspected and licensed. This included pet shops, dog and cat boarding and dog breeders.
- The Regulations did not affect dangerous wild animals and zoo licensing.
- In 2020 the Council went through a process of consulting on and adopting a new Animal Welfare Licensing Policy.
- A 6 week consultation period was proposed as well as a number of minor changes to the Policy which complied with DEFRA guidance which would then be adopted later this year.
- The Animal Welfare (Primate License) Regulations came into force from April 2025 which specifically related to private keepers in setting the same standards you would expect in a zoo. There were currently no private keepers in Mid Devon.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- The granting of an application or renewal guidelines. It was explained that it was the responsibility of the Licensee to apply in good time although reminders were issued prior to the expiry date despite it not been a statutory requirement to do so.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that the Regulatory Committee approve the draft Animal Welfare Licensing Policy attached as Annexe A for a 6 week public consultation.

(Proposed by Cllr A Cuddy and seconded by Cllr J Buczkowski)

Note: * Report previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 12.25 pm)

CHAIR

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **PLANNING COMMITTEE** held on 9 April 2025 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

L J Cruwys (Chairman)
G Cochran (Vice-Chair), F J Colthorpe,
G Czapiewski, G Duchesne, C Harrower,
B Holdman, M Jenkins and L G J Kennedy

Apologies

Councillors

S J Clist, N Letch and S Robinson (online)

Also Present

Officers:

Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), John Hammond (Development Management Manager), Jake Choules (Planning Officer), Daniel Sims (Planning Officer) and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Buczkowski, S Keable and S Robinson

92 **MEETING MANAGEMENT**

The Chair informed the Committee that he would be bringing forward Agenda Item 5 - Chair's Announcements as the first item to be discussed on the agenda.

93 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair informed the Committee of the sad passing of the Chair of the Council, Cllr Frank Letch MBE and wished to send his deepest sympathies to his family at this difficult time.

He explained that Cllr Letch had been a Member of the Planning Committee for some time.

He asked the Committee to stand and observe a minutes silence in Cllr Letch's memory.

The Chair also reminded Members of the Book of Condolence which had been opened in reception and also online for those who wished to leave a message.

94 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr S Clist, Cllr N Letch and Cllr S Robinson (online) who was substituted by Cllr L G J Kennedy.

95 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

96 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests where appropriate.

There were no declarations of interest.

97 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 March 2025 were agreed as a true record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

98 **WITHDRAWALS FROM THE AGENDA**

There were no withdrawals from the Agenda.

99 **THE PLANS LIST**

The Committee considered the applications in the *Plans List.

1. 25/00277/NMA - Non-Material Amendment for 24/01252/FULL to allow replacement of a window on the south elevation, replacement of rear door on the east elevation and alterations to height of new cill on the east elevation at Former Drop In Centre, Newport Street, Tiverton.

The Planning Officer outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The application was a non-material amendment to allow substitute plans at the Former Drop in Centre.
- The change of use for the building was approved at a Planning Committee in August 2024 before the physical alterations were approved by the Committee in October 2024.
- A non-material amendment application was to determine whether the changes would be “non-material” compared with the previously approved development. There was no statutory definition of “non-material” and it was assessed on a case by case basis.
- The scale of the building would remain similar to the previously approved plans.
- The minor changes to windows and doors were considered to be inconsequential to the development previously approved.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether the door had a vision pane and met building regulations. It was explained that the door would need to meet building regulations.

It was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be granted.

(Proposed by Cllr B Holdman and seconded by Cllr C Harrower)

2. 25/00148/FULL - Variation of condition 2 of planning permission
23/01923/FULL (Construction and operation of a micro energy storage facility)
to allow substitute plans relating to the change of design and specification of
the battery box at Land at NGR 282446 100921 (Playing Field), Avranches
Avenue, Crediton.

The Planning Officer outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The application was presented to the Planning Committee as it was located on Council land.
- The original application was approved at the Planning Committee in February 2024.
- It sought to approve variation of Condition 2 of the approved scheme, which granted permission for the construction operation of the micro energy storage facility.
- The main considerations were:-
 - (a) Height of battery units decreased from 2.78m to 2.41m.
 - (b) Length of units (combined) increased from 4m to 5.2m.
 - (c) Width of units increased from 1.2m to 1.78m.
 - (d) Alterations to style of perimeter fence.
- Amendments included wooden cladding fencing which would now encapsulate all the boxes and the equipment within to provide better screening.
- There would be a slight change in the equipment specification since the approval as there was now newer equipment and a different operator would be used.
- The proposed amendments did not detract from the intended purpose of the development to enable storage and flexible use of energy.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether the technology used would be robust. It was explained that the equipment was designed to meet the same standards as previously approved.
- Concerns with regard to fire risk due to the increased units from 3 to 4. Measures for fire risk and maintenance were the same as the originally approved application and that they would be monitored 24 hours a day. There was an internal short circuit detection system, temperature sensor along with built in current and voltage sensors. The units would automatically shut down in the unlikely event of a fire.

It was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

(Proposed by Cllr B Holdman and seconded by Cllr M Jenkins)

3. 25/00147/FULL - Variation of condition 2 of planning permission
23/01615/FULL (Construction and operation of micro energy storage facility)
to allow substitute plans relating to the change of design and specification of
the battery box at Car Park, Fernworthy Park, Copplestone.

The Planning Officer outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The application was presented to the Planning Committee as it was located on Council land.
- The original application was approved at the Planning Committee in February 2024.
- It sought to approve variation of Condition 2 of the approved scheme, which granted permission for the construction operation of the micro energy storage facility.
- Section 73 of the application to vary the plans for the application, had originally proposed the removal of condition 4 of the original approval relating to noise limits. Following discussions between Public Health and the applicant this was removed from the description as the condition was there to protect the neighbouring amenity for the lifetime of the development. This condition therefore remained in place.
- A variation included additional bollards to be put in place to add an extra layer of safety given the location in the car park.
- Amendments also included wooden cladding fencing which would now encapsulate all the boxes and the equipment within to provide better screening.
- The proposed amendments related to technical design specification and did not detract from the intended purpose of the development to enable storage and flexible use of energy.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Condition 4 and the protection it offered to residents should enforcement action be required if the noise levels exceeded the limits set out.

It was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

(Proposed by Cllr G Cochran and seconded by Cllr F J Colthorpe)

*List and report previously circulated.

100 MAJOR APPLICATIONS WITH NO DECISION

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a list *of major applications with no decision.

The Committee agreed the following:-

1. 25/00366/MFUL - To come to Committee - as per the report.
2. 25/00314/MOUT - To remain delegated - as per the report.

Note: *List previously circulated, copy attached to the minutes.

101 APPEAL DECISIONS

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *list of appeal decisions.

Note: *List previously circulated, copy attached to the minutes.

(The meeting ended at 14:47hrs)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **PLANNING COMMITTEE** held on 11 June 2025 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

L J Cruwys (Chair)
S J Clist, G Cochran (Vice-Chair),
F J Colthorpe, G Czapiewski, G Duchesne,
C Harrower, B Holdman, L G J Kennedy,
S Robinson and G Westcott

Apologies

Councillors

N Letch and M Jenkins

Also Present

Councillors

N Bradshaw and S Keable

Also Present

Officers:

Maria De Leburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), John Hammond (Development Management Manager), Adrian Devereaux (Area Team Leader), John Millar (Area Team Leader), Jake Choules (Planning Officer) and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillor

Online

D Wulff

Officer Online

Dr Stephen Carr (Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR (00:04:00)

The Chair of the Council invited nominations for the election of a Chair for the municipal year 2025/2026.

RESOLVED that Cllr L Cruwys be elected Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

(Proposed by Cllr S Clist and seconded by Cllr G DuChesne).

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR (00:05:53)

The Chair of the Planning Committee invited nominations for the election of a Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/2026.

RESOLVED that Cllr G Cochran be elected Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

(Proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr G DuChesne)

3 START TIME OF MEETINGS (00:07:54)

The Committee **AGREED** to meet at 2.15pm for the remainder of the 2025/2026 municipal year.

(Proposed by Cllr S Clist and seconded by Cllr S Robinson)

4 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:08:36)

Apologies were received from Cllr N Letch who was substituted by Cllr L G J Kennedy and Cllr M Jenkins who was substituted by Cllr G Westcott.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:09:08)

Micheal Dearden – referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP

Question 1: If this development is approved, how are the developer and Mid Devon County Council (MDCC) going to ensure that flooding does not happen as a result of it and, if it does, will they take responsibility for putting right the damage caused?

My reasons for this question, and there are several. In response to the 47 people who objected on the grounds of probable flooding and future subsidence of their properties, the Housing Officers' comment in his "recommend approval" report was: "The site is in Flood Zone 1 which represents the lowest probability of sea or river flooding." I agree but this is referring to the river and has nothing to do with our concerns other than we are concerned about the increase of raw sewage being dumped into the river should this application go ahead. Our concerns are about the increase in the already experienced flooding and heavy run off we have today from this proposed building site, it being well above us. Covering the hilltop with tarmac and concrete, as would be the case, will hugely exacerbate the situation. The existing land drainage is inadequate. The site's underlying structure is highly impermeable triassic and permian upper marl transitioning to valley gravel and rainwash along the north boundary of the site. Following heavy rainfall, rainwater filters through upper soil layers, is trapped by the impermeable rock below, seeps to the north to issue behind existing dwellings in Silver Street, we are one of this properties, or into Smallbrook, which has seen flooded houses just the other year. The reason this low area floods is that the culvert passing under Silver Street at that point cannot cope with the volume of water coming down the brook. I hear that to correct this problem would cost in excess of £100,000. The Flood Hub of UK states: planners and developers have a responsibility to ensure future developments are sustainable and do not increase flood risk to the site or surrounding area. We have seen nothing from the developer addressing this very real threat.

Richard Jarman - referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP

The applicant's proposal includes an assessment of whether MDDC has met its legal duty to provide plots for self and custom build. However, their figures appear to contradict Mid Devon's own data.

According to the applicant, only 21 plots have been delivered by the Council. But in response to an FOI request, MDDC confirmed that 70 plots have been approved, with 32 actually built — likely reflecting limited demand rather than under-provision. Another FOI response confirmed that the shortfall last year stood at just 26 plots. Yet Point 2.6 of the planning officer's report appears to rely on the applicant's claim of a 145-plot deficit.

Question 1 - Has the planning officer independently verified the applicant's figures?

Cllr Charles Kay - referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP

The Planning in Principle on open countryside and outside the settlement area in Culmstock - the planning officer has recommended acceptance. This heavily relies on the basis that there is a need for self builds within the local community. DM6 Policy - the number quoted in the report on the self-build list with a Culmstock parish preference is 13. And yet, I know of at least 2 people who have been on the list for years that have now bought houses and another one has emigrated to Denmark. Our local housing needs survey did not highlight a need.

Question 1 - When was MDDC's self-build list updated and importantly for those wanting to build in Culmstock parish?

Question 2 – When were those people on the self-build list contacted to see if they wanted to still be on it?

Paul Moody - referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP

Question 1 - Why, even before the technical details stage, has there been no apparent regard (despite South West Water's comments) to the risk of flooding caused by "water" emanating in one form or another from the proposed development, specifically the flooding risk and water damage to many dwellings in Silver Street?

Judith Fowler - referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP

Question 1 - Could the authorities please explain how they mean to regulate the design of each individual property in this development? A blanket permission would not be acceptable. The height of each should be clearly specified and the design of each should complement and match other properties in Culmstock.

Question 2 - How do the developers intend to deal with waste from these properties? Approximately 50 years ago, the gentleman applying to build the bungalow 'Selfdon' on Silver Street was denied permission to join the main sewer system in the village, as the system then was overloaded. Any other properties might completely overwhelm the system.

Question 3 - Has the Council plans to update and increase the capacity of the system?

Nikki Padget - referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP

Question 1 - How many Members of this Committee have visited the site?

John Sedgwick - referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP

I am the landowner of the property immediately bordering the bend on Uffculme Road, around 50 metres east of the proposed site. We are fortunate to have a lower pedestrian access on our land, allowing us to avoid walking around that corner — a route we otherwise would not feel safe using with our children.

This proposal is likely to attract young families. Yet the only pedestrian route into the village involves walking along a narrow stretch of Uffculme Road with no pavement, around a tight bend with limited visibility — where the 30mph limit is regularly ignored — and often not enough width for two vehicles to pass safely. This route would inevitably be used frequently: not just by parents walking children to school, but for going to the shop, the pub, the church, visiting friends, catching the bus, and other daily needs.

A parent with a reception-aged child, a baby in a pushchair, and morning traffic travelling in both directions represents perhaps the worst-case scenario — but one that is entirely realistic and highlights the danger.

And even for vehicles accessing the proposed site, attempting to achieve the required visibility splays would demand significant hedgerow removal, harming biodiversity — and yet still fall short of national highway standards.

Question 1 - Given these are permanent constraints of the location, how can the site be considered suitable in principle for residential development — and have Devon County Highways actually visited the site?

Susan Dearden – referred to Application No. 25/00346/PIP - question read by the Chair

Question 1 - I would like to ask the Committee how, given the number of valid objections, including that of the Parish Council (and none in support of the application) the planning officer has managed to push our objections aside?

This seems rather undemocratic and I am especially concerned to see that the LivedIn website has not only had the site in question on their website since January but out of the 13 “in the pipeline” developments only three have actual date timelines such as this one in Culmstock. It does rather make one feel you are banging your head against the wall and that it’s a “done deal”.

The facts remain, that the field in question is an agricultural one, that it lies outside the settlement boundary, the sewage plant really is overloaded, the road access and the junction at Town Hill is extremely hazardous. We really do not have any pavements to make life safer for pedestrians, I have lived here nine years so I know what I am talking about! There is a real issue of flooding and water run-off from the field, both Silver Street and the Uffculme Road really do flood.

Question 2 - If there is pressure to build in Culmstock, despite several houses on the market as I write this, then why not on the Linhay site? At least flooding would not be an issue and it lies within the settlement boundary. There would still be issues with infrastructure however.

6 **MEETING MANAGEMENT (00:27:15)**

The Chair informed the Committee that Item 4 on the Plans List (Application - 25/00346/PIP - Permission in Principle for a phased development of between 3 and 9 Custom and Self Build dwellings at Land at NGR 310051 113426, North of Uffculme Road, Culmstock) would be considered as the first item on the Plans List.

7 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:27:25)**

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests where appropriate.

Cllr S Clist made a declaration in accordance with Protocol of Good Practice for Councillors dealing with planning matters regarding planning application number 25/00346/PIP as he had received correspondence.

Cllr F J Colthorpe made a declaration in accordance with Protocol of Good Practice for Councillors dealing with planning matters regarding planning application number 25/00346/PIP in that she had received correspondence.

8 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00:28:15)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 April 2025 were agreed as a true record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

9 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00:28:51)**

The Chair made the following announcements:-

- He thanked the Committee for electing him as Chair for this municipal year.
- He reminded all Members of the need to remain seated during agenda items and that if they left the room or took themselves away to make a drink they would be asked to abstain from voting on that item.
- The order of the Plans List would change with Planning Application 25/00346/PIP being considered first.

10 **WITHDRAWALS FROM THE AGENDA (00:30:22)**

There were no withdrawals from the Agenda.

11 **THE PLANS LIST (00:30:28)**

The Committee considered the applications in the *Plans List.

1. 25/00346/PIP - Permission in Principle for a phased development of between 3 and 9 Custom and Self Build dwellings at Land at NGR 310051 113426, North of Uffculme Road, Culmstock.

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The Application had been called in by Cllr N Bradshaw.
- Permission in Principle was an alternative way of seeking planning permission which separated matters of principle from technical details. The scope of the application was restricted to location, land use and amount of development. If approved, any other matters would be assessed at the next stage as part of a Technical Details Consent Application.
- Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) related to the presumption in favour of sustainable development and stated that where the Development Plan was out of date, Local Planning Authorities (LPA) should grant permission unless the adverse impacts of doing so outweighed the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.
- The LPA could no longer demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and therefore Paragraph 11 was enacted.
- There was a significant shortfall in custom self-build housing in Mid Devon. Thirteen of the households on the Council's self-build register had addresses in Culmstock specifically.
- An amount between 3-9 self-build dwellings were proposed, however the applicant had provided a draft legal agreement which committed to 7 dwellings, 2 of which would be affordable homes.
- Concerns had been raised in relation to highway safety, biodiversity, local services and flood risk. In terms of Highways, the Highway Authority had raised no in-principle objections although they would expect additional details to be submitted at the technical details stage. Officers had visited the site and vehicle speeds had appeared to be low. The number of units proposed would not have a significant impact on vehicle movements in the area and whilst footpaths were limited, this was consistent with that part of the village.

In response to public questions the Principal Planning Officer answered as follows:-

Micheal Dearden

Question 1 - If this development is approved, how are the developer and Mid Devon County Council (MDCC) going to ensure that flooding does not happen as a result of it and, if it does, will they take responsibility for putting right the damage caused?

Answer 1 – It was understood that there may be some localised surface water issues in the area but the proposal would not increase the amount of water entering the site and the Council did not know yet where areas of hardstanding would be located. This would need to be addressed in any final designs at the technical details stage through a Drainage Strategy and appropriate design which may include drainage solutions such as attenuation basins. Given that this was feasibly achievable, the site was not considered to be unacceptable for development as a matter of principle.

Richard Jarman

Question 1 - Has the planning officer independently verified the applicant's figures?

Answer 1 – The Council's Principal Housing Enabling Officer was consulted on the application and stated that they concurred with the applicant's Planning Statement and that there was a shortfall in granting sufficient permissions for custom self-build dwellings against the registered demand.

Cllr Charles Kay

Question 1 - When was MDDC's self-build list updated and importantly for those wanting to build in Culmstock parish?

Answer 1 – The Register remained live on the Council's website for people to add their name.

Question 2 – When were those people on the self-build list contacted to see if they wanted to still be on it?

Answer 2 - There was an option for people to withdraw their name from the Register which the Council would do within 28 days.

Paul Moody

Question 1 - Why, even before the technical details stage, has there been no apparent regard (despite South West Water's comments) to the risk of flooding caused by "water" emanating in one form or another from the proposed development, specifically the flooding risk and water damage to many dwellings in Silver Street?

Answer 1 – This was answered above.

Judith Fowler

Question 1 - Could the authorities please explain how they mean to regulate the design of each individual property in this development?

Answer 1 - In relation to self-build housing, the Council would usually approve a Design Code which set out acceptable heights, materials, massing and some more specific design features. This would be conditioned in the same way that the Council usually conditioned approved plans.

Question 2 - How do the developers intend to deal with waste from these properties?

Answer 2 - This would be a matter for South West Water, the drainage scheme would be designed and finalised at the technical details stage.

Question 3 - Has the Council plans to update and increase the capacity of the system?

Answer 3 – This would be a matter for South West Water.

Nikki Padget

Question 1 - How many Members of this Committee have visited the site?

Answer 1 – There had been no formal Committee site visit and I would advise against this as the plans and photographs shared today were sufficient for Members to make a decision, particularly bearing in mind what could be assessed as part of a Permission in Principle application.

John Sedgwick

Q1 - Given these are permanent constraints of the location, how can the site be considered suitable in principle for residential development — and have Devon County Highways actually visited the site?

A1 – Footpaths were limited, this was consistent with this part of the village. My understanding was that the Highway Authority did visit the site in order to provide comments.

Susan Dearden

Q1 - I would like to ask the Committee how, given the number of valid objections, including that of the Parish Council (and none in support of the application) the planning officer has managed to push our objections aside?

A1 – Officers had fully considered public comments as reflected in the report.

Q2 - If there is pressure to build in Culmstock, despite several houses on the market as I write this, then why not on the Linhay site?

A2 – The Council could not control where applicants chose to make applications and could only assess the scheme and site before us.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Flooding and foul drainage concerns – it was explained that this would be addressed in the technical details stage and that South West Water would be responsible for sewage.
- The location of the development in relation to the national landscape and the road network with the lack of footpaths being unsafe and dangerous.
- Whether the self-build plots would be designed and built by the developer or by people that purchased the plots? It was explained that people would design their own house according to their own requirements and needs within a design code that the Planning Authority would approve. A builder could be commissioned to undertake the building work.

It was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be refused.

(Proposed by Cllr L J Kennedy and seconded by Cllr S Clist)

Reason for the Decision:-

- A) The proposed location and land use was considered unacceptable by reason of the narrow highway and lack of refuge for pedestrians due to the associated stone walls and hedge, resulting in unacceptable highway safety contrary to DM1 of the Mid Devon Local Plan (2013-2033) and Paragraphs 115, 116 and 117 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- B) The raised topography and open and elevated nature of the site at the edge of the village in combination with the distant views of the site and its relationship with the Culmstock Conservation Area and Blackdown Hills National Landscape meant the site was clearly seen as a coherent part of the wider countryside setting and therefore made the location undesirable for residential development contrary to Policies S1, DM1, DM25 and DM27 of the Mid Devon Local Plan and Paragraphs 135, 189, 190 and 210 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Notes:-

- (i) Louise Jarman spoke as the objector.
- (ii) Charlie De Bono spoke as the applicant.
- (iii) Cllr L Jones, spoke as Chair of the Culmstock Parish Council.
- (iv) Cllr N Bradshaw and Cllr S Clist spoke as Ward Members.
- (v) Cllr F J Colthorpe voted against the decision to refuse the application.

- (vi) It was agreed that if the decision were to be appealed then Cllr G Cochran, Cllr L J Kennedy and Cllr S Clist would sit in on the appeal with Cllr G Westcott as a reserve.
 - (vii) Cllr L J Kennedy and Cllr G Westcott left the meeting following the decision.
2. 25/00382/FULL - Change of use from highway to car park at Land at NGR 283208 100428, Car Park, Market Street, Crediton.

The Area Team Leader outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The site was located within the settlement limits of Crediton being within the town centre boundary and adjacent to the conservation area.
- The Council had been operating a car park on the land for more than 20 years.
- Having installed EV chargers it had been found that the land was highway maintainable at public expense and this had caused problems with the lease, wayleaves and cabling.
- There was a need for the highway to be stopped up and this decision was for the Department of Transport.
- The main issues raised were policy, procedure and principle of development.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether the car park would be for public use? It was explained yes that would be the case.

It was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

(Proposed by Cllr F J Colthorpe and seconded by Cllr S Clist)

Note:-

- (i) Cllr G Cochran spoke as the Ward Member.
3. 25/00366/MFUL - Demolition of existing dwellings to provide 14 affordable dwellings with associated parking, landscaping and associated works at 30-44 Beech Road, Tiverton, Devon.

The Area Team Leader outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- There were currently 8 existing flats with the proposal to demolish those and replace with 14 new units contained within 2 blocks which would be used as social rented accommodation as part of the Council's housing stock.
- The main issues raised included: principle of development; design and impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; flooding and drainage; residential amenity; highways, parking and access; climate change; ecology and biodiversity net gain.
- The zed pods would have a metal clad roof with solar panels. Each property would have a balcony or terrace which overlooked the allotments to the rear.
- There would be individual bin and recycle storage facilities with one car parking space per property.
- The proposed landscape included new grasslands, hedge planting and tree planting that provided well in excess of the 10% biodiversity net gain required.
- Condition 8 rewording which required details of the off-site works and improvements.
- When reviewing the application there did not seem evidence of site notices being erected however this had now been rectified but the notices had not yet expired. Members were asked to consider granting permission on the proviso that no additional comments were received before the expiry of the site notice. If comments were to be received then the application may need to come before the Planning Committee again.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Whether Highways recommendations were included as part of the proposal. It was explained that due to collision data for a slight recorded collision near to the site, concerns had been raised by the Highway Authority. However having discussed the matter further it was felt that it would not be appropriate to recommend refusal. Also due to tactile pavements on the corner that were not up to standards, a drop down kerb should be placed on the road. The applicant was happy to do that.
- Whether the bin and recycle storage facilities were large enough. It was explained that they were of an adequate size.

It was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be granted subject to conditions plus additional conditions:-

:-

- (i) That no further comments being received before the expiry of the site notice on 2nd July 2025.

- (ii) Condition 8 revised wording to state:-
“Prior to the development hereby approved first being occupied, off-site highway works comprising vehicle crossings for the parking spaces, and improvements to the existing tactile arrangement on the adjoining footway, shall be fully provided in accordance with details (including drawings of said off-site highway works), which shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority”.

(Proposed by Cllr S Clist and seconded by Cllr S Robinson)

Notes:-

- (i) Cllr G Czapiewski spoke as the Ward Member.
4. 25/00386/FULL - Installation of external heat pump systems and enclosures at Culm Valley Sports Centre, Meadow Lane, Cullompton.

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The pumps would be screened by fencing and would provide some acoustic screening.
- There would be no adverse visual or neighbourhood amenity impacts and no impacts on biodiversity or agricultural land.

There being no discussion it was **RESOLVED** that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

(Proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr C Harrower)

Note:-

- (i) Cllr S Robinson spoke as the Ward Member.

*List and report previously circulated.

12 MAJOR APPLICATIONS WITH NO DECISION (02:54:09)

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a list *of major applications with no decision.

The Committee agreed the following:-

1. 25/00660/MFUL – to remain delegated as per the report.
2. 25/00674/MFUL – to remain delegated as per the report.
3. 25/00304/MOUT – to come to Planning Committee with a site visit to be arranged
4. 25/00470/MOUT – to remain delegated as per the report.

Note: *List previously circulated, copy attached to the minutes.

13 APPEAL DECISIONS (02:58:20)

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *list of appeal decisions.

With regard to Planning Application 24/00285/FULL - Erection of 7 workshops (Use Class B2) and cafe to serve development (Use Class E) following demolition of general industrial buildings – the Chair asked for clarification on what the inspector had and had not allowed with regard to the conditions.

It was explained that two conditions had been appealed. The first condition related to the method of foul sewerage and the second condition related to limiting the use of the café. The Planning Authority had won on the grounds of the drainage condition as the developer did not demonstrate why the costs had made the scheme unviable. The Planning Authority had lost on the condition relating to the café as the inspector was less convinced that there would be any harm if it were available to the wider public.

Note: *List previously circulated, copy attached to the minutes.

14 PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD QUARTER 4 (03:00:11)

The Committee were presented with the *Performance Dashboard for Quarter 4 2024/25. The following was highlighted within the report:-

- The overall performance was presented in a pie chart and combined a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating to indicate if the performance was on track or not.
- Major planning applications determined within 26 weeks was shown as amber in the RAG rating and minor planning applications determined within 16 weeks was also shown as amber both of which were set against an in-house target of 100% rather than national targets of 60% and 80% retrospectively therefore the Council were performing better than that.
- Statutory and discretionary income fees were showing as red due to the lower planning income in the financial year due to the depressed housing market.

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Habitat banks and whether they earned revenue. It was explained that this was questionable but it meant that the Council had done all that was possible to minimise costs.
- Whether there was a difference in cost between PIP (Planning in Principle) Applications and Full Planning Applications? It was explained that the fees were similar.
- Planning Income and how would this be improved moving forward? It was explained that with the upcoming changes to the 5 year housing supply there would be an issue in that more planning applications would be received that the Council may not have received previously. However this may lead to defending appeals.
- The cost of planning appeals to the Council. The Committee were informed that it depended on the type of appeal. However broadly speaking for a 5 or 6 day Public Inquiry a benchmark figure would be £60,000. If the Council were seen to be unreasonable, the costs from the appellants would also be a factor.

Note: * Performance Dashboard previously circulated.

(The meeting ended at 5.28 pm)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **PLANNING COMMITTEE** held on 2 July 2025 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors: L J Cruwys (Chair)
G Cochran (Vice-Chair), F J Colthorpe,
G Czapiewski, G Duchesne, C Harrower,
B Holdman, L G J Kennedy, M Jenkins and
D Wulff

Apologies

Councillors: S J Clist, N Letch and S Robinson

Also Present

Councillor: S Keable

Also Present

Officers: Maria De Leiburne (Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)), John Hammond (Development Management Manager), John Millar (Area Team Leader), Claire Sutton (Conservation Officer) and Angie Howell (Democratic Services Officer)

15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (00:03:58)

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr S Clist who was substituted by Cllr D Wulff
- Cllr S Robinson who was substituted by Cllr L G J Kennedy
- Cllr N Letch

The Chair wished to clarify that although three Councillors had sent their apologies, only two substitutes could be appointed from the same political group.

16 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (00:04:41)

There were no public questions.

17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT (00:04:54)

Members were reminded of the need to declare any interests where appropriate.

There were no declarations.

18 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (00:05:14)**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 June 2025 were agreed as a true record and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

19 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (00:05:40)**

The Chair reminded Members of the Committee that a site visit would be held on the 17 July at 2pm with regard to Application 25/00304/MOUT, Mountain Oak Farm, Lower Town, Sampford Peverell.

20 **WITHDRAWALS FROM THE AGENDA (00:07:15)**

There were no withdrawals from the Agenda.

21 **THE PLANS LIST (00:07:21)**

The Committee considered the applications in the *Plans List.

1. 25/00586/NMA - Non Material Amendment to 23/00118/MFUL to rationalise internal layouts including placement of external doors and windows; additional solar panels; inclusion of cycle storage facilities and refuse/bin recycling storage areas details and revised site levels at School Close, Bampton, Tiverton.

The Area Team Leader outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The Zed Pods modular housing scheme provided social rented housing which would form part of the Council's housing stock.
- The changes proposed were minor which included: layout design to improve the functionality and energy efficiency; changes to the doors, windows and floor levels; cycle storage; landscaping and the introduction of additional colour ranges.
- The changes proposed complied with National Space Standards

Discussion took place regarding:-

- Accessibility within the properties – it was explained that the properties all had level access.

It was **RESOLVED** that planning permission for the Non Material Amendment be granted.

(Proposed by Cllr B Holdman and seconded by Cllr C Harrower)

2. 25/00573/LBC - Listed Building Consent for the removal of 20th century 1st floor timber partition at Shapcott Cottage, Whitnage, Tiverton.

The Conservation Officer outlined the contents of the report by way of a presentation and highlighted the following:-

- The property was a mid-17th century Grade 2 listed building.
- The wall to be removed had been inserted at some point during mid-20th century which had divided up the main bedroom to provide access to a smaller bedroom.
- The fabric to be removed was of low quality.
- The proposed change would be to remove the wall to open up the first bedroom and allow the front elevation window to provide light back into the bedroom. The second bedroom would continue to be useable.

There being no discussion it was **RESOLVED** that Listed Building Consent be granted.

(Proposed by Cllr G DuChesne and seconded by Cllr M Jenkins)

*List and report previously circulated.

22 **MAJOR APPLICATIONS WITH NO DECISION (00:22:47)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a list *of major applications with no decision.

The Committee agreed the following:-

1. 25/00755/MFUL – to remain delegated as per the report.

Note: *List previously circulated, copy attached to the minutes.

23 **APPEAL DECISIONS (00:23:55)**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a *list of appeal decisions.

Note: *List previously circulated, copy attached to the minutes.

(The meeting ended at 14:39)

CHAIR

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held on 18 June 2025
at 5.15 pm

**Present
Councillors**

E Buczkowski, F J Colthorpe, G Czapiewski,
G Duchesne, M Fletcher, M Stratton,
L Taylor, N Woollatt and D Wulff

**Also Present
Councillor(s)**

S Keable, L Knight and S Robinson

**Also Present
Officer(s):**

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Maria De Leburne
(Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring
Officer)) and Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager)

**Councillors
Online**

J Buczkowski and M Farrell

1 **ELECTION OF CHAIR**

The Chair of the Council invited nominations for the election of a Chair for the municipal year 2025/26.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cllr E Buczkowski be elected Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

(Proposed by Cllr L Taylor and seconded by Cllr G DuChesne)

2 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

The Chair of the Committee invited nominations for the election of a Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2025/26.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Cllr G DuChesne be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

(Proposed by Cllr D Wulff and seconded by Cllr M Fletcher)

3 **START TIME OF MEETINGS**

Cllr M Fletcher proposed and seconded by Cllr D Wulff that the Committee to be at 5.15pm for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

The Committee **AGREED** to meet at 5.15pm for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

4 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies.

5 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

None received.

6 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting were **APPROVED** as a true record and signed by the Chair.

7 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

8 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair thanked the Committee for electing her as Chair of the Committee.

9 **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION FOLLOWING MOTIONS APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

The Committee **NOTED** the amendments to the constitution following motions approved by Council.

10 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER 2024/2025**

The Committee had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) providing it with an overview of the preceding year.

The following was highlighted:

- In the municipal year 2024/25, a total of 15 formal complaints had been made, 1 of which were withdrawn.
- In terms of the complaints which were not taken forward to investigation, the core themes were respect, bullying, harassment communication and reputational concerns including bringing the council into disrepute.
- There were only 5 declarations of gifts and hospitality made by officers. No members declared gifts and hospitality, but some members had previously chosen to do this via their registers of interests.
- There had been two Government consultation that had taken place and would be reported back to the committee in due course.

Consideration was given to:

- In regards to the Parish Clerks would any amendments need to be made to the Constitution for support and guidance.
- When the Social Media Policy due to be updated as the date stated on the policy was 2023.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer be **NOTED** and circulated to all Town and Parish Councils for information.

(Proposed by Cllr M Fletcher and seconded by Cllr G Czapiewski)

Note: * Report previously circulated.

11 **UPDATE FROM THE GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION**

The Committee had before it and **NOTED**, a verbal update from the Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) on the Government Consultations. There was no response yet to the consultation on Strengthening the Standards and Code of Conduct for Local Authorities in England. The Council were awaiting further legislation/guidance from Government in relation to remote attendance and proxy voting and this would be brought back to the Committee in due course.

Consideration was given to:

- The provision around proxy voting and what would be included.

12 **TERMS OF REFERENCES FOR COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY GROUPS**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Democratic Services Manager on the working group that was set up to review the Scheme of Delegations for Committees and Advisory Groups.

The Members of the working Group were **AGREED** to be Cllr G Czapiewski, Cllr F J Colthorpe and Cllr M Stratton.

13 **ADVISE TO ELECTED MEMBER WHO MAY BE VICTIMS OF CRIME**

The Committee had before it, a report * from the Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) providing advice to Elected Members who may be a Victim of Crime.

The following was highlighted:

- Elected members may be the victims of intimidation that can also amount to criminal conduct such as public order offences, criminal damage, communications offences, assaults, harassment, and stalking offences or hate crime.
- Training would be provided to Members in regards to Op Ford contribution to the safety and security, personal safety and Social media training.

Consideration was given to:

- A member and their family had been threatened and still ongoing.
- It is important that Members do not feel intimidated or threatened while undertaking their duties.
- Would the training be mandatory and not optional?
- To cover as part of the training the processes to follow.

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee recommend to Full Council that all members note the procedure and the option available to them in the event of an incident occurring.

(Proposed by Cllr L Taylor and seconded by Cllr G Czapiewski)

Note: * Report previously circulated.

14 **ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair stated that the Committee would remain in open session.

15 **COMPLAINTS**

The Committee **NOTED** a verbal update from the Director of Legal, People and Governance (Monitoring Officer) which provided an update on complaints received.

The following was highlighted:

- Further information had been provided in more detail about the types of complaints that had been made.
- The themes were bullying, harassment and respect.

The following was discussed:

- Could it be included within the complaints if it had been upheld or not.
- Were there any complaints that may require further guidance or in additional training and development.

16 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

The following items were identified for the next meeting of the Committee:

- Updates from the Government Consultation.
- Register of Interest form going through Modern.gov.

Members were requested to contact either the Monitoring Officer or the Chair with any additional items.

(The meeting ended at 17.38pm)

CHAIR

Report for: Standards Committee

Date of Meeting:	18 June 2025
Subject:	Advice to Elected Members who may be Victims of Crime
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Matt Fletcher, Cabinet Member for People Development
Responsible Officer:	Maria De Leburne, Director of Legal, People, Governance & Monitoring Officer
Exempt:	NA
Wards Affected:	NA
Enclosures:	[any appendices – list here]

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

This report provides the Standards Committee with advice from Devon & Cornwall Police.

Recommendation(s):

The Standards Committee recommend to Full Council that all members note the procedure and the option available to them in the event of an incident occurring.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The OPCC in conjunction with Devon and Cornwall Police have prepared a protocol whereby Local Authority Monitoring Officers can facilitate a third party crime report to Devon and Cornwall Police on behalf of their elected members if a Councillor is subject to a crime whilst undertaking their public duties. This was put in place in May 2024.

2.0 **Background**

2.1 It has sadly been reported that an increasing number of Councillors are being subjected to abuse, threats, and public intimidation which undermine the principles of free speech, democratic engagement and debate.

2.2 The purpose of the framework is twofold, firstly to enable the Monitoring Officer to provide advice to Councillors if they have been the victims of intimidating behaviour, and secondly to provide a framework to escalate issues of concern if elected members are subjected to intimidating behaviour.

2.3 **Advice to local elected members who may be victims of intimidating behaviour**

Elected members may be the victims of intimidation that can also amount to criminal conduct such as public order offences, criminal damage, communications offences, assaults, harassment, stalking offences or hate crime.

The guidance will apply in the following instances:-

- a) Where the elected member or their family are subjected to intimidation or harassment due to their role;
- b) There are criminal acts which target the elected member or their family in connection with their official position;
- c) A demonstration at their home address.

The protocol does not offer elected members preferential treatment, however, is designed so that the Monitoring Officer can be a conduit to report if required.

Examples of behaviour to report are communications, which contain excessively abusive or threatening language, repeated and unwanted contact, racial, homophobic or other discriminatory abuse and threats.

If any of the following indicators are present which may signal an escalation members are advised to bring to the immediate attention of the Police:-

- a) A threat of imminent violence;
- b) Fixation on the Elected Member;
- c) Access to weapons or weapons skills;
- d) The release of information about the member which isn't already in the public domain.

If members have reported to the Police either through 999 or 101 and they still remain concerned then they may escalate through their Monitoring Officer. This is only applicable if the crime has occurred due to their elected role.

3.0 Conclusion

It is important that Elected Members do not feel intimidated or threatened while undertaking their duties. This protocol recognises that and helps to put a mechanism in place whereby Monitoring Officers can escalate complaints in the event that Members are in fear for their safety.

Financial Implications

None

Legal Implications

None

Risk Assessment

No risks identified.

Impact on Climate Change

NA

Equalities Impact Assessment

No EIA required.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

No specific or relevant provision.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 06/06/2025

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 06/06/2025

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Maria De Leiburne, mdeleiburne@middevon.gov.uk

Background papers: None

Appendix 1 – General advice to Elected Members

Below are a suggested set of actions that you could undertake if you consider you are being subjected to Intimidation:

- Make sure that your immediate safety is not at risk. Make sure you are safe.
- If possible, record or diarise the encounter or communication. In the case of an email or letter, you can copy or save it. A telephone call or face-to-face discussion and social media incident should be written in a diary as soon as possible after the event, recorded, screen-shot or saved. You can also take photos of damage or even a computer screen. Even if this is the first or only incident, others may also have been subjected to intimidation. A collective record is important if future action is going to be taken. It is also important that incidents relating to the same individual or individuals should be recorded as such evidence could be critical should the matter give rise to a criminal prosecution.
- Raise the incident with a view to discussing it or obtaining support from a nominated council officer and/or political group nominated person. This will also help you establish if others have been subjected to the same or similar intimidation.
- If a serious potential crime has occurred, it is advisable to formally report it to the council and/or to the police, particularly in the context of a serious threat to life or anticipated violence.
- If you are concerned about your personal safety, raise this with the council and the police so that there is a record of the impact the incident is having and review your own security and personal safety. This could include your personal or work activities and those of your family.
- Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, councils have a duty to safeguard their staff against potentially violent persons and will generally maintain a Caution list with names of such parties. This will enable you to ascertain if the individual or individuals who have intimidated them are on the Caution List, if not; ensure that that their name is added using the appropriate processes.
- Every situation will be different, and it will need a personal judgement about whether it is worthwhile to pursue the incident, ignore it or politely acknowledge.
- If the letters or emails continue further steps may need to be considered such as advising the individual that such abuse will result in a referral to the police and the stopping of further correspondence.

Shield Principles

In addressing public intimidation, the LGA has developed the following SHIELD principles:

Safeguard – where possible, protect yourself online and in person. For example, set out in any online biography or page that abusive, threatening or intimidatory communication or actions will be reported, utilise security features, take personal safety precautions and have a point of contact in the local police for any incidents.

Help – in any situation ensure you are safe before you take further action and get help if needed. If the threat is not immediate, you can contact officers at the council who have been given the responsibility to support you or someone with that role from your political group.

Inform – you can inform the individual or group that you consider their communication or action as intimidating, threatening or abusive. There is a growing movement of ‘digital citizenship’, which encourages the labelling of poor online conduct as a way of challenging such behaviour.

Evidence – if you consider that a communication or action is intimidatory, threatening or abusive, gather evidence. For example, photos, recordings, screen-shots, letters, emails, details of witnesses, etc. Let people know – report the incident to your social media platform/officers/party contact/lead member/the police, depending on the nature and severity of the incident(s). Be prepared that the police and courts will look to determine if the incident is intimidation based on the theoretical opinion of the average person.

Decide – determine whether you want to continue receiving communications from the individual or group and block or mute if on social media where appropriate. Decide if you want to pursue any action to inhibit the ability of the individual or group to approach you.

Incident reporting - If you are involved in an incident or have concerns around an individual’s behaviour after you have made an initial report to the police then you should consider escalating this to the Councils Monitoring Officer. An incident report must be completed as soon as possible after an event, whilst memories are fresh and so that issues can be investigated, and appropriate action taken. This should be forwarded to the Councils Health and Wellbeing team. If the incident involves acts of a potential criminal nature, then there is a helpful guide to understanding what constitutes criminal acts (appendix 2) and how you can report this. You can access this information by clicking the link below:

[Guidance about harassment and intimidation | Electoral Commission](#)

If you are working alone, your local council may have lone working protocols which apply to you. Even if there is no specific protocol the local authority has a duty of care to their elected members under the Health and Safety at work etc Act 1974.

Likewise, as elected members you have a duty to act responsibly and take reasonable steps for your own health and safety.

Below is a checklist which you may find useful in considering your personal safety: If you are meeting a member of the public alone:

- Opt for a busy location with a venue that is well lit;
- Use a venue that has more than one entrance or exit
- Choose somewhere with a lobby area where there will be other people around to support you if required.
- Keep your mobile phone with you and charged up;
- Think about where you will park your vehicle, and have your keys readily accessible
- Remain vigilant and do not get distracted e.g. do not walk alone with your headphones on
- If you have been supplied with a lone worker device then remember to carry it with you.
- Wherever possible take the details of the member of the public you are meeting and ensure that someone else knows who you are meeting with, when and where
- If you are subject to inappropriate behaviour then make sure you take a note of it, including the date and time of its occurrence and whether there were any witnesses;
- If you are in a separate room, then try and keep the door ajar and make sure that you are positioned nearest the door. Never lock yourself in the room with a stranger.
- Position a table between you and the member of the public.

When you are out and about

- Don't advertise your movements in advance on social media unless there is a specific reason for doing so.
- Be conscious of the information you share online about yourself and your family members;
- If you feel uneasy about a situation, then trust your instincts and head towards a safe place such as a shop or other public space.
- If you think you are being followed, then take sensible steps such as remain calm; keep to well populated areas; cross and recross the road to see if you are still followed; keep moving and head to the nearest safe place; call the police when you can.