

West Devon Council



West Devon
Borough
Council

Title:	Summons																														
Date:	Tuesday, 20th February, 2024																														
Time:	2.00 pm																														
Venue:	Chamber - Kilworthy Park																														
Full Members:	<p style="text-align: center;">Mayor Cllr Daniel Deputy Mayor Cllr Sellis</p> <p><i>Members:</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Cllr Ball</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Cllr Leech</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Blackman</td> <td>Cllr Moody</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Bridgewater</td> <td>Cllr Mott</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Calder</td> <td>Cllr Oxborough</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Casbolt</td> <td>Cllr Renders</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Cheadle</td> <td>Cllr Saxby</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Cunningham</td> <td>Cllr Southcott</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Dexter</td> <td>Cllr Squire</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Edmonds</td> <td>Cllr Vachon</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Elliott</td> <td>Cllr Wakeham</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Ewings</td> <td>Cllr Watts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Guthrie</td> <td>Cllr Viney</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Johnson</td> <td>Cllr West</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Jory</td> <td>Cllr Mann</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Kimber</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Ball	Cllr Leech	Cllr Blackman	Cllr Moody	Cllr Bridgewater	Cllr Mott	Cllr Calder	Cllr Oxborough	Cllr Casbolt	Cllr Renders	Cllr Cheadle	Cllr Saxby	Cllr Cunningham	Cllr Southcott	Cllr Dexter	Cllr Squire	Cllr Edmonds	Cllr Vachon	Cllr Elliott	Cllr Wakeham	Cllr Ewings	Cllr Watts	Cllr Guthrie	Cllr Viney	Cllr Johnson	Cllr West	Cllr Jory	Cllr Mann	Cllr Kimber	
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Cllr Kimber																															
Interests – Declaration and Restriction on Participation:	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.																														
Committee administrator:	Democratic.Services@swdevon.gov.uk																														

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Confirmation of Minutes

1 - 12

To approve and adopt as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 19 December 2023 and the Special Meeting of Council, also held on 19 December 2023;

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members are invited to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests and Non-Registerable Interests including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting;

4. To receive communications from the Mayor or person presiding

5. Business brought forward by or with the consent of the Mayor

6. To respond to any questions submitted by the public and to receive deputations or petitions under Council Procedure Rule 21

7. To consider (any) questions submitted under Council Procedure Rules

8. To consider Motion(s) of which notice has been duly submitted by Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rules

9. To receive the Minutes of the following Committees, to note the delegated decisions and to consider the adoption of those Minutes which require approval

(a) Development Management & Licensing Committee

13 - 18

Meeting held on 12 December 2023

(b) Overview & Scrutiny Committee

19 - 26

Meeting held on 16 January 2024

(c) Hub Committee

27 - 34

Meeting held on 30 January 2024

Recommendations to agree:

HC 41/23 The Council Plan 2024-2028

To be considered at Agenda Item 11

**HC 42/23 Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals For
2024-25**

To be considered at Agenda Item 10

**HC 45/23 Council Tax Discounts and Council Tax Reduction
Scheme 2024/25**

To be considered at Agenda Item 13

HC 47/23 Month 7 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/2024

RECOMMENDED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to update the current virement limits within the Constitution, as shown in paragraph 10 of the presented agenda report.

The associated Committee Report can be accessed here (agenda item 13 refers) :

<https://democracy.swdevon.gov.uk/documents/g1867/Public%20reports%20pack%2030th-Jan-2024%2014.00%20West%20Devon%20Hub%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

**HC 48/23 Capital Programme Monitoring as at 31 October
2023**

RECOMMENDED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to use £180,000 of the Vehicle Replacement Reserve in 2023/24 to finance replacement vehicles currently on order, in accordance with the waste vehicle forward plan.

The associated Committee Report can be accessed here (Agenda item 14 refers):

<https://democracy.swdevon.gov.uk/documents/g1867/Public%20reports%20pack%2030th-Jan-2024%2014.00%20West%20Devon%20Hub%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

	<i>Page No</i>
10. Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2024/25	35 - 94
11. Council Plan and Year One Annual Delivery Plan	95 - 148
12. Community Governance Reviews - Final Recommendations	149 - 166
13. Council Tax Discounts and Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25	167 - 178

Agenda Item 2

At a Meeting of the **WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL** held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILWORTHY PARK, TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **19th** day of **DECEMBER 2023** at **4.00pm** pursuant to Notice given and Summons duly served.

Members in attendance

- * Denotes attendance
- ∅ Denotes apology for absence
- ** Denotes attendance via Teams

* Cllr L Daniel – The Mayor (In the Chair)

* Cllr K Ball	∅ Cllr T Leech
* Cllr A Blackman	* Cllr U Mann
* Cllr A Bridgewater	* Cllr J Moody
* Cllr M Calder	* Cllr C Mott
* Cllr M Casbolt	* Cllr R Oxborough
* Cllr R Cheadle	* Cllr M Renders
* Cllr A Cunningham	* Cllr I Saxby
* Cllr G Dexter	* Cllr D Sellis (Deputy Mayor)
* Cllr C Edmonds	* Cllr T Southcott
* Cllr J Elliott	* Cllr P Squire
∅ Cllr M Ewings	* Cllr P Vachon
* Cllr S Guthrie	* Cllr N Viney
* Cllr A Johnson	∅ Cllr S Wakeham
* Cllr N Jory	* Cllr L Watts
* Cllr P Kimber	* Cllr C West

Officers in attendance

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive; Section 151 Officer; Director – Strategy & Governance; Monitoring Officer; Head of Democratic Services; Head of Communications; Head of Assets and Principal Civil Engineer.

CM 49/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Ewings, Leech and Wakeham.

CM 50/23 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was moved by Cllr L Daniel, seconded by Cllr M Renders and upon the motion being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and **“RESOLVED** that the Council agree the Minutes of the 3 October 2023 meeting.”

CM 51/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor invited Members to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but there were none made.

CM 52/23 BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE MAYOR

The Mayor proceeded to inform the meeting that she had agreed for three items of urgent business to be considered. These items were deemed to be urgent in light of the time constraints associated with each matter.

a) From Cllr Mott

“That in recognition of 2023 being the 40th Anniversary of the Council’s association with Wesseling, Germany, the Council send a letter acknowledging this milestone and expressing our good wishes for the festive season and the New Year.”

There being no debate, it was then:

RESOLVED

That, in recognition of 2023 being the 40th Anniversary of the Council’s association with Wesseling, Germany, the Council send a letter acknowledging this milestone and expressing our good wishes for the festive season and the New Year.

b) Update on the work of SSAFA (Soldiers’, Sailors’ and Airmen’s Family Association)

The Council’s lead Member for the SSAFA, Cllr Ball proceeded to give an update on Grants that had recently been paid to assist ex-Servicemen and Women and their families within the Borough Council area.

In concluding, Cllr Ball requested that Members contact him if they were aware of any current or past serving armed forces personnel within their respective local Wards who required support and/or assistance.

c) Proposals for on-street parking charges by Devon County Council

Members considered an urgent report that sought the delegation of authority for the Lead Member for People and Communities, in consultation with the Director of Customer Services, to respond to Devon County Council’s consultation on the introduction of Pay and Display Car Parking Charges in Okehampton and Tavistock.

The item was considered urgent as the consultation period coincided with the Christmas break and there was no meeting of the Full Council scheduled before the deadline for receipt of consultation responses by the County Council.

During the ensuing debate, the following points were raised:

- (a) A number of Members expressed the view that, if adopted, the proposals would be very detrimental to the local town centre economy;
- (b) An additional (part 2) of the recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that read as follows:

'2. the Council write directly to Devon County Council seeking an urgent meeting with key Members of the County Council, Borough Council, Okehampton and Tavistock Town Councils and other key stakeholders, with the set objective of understanding the rationale, full implications and impact of the proposals.'

In debate, this addition was welcomed and, when put to the vote, was declared **CARRIED** and therefore became part of the substantive motion;

- (c) Members also felt it to be regrettable that the public consultation period was being undertaken over the festive period. As a consequence, all Members were felt to have an important role to play in promoting awareness of the proposals (and the consultation exercise) within their respective local Wards;
- (d) It was noted that both Tavistock and Okehampton Town Councils had been very proactive in their opposition to the proposals and the importance of a united voice with the Borough Council was emphasised.

It was then proposed by Cllr A Bridgewater, seconded by Cllr C Mott and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and **RESOLVED** that:

- 1. Cllr Adam Bridgewater as Lead Member for People and Communities, in consultation with the Director of Customer Service and Delivery, be authorised to respond to the proposals for on-street parking charges in Okehampton and Tavistock on behalf of the Borough Council; and

2. the Council write directly to Devon County Council seeking an urgent meeting with key Members of the County Council, Borough Council, Okehampton and Tavistock Town Councils and other key stakeholders, with the set objective of understanding the rationale, full implications and impact of the proposals.”

CM 53/23 COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor proceeded to inform the meeting of:

(a) Mayor’s Young Persons Environment Award

The Mayor took pleasure in advising those present that Whitchurch Primary School and Okehampton Brownies had won recent Mayor’s Young Persons Environment Awards and confirmed that the prizes would be awarded to each early in the New Year.

CM 54/23 TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC AND TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS OR PETITIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, the Mayor advised that the Council had received notification from Mr Graham Parker of his intention to formally submit a petition to this Council Meeting regarding Tavistock Bus Routes. Specifically, the petition stated that:

‘We, the undersigned, are dismayed that our local bus services have been depleted and withdrawn without consultation with the people of Tavistock. We ask our elected representatives to protest on behalf of all users of these services and to work with us to:

- *Reinstate the 89 local bus services replacing the new 86 and 89 buses; and*
- *Reinstate the 104 and 105 services for our children.*

The Mayor proceeded to exercise her discretion to invite Mr Parker to present his Petition and to address the Council. During his address, Mr Parker made particular reference to the new service costing three times more than the previous service and his hope that the Borough Council and Tavistock Town Council could work together in an attempt to reinstate these bus services.

CM 55/23 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Members noted that no Questions on Notice had been received from the membership in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.

CM 56/23 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Mayor advised that no Motions on Notice had been received from the membership in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.

CM 57/23 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

(a) Development Management & Licensing Committee – 3 October, 31 October and 21 November 2023

It was moved by Cllr R Cheadle, seconded by Cllr T Southcott and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and “**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings held on 3 October 2023, 31 October 2023 and 21 November 2023 be received and noted.”

(b) Audit & Governance Committee – 10 October 2023 and 5 December 2023

It was moved by Cllr G Dexter, seconded by Cllr A Bridgewater and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and “**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2023 and 5 December 2023 be received and noted, with the exception of recommendation AC 30.”

In respect of the Recommendation:

AC 30 Strategic Risk Update and Framework

The Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee introduced and made reference to the Risk Framework, summarising to Members the key points.

Firstly, that the Council recognised that it had a responsibility to manage risks and opportunities effectively, to control its risks and liabilities, to protect its employees and communities against potential losses, minimise uncertainty in achieving these goals and objectives and maximise the chances of achieving its vision.

Secondly, Risk Management was an integral part of the Council's Corporate Governance Arrangements and thirdly that the Council would be open in its approach to the management of risk and opportunity and defined the role of Staff, Management, the Performance Board, the Audit Committee and our Internal Auditors.

Thirdly, it set out clearly the reporting arrangements which were designed to ensure that Risk Management was embedded throughout the Council. This included monthly reporting to the Performance Board, Quarterly reports on Strategic Risk to the Hub Committee, six monthly reports to the Audit & Governance Committee and a consideration of risk within the Council's Annual Governance Statement and an Annual Review of risk.

Finally, all Members were asked to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Framework and were asked to let the Committee Chairman have any feedback.

It was then moved by Cllr G Dexter, seconded by Cllr A Bridgewater and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and “**RESOLVED** that the updated Risk and Opportunity Management Strategy be adopted;

(c) Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 10 October 2023

It was moved by Cllr P Kimber, seconded by Cllr C West and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and “**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2023 be received and noted.”

(d) Hub Committee – 21 November 2023

It was moved by Cllr M Renders, seconded by Cllr C Mott and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and “**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 be received and noted, with the exception of recommendations HC 29/23 and HC 35/23.”

In respect of the Recommendations:

HC 29/23 Review of Capital Programme (Capital Programme Monitoring) and Review of Earmarked Reserves

It was moved by Cllr M Renders, seconded by Cllr C Mott and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and “**RESOLVED**:

- 1) that three capital projects be withdrawn from the current Capital Programme, these being Parklands Leisure Centre contribution to moveable floor (£50,000), Tavistock Viaduct (£20,000) and the Springhill Temporary Accommodation project (£193,200) (following the Hub Committee decision to put the project on hold whilst other options were explored). It was noted that the review of the capital programme had freed up capital resources of £263,200 which was potentially available for future corporate priorities and could be re-purposed;
- 2) that all other capital projects, in line with the existing capital projects within the overall Capital Programme, be progressed;

- 3) that the content of the Capital Programme Monitoring Report in Appendix C of the agenda report presented to the Hub Committee Meeting which set out the current expenditure on capital projects between April 2023 and September 2023 of £1.692m, (being 21% of the profiled budget for 2023/24), be noted;
- 4) that the revised capital allocation for the UK Shared Prosperity fund (UKSPF) scheme for 2023/24 and 2024/25 as set out in section 3.2 of the report considered by the Hub Committee, be noted;
- 5) that the addition of £26,632 to the capital programme for a new boiler at Okehampton Business Centre be noted (to be financed from the Maintenance Earmarked Reserve, set out in section 3.3 of the agenda report presented to the Hub Committee); and
- 6) that the outcome of the review of revenue reserves, releasing revenue reserves of up to £871,000 which was potentially available to support the delivery of the emerging Corporate Strategy, be approved.”

HC 35/23 Climate Change – EV Strategy Update

It was moved by Cllr M Renders, seconded by Cllr I Saxby and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and **“RESOLVED** that the Electric Vehicle Strategy 2023-2025 (as set out at Appendix B of the agenda report presented to the Hub Committee) be adopted.”

CM 58/23 SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES REVIEW

Members considered a report that set out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel following its meeting held on 23 November 2023

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) Given the workload, some Members welcomed the recommendation for the Panel to keep under review the merits of whether or not Development Management and Licensing Committee Members should be in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance;
- (b) Members wished to record their thanks to the Independent Remuneration Panel representatives for giving up their time to compile such a balanced set of proposals.

It was then proposed by Cllr M Renders, seconded by Cllr R Oxborough and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and **RESOLVED** that, the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances (as set out at paragraph 3 of the presented agenda report) be agreed and that the revised draft Scheme of Members Allowances (as shown at Appendix C of the presented report) be adopted with immediate effect, with any consequent increases in Allowances being backdated to 9 May 2023."

CM 59/23 MEMBER APPOINTMENTS

Members considered a report that requested consideration of a proposal for the Council to withdraw from the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee and to support the dissolution of the Body.

The report also advised Members that with effect from Wednesday, 22 November 2023, all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales had become 'National Landscapes' and in view of the fact that the Council made formal appointments at its Annual meeting each May to the 'Tamar Valley AONB Partnership Committee', respectively, that these would now need to be re-titled accordingly.

It was then proposed by Cllr M Renders, seconded by Cllr R Oxborough and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) with effect from 31 December 2023, the Council withdraw from the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee and the dissolution of the Joint Committee be supported; and
- 2) it be noted that the 'Tamar Valley AONB Partnership Committee' had been re-titled to the: 'Tamar Valley National Landscapes Committee'."

CM 60/23 20 PLYMOUTH ROAD, TAVISTOCK, PL19 8AY, CONVERSION OF EXISTING OFFICE ACCOMMODATION TO RESIDENTIAL UNITS.

Members considered a report that provided an update and made a series of recommendations with regard to the Council owned property at 20 Plymouth Road, Tavistock, PL19 8AY.

During the ensuing discussion, particular reference was made to the total project cost. Whilst noting the outcome of the tender submissions, some Members remained of the view that the total project cost was expensive.

Since Members wished to discuss the issue of costings in more detail and it was therefore **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that, “in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in order to avoid the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act”.

Once all Members were content that they had no further questions or issues to raise in exempt session, it was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED** that “the public and press be re-admitted to the meeting.”

It was then proposed by Cllr M Renders, seconded by Cllr C West and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and **RESOLVED** that;

1. the repurposing of No. 20 Plymouth Road, Tavistock PL19 8AY from office accommodation to 3 x residential units in accordance with Planning Consent Ref: 1318/23/FUL, be approved;
2. the total project cost of £650,000 to be funded as follows:
 - Internal borrowing in the form of a 50 year loan of up to £500,000 at a fixed interest rate of 3%; and
 - £150,000 in housing revenue grants;
3. the Head of Assets be authorised to make the contract awards necessary for the delivery of the Project; and
4. the programme dependency on the following issues be noted:
 - a. Securing a Bat Mitigation Licence from Natural England; and
 - b. Works being restricted to the active bat season (1st March to 31st Oct).”

(The Meeting terminated at 5.25 pm)

Mayor

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At a Special Meeting of the **WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL** held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILWORTHY PARK, TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **19th** day of **DECEMBER 2023** at **12.00 Noon** pursuant to Notice given and Summons duly served.

Members in attendance

- * Denotes attendance
- ∅ Denotes apology for absence
- ** Denotes attendance via Teams

* Cllr L Daniel – The Mayor (In The Chair)

∅ Cllr K Ball	∅ Cllr T Leech
∅ Cllr A Blackman	* Cllr U Mann
* Cllr A Bridgewater	* Cllr J Moody
* Cllr M Calder	* Cllr C Mott
* Cllr M Casbolt	* Cllr R Oxborough
* Cllr R Cheadle	* Cllr M Renders
* Cllr A Cunningham	∅ Cllr I Saxby
* Cllr G Dexter	* Cllr D Sellis (Deputy Mayor)
* Cllr C Edmonds	* Cllr T Southcott
* Cllr J Elliott	* Cllr P Squire
∅ Cllr M Ewings	* Cllr P Vachon
* Cllr S Guthrie	* Cllr N Viney
* Cllr A Johnson	* Cllr S Wakeham
* Cllr N Jory	* Cllr L Watts
* Cllr P Kimber	* Cllr C West

Officers in attendance:

Chief Executive, Director – Strategy & Governance; Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services

CM 46/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Ball, Blackman, Ewings, Leech and Saxby.

CM 47/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor invited Members to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but there were none made.

CM 48/23 HONORARY ALDERMEN - NOMINATIONS

Members considered a report that sought approval, in accordance with Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, for the nomination of Mr Mike Davies, Ms Diana Moyse, Mr Terry Pearce and Mr Paul Ridgers to be conferred the title of 'Honorary Alderman' in recognition of their respective service to West Devon Borough Council

In the ensuing debate, tributes were paid by a number of Members to the outstanding community service and dedication that each of the four nominees had demonstrated.

It was then proposed by Cllr L Daniel, seconded by Cllr M Renders and upon being submitted to the Meeting was declared to be **CARRIED** and **RESOLVED** that, in accordance with Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council confer the title of Honorary Alderman of the Council upon:

- Mr Mike Davies;
- Ms Diana Moyse;
- Mr Terry Pearce; and
- Mr Paul Ridgers.”

(The Meeting terminated at 12.10 pm)

Mayor

Agenda Item 9a

Minutes of a meeting of the **WEST DEVON DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT & LICENSING COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY** the **12th** day of **December 2023** at **10.00am** in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILWORTHY PARK**

Present Cllr R Cheadle – Chairman
Cllr T Southcott – Vice-Chairman

Cllr A Cunningham	Cllr J Moody
Cllr S Guthrie	Cllr C Mott
Cllr P Kimber	Cllr S Wakeham
Cllr U Mann	

Head of Development Management (JH)
Senior Planning Officer (BRH)
Environmental Health Officer (JW)
Senior Democratic Services Officer (KH)

***DM&L.36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Leech and Cllr Jory for who Cllr Kimber substituted.

***DM&L.37 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

***DM&L.38 URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business brought forward to this meeting.

***DM&L.39 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The updated minutes from the Committee meeting held on 31 October 2023, the minutes from the Committee meeting held on 21 November and the minutes from the Licensing Sub-Committee meeting held on 24 October were agreed as a true and correct record.

***DM&L.40 PLANNING, LISTED BUILDING, TREE PRESERVATION ORDER AND ENFORCEMENT REPORTS**

The Committee proceeded to consider the report and presentation that had been prepared by the relevant Planning Officer on the following application and also considered the comments of the Parish Councils together with other representations received, which were listed within the presented agenda report and summarised below:

(a) Application No. 1769 /23/FUL Ward: Buckland Monachorum

Site Address: Uphill, Yelverton PL20 6DF

Development: Use of walled garden for weddings, workshops

& food events, construction of four ancillary buildings within the walled garden, use of part of adjacent barn for wedding ceremonies & construction of external staircase to barn (part retrospective) (resubmission of 2992/22/FUL)

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

Conditions

1. Standard time limit
2. Accord with plans
3. Use (weddings, workshops & food events)
4. Walled garden (catering)
5. Tie to Listed Building
6. Number of events
7. Time of events – to protect the barn owls and amenity of neighbours
8. Number of guests
9. Sustainable travel plan
10. Lighting plan
11. Noise management plan
12. Amplified music
13. Ecological appraisal
14. Existing nesting site (prior to commencement)
15. New nesting site (prior to commencement)
16. Barn owl monitoring
17. Remove when no longer required

Key issues for Committee consideration:

- Locality (countryside)
- Heritage (Listed Building)
- Landscape
- Ecology (barn owl)
- Amenity (noise and lighting)
- Highways and access

The Planning Officer gave a presentation to the Members on the application. The business plan submitted showed up to 15 courses per calendar year. Up to 10 Day/evening events per calendar year, up to 20 small events/elopement weddings per year and up to 10 late finish events per calendar year. 16 letters of representation were received in support and 16 against the application.

In response to a Member question the Planning Officer stated that the associated Listed Building application was not being heard at Committee as it related to minor works to the barn and no objections had been received. It was confirmed that the glass house would also be used as a gardening space.

The Environmental Health Officer stated that the noise heard from the boundary of the site would be ambient and blend into the background.

She stated that it would be for the owner to demonstrate they are complying with the noise levels. A noise management plan had been received from the applicant. A noise limiter was to be used to cut back

any music being played too loudly. If the noise levels were too high and complaints received, it would be dealt with by Environmental Health Officer and in some circumstances a Noise Abatement Notice could be considered. She said those to the south of the site would be less likely to hear noise as most of the winds are from the south or southwest. She said measurements are not taken for any particular planning applications, however, they are aware that most noise in the countryside is recorded at around 25 decibels.

The Planning Officer explained that sound proofing in the barn along with provision of a new barn owl box, monitoring and a guest exclusion zone meant the barn owl currently living in the barn would be protected. In terms of heritage assets, there is a phased schedule of repairs to the buildings. With regard to Policy TTV26, Development in the Countryside, the Planning Officer explained whilst the policy would not wholly support the proposal, there were heritage and economic benefits, which weighed in favour of the proposal.

Speakers

Murray Ross - Objector

Christopher Hayes – Supporter/Applicant

Mr Ross spoke on behalf of a neighbouring resident. He stated that the site had been operating for almost 24 months as a wedding venue without planning permission and had demonstrated to have had an impact on residential amenity by way of noise and disturbance. He stated the residents were unable to sit in their gardens during events at the site due to the noise. The residents had commissioned their own noise assessment which had been submitted to the Council. He made comment to the traffic impact stating the nearest bus stop was $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away, with the last bus to Plymouth leaving at 10pm. Guests using the bus would need to leave and walk a dark unlit county lane with no footway. He stated the venue was in an unsustainable countryside location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where tranquillity and dark skies are to be protected.

The applicant stated he had been running the venue for three years, holding up to 7 events each year. At pre-application, a Planning Officer, Police Licencing Officer, Environmental Health Officer and Heritage Specialist were present and all were consulted throughout the process of the application. There would be 20 events with provision of amplified music, 10.00- midnight and 10.00- 22.00 hours. Not all would be weddings, some would be feasting nights with long tables and feasting platters.

A system would be installed to give the applicant full control over the music being played at the events.

Local amenity had been at the forefront of considerations when starting the application process and feedback was sought on improvements. This resulted in not allowing certain types of music and putting up more signage to ensure guests found the venue. This led to the nearest neighbour to the site being at the meeting in support of the application. As a young family they prided themselves in using locally produced produce. Staff employed were all from the local area.

One Member asked if there were plans for solar panels or electric

charging points in the future. The applicant responded by saying the cost of charging points and the lack of 3 phase electricity locally meant they weren't looking to install any immediately. The barn would be the only suitable source for installing solar panels and given the listed status of the barn, there may be conflicting issues. The applicant confirmed that the larger events would run between May to September. He stated a zonal system is a targeted speaker system and sits above the dance floor within a marquee. He stated that they would be employing staff on an all year round basis.

He would be getting the sound equipment built once the application was given consent. He commented that he was a qualified noise assessor at work with HSE and he would be dealing with any complaints through a complaints log. Liaising with Environmental Health he would respond to any complaints.

The Development Management and Licensing Committee had most of their issues addressed during the questioning of the presenters and as such there was very little debate.

Committee Decision: Conditional Consent in line with the Officer's recommendation- Conditions as set out in the Planning Officer's report

***DM&L.41 PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE**

The Head of Development Management took Members through the appeals that had been given decisions. Application 2391/22/HHO, a householder application for a rear extension at Southmoor, Thorndon Cross, with officer recommendation for refusal was upheld on appeal by the Inspector.

The Planning Officer had refused due to the effect on the character and appearance of the host building, the rural location and also due to the site being close to the Dartmoor National Park. The Inspector had concluded the only views of the extension would be from some distance away and didn't feel the primacy of the host dwelling would be diminished. A Member felt the Inspectors decision should be questioned. The original application was refused due to size and scale. An application was presented for a smaller extension with this extra extension being proposed. The Parish Council had felt the Neighbourhood Plan had not been considered.

The Inspector agreed with the decision on Application 3844/22/FUL at Exbourne for the refusal of three dwellings. He felt the bulk and massing of the development would create a mass of development where there was none currently. It would also have a harmful effect on an oak tree with a tree preservation order on it.

Application 4242/21/FUL for a five-bedroom house in Highampton was dismissed on Appeal. It was submitted as being of outstanding architectural value under para. 80 (5) of the NPPF, being an unusual design with a fish hatchery under the building.

Application 1183/23/HHO for an extension to a converted barn at 2 Fowley Barns, Okehampton was upheld on appeal. The Inspector felt

the extension would have a neutral effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

***DM&L.42 UPDATE ON UNDETERMINED MAJOR APPLICATIONS**

The Head of Planning stated that the applicant for application 2915/19/FUL, The Wool Grading Centre at North Tawton, was trying to resolve a flooding issue. The Planning Officer overseeing the case has given them until Christmas to submit additional information. If this is not received the Officer would be looking for a recommendation for refusal. Regarding application 4004/21/FUL, Former Hazeldon Preparatory School, Tavistock, information was awaited from the applicant by the Heritage Officer for works on Hazeldon House. He had been in conversation with the architect and plans are expected to be provided on the back of that conversation.

(The Meeting ended at 11.25 am)

Chairman

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Agenda Item 9b

At a Meeting of the **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, **TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **16th** day of **January 2024** at **2:00 pm**.

Present:

Cllr P Kimber – Chairman
Cllr A Johnson – Vice-Chairman

Cllr M Calder	Cllr I Saxby
Cllr A Cunningham	Cllr T Southcott
Cllr J Elliott	Cllr P Squire
Cllr S Guthrie	Cllr P Vachon
Cllr U Mann	Cllr C West

Director of Customer Service and Delivery
Director of Strategic Finance and S151 Officer
Assistant Director of Strategy and Organisational
Development
Democratic Services Officer

Also in Attendance:

Mr Burrows - Director of External Liaison (South West Water)
Mr Worsford – Director of Asset Management (South West Water)
Ms Newell – Area Manager (Environment Agency)
Cllrs A Blackman (via Teams), L Daniel, C Edmonds, M Ewings, N
Jory, M Renders (via Teams) and S Wakeham (via Teams)
Head of Housing
Head of Finance (via MS Teams)
Head of Customer Service Improvement (via MS Teams)

***O&S 16/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence for this meeting were received from Cllrs Blackman, Casbolt and Viney

***O&S 17/23 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 October 2023 were confirmed as a true and correct record.

***O&S 18/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests made.

***O&S 19/23 PUBLIC FORUM**

The Chairman confirmed that no formal requests had been received in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

***O&S 20/23 SOUTH WEST WATER AND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (Quality of river water)**

The Director of External Liaison and the Director of Asset Management for South West Water (SWW) gave a presentation to the Committee which included a response to questions that the Committee had submitted prior to the meeting.

Key points arising from the presentation were:

An overview of SWW:

- 2 million customers and served up to 9 million people during the tourist season;
- 19,000km of pipe network;
- £300m a year investment in our region and improving our network; and
- The organisation had a Net Zero Commitment by 2030 investing in renewables across the South West.

Pollution and storm overflow monitors

- Reduce the impact on rivers by 2025, by one-third and put forward plans to target zero harm by 2030;
- Reduce spills from storm overflows to an average of 20 per year by 2025;
- Maintain the excellent bathing water quality standards, all year round, so that everyone could enjoy the 860 miles of coastline;
- Deliver zero serious pollutions by 2025, and target a year on year reduction in all pollutions;
- 100% monitoring of all storm overflows, ahead of government targets;
- 89 storm overflows in the West Devon Borough area - 31 already meet new government targets;
- One serious pollution in the West Devon Borough area since 2020;
- The Storm Overflow Action Plan (SOAP) would show when improvements would take place on each storm overflow;
- Overall SWW operations contributed to c.12% towards the reasons for not achieving good ecological status. This varied between catchments depending on the infrastructure; and
- Main catchments included: River Tavy, River Lew, Headwaters of Taw, Torridge and Dart.

The Area Manager for the Environment Agency (EA) then proceeded to deliver a presentation. In so doing, she informed that:

- the increased public interest meant that the EA could seek more resources for monitor and enforce;
- the spill numbers needed to be taken into context as the spills often occurred during very wet periods of weather and those spills were very diluted. Close monitoring on particular spills was taking place and once the investigations were concluded, the results would be published;
- there were three land and water teams consisting of 24 officers and 12 officers in the agricultural team within the Devon and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly area;
- increased numbers of freedom of information requests were taking up substantial amounts of officer time, therefore keeping people informed in a smarter way was to be pushed forward;
- a more consistent approach was needed to regulate water authorities;
- abandoned metal mines was a particular issue with regard to pollution, notably along the River Tavy.

During questions, the Director of External Liaison stated that a Category 3 incident was a minor incident, although it did still constitute pollution. He said that more monitors would be put in the fould sewers to give an earlier warning of where blockages were occurring.

In response to investment, the Director of Asset Management confirmed that £3 billion would be spent on storm overflows in the next 15 years. £1 billion over the next five-year period would have £750 million impacting on customer bills, the rest would be found through efficiency and self-funding from SWW.

Large spills from smaller sewage works were raised as a concern. Those were being addressed through operational changes and putting in additional stages of treatment as well as additional storage. He said that investigations were ongoing to find a way of stopping the amount of ground water going into those sewers. There were also land drainage connections going into the foul network, which was illegal. A Member advised that he was aware of a developer who had technical approval to connect to a sewer and wondered where the final approval was given. The Director of Asset Management reported that, in 2011, the Floods and Water Management Act, under Section 3 a Suds Authorising Body had been discussed but was never enacted. However, he stated that it was being looked at again and he was hopeful that it would be taken forward as currently they could not enforce the connections from developers into the foul sewers.

The representative also responded to a Member question on how the organisation dealt with the archaic structures, and whether they were reactive or proactive in their organisation approach to issues. He stated that there was a proactive cleaning process of the sewers which was ranked in order of how often they required cleaning to reduce blockages. They were also proactive with customers in the 'Love your Loo' public campaign, where the use of wet wipes was causing major blockages and a campaign was underway for them to be banned from sale.

In response to a question related to shareholders and dividends, the representative explained that 40% of the funding needed to be borrowed from banks and shareholders. The dividends were the means of repaying those customers for lending the money. It was noted that additional information on shareholders and dividends was set out on the Pennon website.

The Committee noted that two statutory frameworks were in place to combat climate change. One of those frameworks looked at urban creep where paving over of gardens caused more surface runoff of water. There was an organisational commitment for the vehicle fleet to be electrified by 2030.

Members were also advised that a lot of work was being done around catchment management in the rural areas.

The Environment Agency Manager stated that flooding was the bulk of the Agency's workload. Central Government was focusing on permit holders' fees and she hoped that this would help in funding the Agency and enabling a more sector-based stance on officer knowledge and enforcement.

A Member voiced their concern over wild swimming waters not being monitored as a bathing water category. The representative replied that the need for monitoring was recognised and a pilot was being carried out on the River Tamar and River Tavy. Four applications on the River Dart had been presented to the Minister and DEFRA for approval to become an inland bathing water, and the outcome would be given in March 2024.

Where leaks were visible, there was a policy in place to attend and repair within 24 hours.

In conclusion, the representatives were thanked for their informative presentations and comprehensive responses to Member questions.

Whilst a matter for the Committee to consider as part of its annual work programming considerations, some Members felt that South West Water and Environment Agency representatives should be formally invited to attend the Committee on an annual basis. Conversely, other Members felt that it would be more appropriate for a Working Group of Members to be appointed to meet with both organisations. SWW agreed to attend a working group with Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

***O&S 21/23 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024-25**

The lead Hub Committee Member introduced the draft Revenue and Capital Budget proposals for 2024/25 to Members. The Section 151 Officer stated that in the financial year 2009/10 the authority received £3 million in Revenue Support Grant. This has been reduced to almost nil

each year. To help with this the authority had to become self-financing. Working in partnership with South Hams District Council had allowed the workforce to be shared, with savings being generated of over £6 million per year.

It was explained to the Committee that negative revenue support grant was unlikely to be introduced until two years' time at the earliest.

The Council Tax Collection Rate for 2022/23 was at 98.34% and the authority was in the top quartile nationally.

The Rural Services Delivery Grant would continue next year at an amount of just over £500,000.

In response to a Member question, the Section 151 Officer informed that the Business Rate Pool had generated significant financial benefits for the Borough Council and all of the Devon Councils within the Pool. In the year of a Business Rates Baseline reset (which could be in 2026/27), it may not make financial sense to Pool in the early days, due to the risk of significant appeals having a major impact on the Business Rates Pool when the level of growth above the baseline would be a lot lower than it was currently due to the reset.

The Section 151 Officer also stated that the Council Plan would set out the Corporate Priorities and the Year 1 Delivery Plan for 2024/25 and would set out the amounts of financial resources allocated to each Theme. This would be via reports to the Hub Committee on 30 January 2024 and Full Council on 20 February 2024.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has given its views on the content of the Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2024/25 and supports:
 - i) Modelling an increase in Council Tax for 2024/25 of 2.99% (This would increase a Band D council tax for 24/25 from £254.00 to £261.59 – an increase of £7.59 per year or under 15 pence per week);
 - ii) The financial pressures shown in Appendix A of the published agenda report (amounting to £1,268,000);
 - iii) The savings/additional income of £(705,000) as shown in Appendix A of the published agenda report;
 - iv) The net contributions to/(from) Earmarked Reserves of £342,000 as shown in Appendix A of the published agenda report, including using

£150,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve, as set out in section 3.14 of the published agenda report;

- v) The proposed use of £309,180 of New Homes Bonus funding to fund the 2024/25 Revenue Budget as set out in section 3.20 of the published agenda report; and
- vi) The proposed two capital bids (total of £140,000) set out in section 8.4 of the published agenda report and the proposal to finance these from New Homes Bonus funding.

***O&S 22/23 PERFORMANCE REPORT – APRIL TO NOVEMBER 2023**

The Assistant Director of Strategy and Organisational Development and the Lead Hub Committee Member took Members through the published agenda report.

In so doing, it was noted that:

- (a) The Freedom Of Information (FOI) requests were off track to time scales. 62 requests were received with 52 being responded to on time. 90% was the target figure to be met on time.
- (b) Missed bin collection rates were slightly off target due to a couple of the vehicles being off the road with technical issues.
- (c) The answering of revenues and benefits service calls was under the target of being answered in under 8 minutes. The Director of Customer Services and Delivery stated that the service area had been rearranged to take their own calls and at the start there had been a big improvement, but it had slipped back recently. The team was giving him weekly feedback on performance.
- (d) The Head of Housing stated that there were currently 25 people in temporary accommodation which was more than the average for November of 16.8 people. There were 5 families and 20 singles, 3 of which were there under the rough sleepers emergency accommodation provision due to cold weather. It was recognised that the proposals at 20 Plymouth Road would make a difference. In addition, the Springhill project was progressing.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee note:

1. The Key Performance Indicators for April 2023 -November 2023; and
2. The intention to review some Key Performance Indicators to provide more helpful information for Members in the future.

***O&S 23/23 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Customer Service and Delivery said that, once the Council's Corporate Plan and Year 1 Delivery Plan was approved by Full Council, then Lead Hub Committee Members for a particular theme would be invited to attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings to report on targets and achievements.

(The meeting terminated at 4.30 pm)

Chairman

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Agenda Item 9c

At a Meeting of the **HUB COMMITTEE** held in the **Council Chamber, Kilworthy Park, Tavistock** on **TUESDAY** the **30th** day of **January 2024** at **2.00 pm**.

Members in attendance:

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

* Cllr A Bridgewater	∅ Cllr T Leech
* Cllr L Daniel	* Cllr J Moody
* Cllr C Edmonds	* Cllr C Mott
* Cllr M Ewings (Leader)	* Cllr M Renders (Deputy Leader)
* Cllr N Jory	

Other Member(s) also in attendance in a non-voting capacity:

Cllrs Cheadle, Elliott, Kimber, Mann, Oxborough, Viney (via Teams) and West

Officers in attendance

Senior Leadership Team; Head of Democratic Services; Assistant Director Strategy; Head of Finance; Head of Revenues & Benefits; Head of Housing and Head of Communications

***HC 36/23 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence had been received from Cllr Leech.

***HC 37/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed but there were none made.

***HC 38/23 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 21 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

***HC 39/23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

It was noted that no Public Questions had been received in accordance with the Hub Committee Procedure Rules.

***HC 40/23 HUB COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

Members were presented with the latest version of the Hub Committee Forward Plan that set out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months and proceeded to note its content.

HC 41/23 THE COUNCIL PLAN 2024-2028

The Hub Committee considered a report that set out the progress made in the preparation of the draft Council Plan for the period 2024-28.

During the ensuing debate, reference was made to:

- (a) the importance of these Plans. In recognition that the annual Delivery Plans and the overriding Council Plan would underpin the work of this Council administration, Members welcomed its content and wished to record their thanks to the wider membership for their input and contributions via the Hub Advisory Group meetings. In addition, the Committee set out its thanks to the Assistant Director Strategy for his tireless efforts in producing such comprehensive Plans that were reflective of the views of the membership;
- (b) the evolving nature of the Plans. It was recognised that the Plans would evolve and there was sufficient flexibility built in to enable this to happen. With regard to performance monitoring, it was also noted that reports would be considered at regular intervals by both the Hub and Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- (c) reference to capital expenditure. Members felt it very pleasing that the Plans referenced and set aside monies for capital projects.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That 'The Council Plan 2024-2028' (as set out in Appendix A of the presented agenda report) and 'Year 1 (2024/25) Delivery Plan' (as set out in Appendix B of the presented agenda report) be noted; and

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to:

2. adopt 'The Council Plan' and 'Year 1 (2024/25) Delivery Plan' at its meeting on 20 February 2024; and
3. approve the funding for the 2024-25 Delivery Plan in accordance with section 5.4 of the presented agenda report.

HC 42/23 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024-25

Members considered a report that outlined a series of draft revenue and capital budget proposals for 2024/25.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Section 151 Officer informed that, since the agenda papers had been published, there had been further announcements made from Central Government in response to the consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement and clarification over the Rural Services Delivery Grant. The impact of these updates (which were likely to be minimal) would be included in the report to be presented to Full Council on 20 February 2024.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- (a) Thanks were extended to the Section 151 Officer and her finance team for producing a set of such detailed and understandable budget papers. Given the number of local authorities that were really struggling to set a balanced budget for 2024/25, the Committee wished to record its thanks to all Members (past and present) and officers for their prudent financial management of the Council's budget;
- (b) In respect of the town and parish council precepts, some disappointment was expressed at the number of parish councils that were proposing significant percentage increase in their precepts for 2024/25;
- (c) The Council's treasury management performance was recognised as being absolutely vital in supporting the Council's budget.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

- i) to increase Council Tax for 2024/25 by 2.99% (This would increase a Band D Council Tax for 2024/25 from £254.00 to £261.59 – an increase of £7.59 per year or under 15 pence per week);
- ii) the financial pressures shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report (amounting to £1,655,500);
- iii) the savings/additional income of £(705,000) as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report;
- iv) the revenue expenditure (£337,500) and capital expenditure (£50,000) for the Year 1 Delivery Plan of the Council Plan (2024/25), totalling £387,500, as set out in section 3.30 of the presented agenda report;
- v) the net contributions to/(from) Earmarked Reserves of £(45,500) as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report, including using £150,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve as set out in section 3.14 of the published agenda report;
- vi) the proposed use of £309,180 of New Homes Bonus funding to fund the 2024/25 Revenue Budget as set out in section 3.20 of the published agenda report;
- vii) the proposed two capital bids (total of £140,000) set out in section 8.4 of the published agenda report and the proposal to finance these from New Homes Bonus funding;
- viii) that Unearmarked Reserves should continue to have a minimum level of £900,000 (as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2023), but an operating level of a minimum of £1.25million.

***HC 43/23 HOUSING CRISIS UPDATE - HOUSING & HOMELESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

The Hub Committee considered a report that sought approval for the refreshed Housing and Homeless Strategy Action Plan.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Thanks were recorded to those Council officers who had worked tirelessly on the Corporate Parenting agenda;
- (b) Notwithstanding the fact that the requirement for a minimum of 30% affordable housing for schemes of 11 or more dwellings was being achieved across the Joint Local Plan area, some Members were interested in seeing the figures for the West Devon Borough area alone. In reply, officers informed that an update in this regard was to be presented to a future Hub Committee meeting;
- (c) Members referenced on a number of occasions their views that the housing market was fundamentally broken and cited examples that included:
 - the desperate need for additional provision of smaller (one bedroom) affordable units in the Borough;
 - the difficulties of finding suitable land for development;
 - the massive challenges (including serious budgetary implications) associated with temporary accommodation. It was recognised that this was one of the single largest issues facing all tiers of local government;
 - the need to bring empty homes back into use;
 - the need to add greater subtlety and sophistication to the Council's planning policies.

It was agreed that such matters would be considered in more detail at future meetings of the Housing Hub Advisory Group.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the progress on the previous Housing Strategy Action Plan be noted; and
2. That the refreshed Action Plan be agreed.

***HC 44/23 SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS**

Members considered a report which provided an update on the Council's activity in supporting care leavers including a proposal for the Council to become a signatory to the Care Leaver Covenant.

During debate, particular reference was made to:

- (a) the commitment of the Council. It was noted that the range of measures that were set out in the published agenda report demonstrated the Council's commitment and emphasis to supporting Care Leavers;

- (b) widespread support was expressed for the proposals. In emphasising the importance of this agenda item, the leading role that the Council and Chief Executive continued to take in this subject area was recognised and commended;
- (c) the work being undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA). Since the LGA was implementing similar measures to those set out in the agenda report, Members asked that officers report back to that organisation on the work of the Council in this regard.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the measures implemented to support care leavers into employment be noted
2. That the intention for the Council to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant be noted; and
3. That the steps taken to support Council employees who are seeking approval to be a foster carer and following the placement of a child be noted.

HC 45/23 COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2024/25

Members considered a report which provided a summary of the findings of the recent consultation on changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and sought a decision on a Scheme for 2024/25.

The report also provided details of the current Council Tax Discounts and reaffirmed the Council's intention to levy a 100% premium on Second Homes as permitted in the Levelling-UP and Regeneration Act 2024

During debate, the following points were raised:

- (a) In reply to a question, officers confirmed that a version of this agenda item had also been presented to the South Hams District Council Executive at its meeting held on 25 January 2024;
- (b) Officers confirmed that they would inform those residents newly affected by the empty homes premium via letter and would work closely with colleagues in Housing and Environmental Health.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report be noted; and

That the Hub Committee **RECOMMENDS** to Council:

2. a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 as follows:

- Make no changes to the bands of the current banded scheme;
- Removes the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for self-employed Claimants; and

- Disregards 100% of the of the 'Limited Capability for Work' element of Universal Credit.
3. the adoption (with effect from 1 April 2024) of the following Council Tax discounts:
- (a) The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 100% for a maximum period of 1 month;
 - (b) The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties for 1 month to 1 year is zero;
 - (c) The discount for properties which require major repair work to render them habitable is 50% for a maximum period of 12 months;
 - (d) The discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero;
 - (e) An empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and unfurnished for at least one year, but less than five years;
 - (f) An empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and unfurnished for at least five years, but less than ten years; and
 - (g) An empty homes premium of additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and unfurnished for at least ten years; and
4. the adoption of a Second Homes Premium of 100%, with effect from 1 April 2025.

***HC 46/23 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF AND CORPORATE DEBT POLICIES**

The Hub Committee considered a report that sought approval for four revised and updated policies in respect of key areas impacting on the Council's financial position.

With no questions or discussion ensuing, it was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy (as attached at Appendix A of the presented agenda report) be approved;
2. That the Business Rates Relief: 2024/25 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme Policy (as attached at Appendix B of the presented agenda report) be approved;
3. That the Corporate Debt Policy (as attached at Appendix C of the presented agenda report) be approved; and

4. That the amendment to the Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates) and Housing Benefit Overpayments Write-Off Policy, to incorporate Sundry Debt (as attached at Appendix D of the presented agenda report) be approved.

HC 47/23 MONTH 7 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/2024

Members considered a report that provided a forecast for the year end budget position and that also enabled them to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2023/24.

In discussion, the projected surplus of £54,000 was welcomed.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2023/24 financial year and the overall projected surplus of £54,000 (0.6% of the total Budget £8.588 million) be noted; and
2. That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to update the current virement limits within the Constitution, as shown in paragraph 10 of the presented agenda report.

HC 48/23 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2023

Members were presented with a report providing details of the Capital Programme financial position as at 31 October 2023.

In the ensuing debate, a question was asked as to whether replacement waste vehicles would be either electric or hydrogen powered. In response, officers advised that, whilst technology continued to advance, at the present time, environmentally friendly waste vehicles were both incredibly expensive and inefficient.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That the contents of the report be endorsed;
2. That the addition of a budget for LAHF (Local Authority Housing Fund) 2 (as approved by the Hub Committee at its meeting held on 19 September 2023) be noted;
3. That the addition of 20 Plymouth Road (as detailed in section 2.8 of the presented agenda report) be noted; and
4. That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to use £180,000 of the Vehicle Replacement Reserve in 2023/24 to finance replacement vehicles currently on order, in accordance with the waste vehicle forward plan.

***HC 49/23 QUARTER 1 AND QUARTER 2 WRITE-OFF REPORT 2023/24**

A report was considered that informed Members of the proposal to write-off a series of debts with a value of more than £5,000 for the period from 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.

In discussion, the greater corporate emphasis now being given to debt collection was noted. As a result of this increased emphasis, Members were reassured that the Council was not seeing a spike in the amount of debt that was being written off.

It was then:

RESOLVED

1. That it be noted that, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the Section 151 Officer had authorised the write-off of individual debts totalling £76,408.49 as detailed in paragraph 3 of the presented agenda report;
2. That the write-off of the individual debts totalling £54,049.72 (as shown in Appendix A of the presented agenda report) be approved; and
3. That the write-off of a sundry debt (as set out in Exempt Appendix B of the presented agenda report) be approved.

(The meeting terminated at 4.05 pm)

Chairman

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS, WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM 5.00PM ON THURSDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2024, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MINUTES HC 41/23 (Parts 2 & 3), HC 42/23, HC 45/23 (Parts 2, 3 & 4) HC 47/23 (Part 2) AND HC 48/23 (Part 4) WHICH ARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2024, UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Appendix F to this report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972
(applies to Appendix F only)

Report to: **Council**

Date: **20 February 2024**

Title: **Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2024/25**

Portfolio Area: **Cllr M Ewings – Budget Setting Process**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Lisa Buckle** Role: **Corporate Director for Strategic Finance**

Contact: Email: lisa.buckle@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that:-

- i) Council Tax for 2024/25 is increased by 2.99% (This would increase a Band D council tax for 24/25 from £254.00 to £261.59 – an increase of £7.59 per year or under 15 pence per week). This equates to a Council Tax requirement of £5,627,384.**
- ii) The financial pressures shown in Appendix A of £1,605,500 be approved;**
- iii) The savings/additional income of £(705,000) as shown in Appendix A be approved; and**
- iv) The net contributions to/(from) Earmarked Reserves of £(139,680) as shown in Appendix D, including the proposed use of £309,180 of New Homes Bonus funding to fund the 2024/25 Revenue Budget as set out in 3.4 and £70,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve as set out in 3.3 of this report be approved;**

- v) That the Council should set its total net expenditure for 2024/25 as shown in Appendix B as £9,488,495;**
- vi) The proposed Capital Programme Proposals for 2024/25 of £16,819,137 and the proposed financing of the Capital Programme (as set out in Appendix E of the presented agenda report) be approved;**
- vii) The Reserves strategy (Appendix H) is approved which sets out that Unearmarked Reserves should continue to have a minimum level of £900,000 (as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2023), but an operating level of a minimum of £1.25million.**
- viii) That the level of reserves as set out within this report and the assessment of their adequacy and the robustness of budget estimates are noted. This is a requirement of Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 It is important to note that the MTFS sets out the budget strategy for the Council for the next three years, with regular reviews (at least annually) and updates when items are further known or are announced by the Government.
- 1.2 Prudent financial management in the past, has meant that the Council was in a relatively healthy position financially before the pandemic hit. The management of risk and promoting financial resilience is a key principle of our budget strategy and this has helped facilitate our response. Key to the authority's financial resilience are our reserves, which are at a prudent level.
- 1.3 The Fair Funding Review, business rates baseline reset, and other funding reforms now look set to be pushed back to 2026/27 although this has not been confirmed by the Government so the MTFS and Budget Proposals for 2024/25 assumes that these changes will happen in 2026/27.
- 1.4 The report sets out proposals for the Council to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25, as shown in **Appendix B**. The Council is currently forecasting a £372,943 budget gap by the following year, 2025/26. The cumulative aggregated Budget Gap by 2026/27 is £1.6 million, if no action has been taken in each individual year to close the budget gap annually.

Budget Gaps	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	Total Aggregated Budget Gap £
'New' Budget Gap each year	Nil – Balance budget proposed	372,943	874,174	1,247,117
*Cumulative Budget Gap	Nil – Balance budget proposed	372,943	1,247,117	1,620,060

* (Cumulative Budget Gap assumes annual new budget gaps have not been addressed)

- 1.5 The budget gap for 2025/26 of £372,943 is very much in line with the level expected at this point in the financial planning cycle. In the year after, the budget gap is £874,174, due to the local government reforms that are expected. These are the reset of the business rates baseline, the fair funding review and the impact of negative RSG (Revenue Support Grant), coupled with the loss of the business rates pooling gain.

2 HUB COMMITTEE'S FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024-25

- 2.1 Over the last six months, the Hub Committee has given the budget very detailed consideration and has sought views on budget proposals. This process has enabled and informed Members in their consideration of the appropriate level of service provision and council tax levels.
- 2.2 The Hub Committee met on 30 January 2024 and their recommendations are contained within this report (Minute HC 42).
- 2.3 To balance the budget of £9.5 million, the Council has identified savings and additional income of £705,000. The Council is forecasting a budget gap by 2025/26 of £0.37 million.
- 2.4 The Hub Committee is recommending increasing council tax by 2.99%. This would mean the council tax would increase to £261.59 (Band D) for 2024/25, an increase of £7.59 per year or the equivalent of less than 15 pence per week.
- 2.5 **The Council Plan 2024-2028 and the Year 1 (2024/25) delivery plan** is also an item on this Council agenda. The Council Plan and delivery plans have been refined following a seven-week consultation and engagement period with the public and partners.

- 2.6 Appendix J shows the Proposed Budget for 2024-25 when taking into account the Cost Pressures (Appendix A), Savings and additional income (Appendix A), contribution to/from Earmarked Reserves (Appendix D) and the investment in the Council Plan.
- 2.7 At the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 19th March 2024, Members will consider the detailed Budget Book for 2024-25, following the decisions of Full Council on 20th February 2024.

3 FINAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2024-25

- 3.1 The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was issued on 5th February 2024. The Communities Secretary, Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP announced a total of £600m of additional funding for local authorities in England including a £500m addition to the social care grant (an upper tier function) and a £100m increase in core spending power.
- 3.2 The amount of extra funding that West Devon will receive is **£85,270**. Extra funding has been allocated to the Rural Services Delivery Grant and the Council's allocation has increased from £544,625 to £630,619 (an increase of £85,994). There has been a partial decrease in the minimum funding guarantee which has decreased from £93,067 to £91,325 (a decrease of £1,742). The Services Grant has increased by £1,018 to an allocation of £11,506.
- 3.3 *It is recommended as part of these final budget proposals to decrease the contribution from the business rates retention reserve from £150,000 to £70,000 (a decrease of £80,000) to reduce the reliance on this reserve contribution to fund the revenue base budget. In order to achieve balanced budget proposals, it is also recommended to decrease the business rates income figure from £2,327,835 to £2,322,565 in Appendix B (a decrease of £5,270).*
- 3.4 New Homes Bonus for 2024/25 has been confirmed at £449,180. It is recommended that the allocation of NHB is used in the way set out below.

NHB final allocation for 2024/25	£449,180
Amount used to fund the 2024/25 revenue base budget	£(309,180)
Funding for capital projects for 2024/25, to set aside an annual provision for the roof at Kilworthy Park and a capital budget for the bank reconciliation software.	£(140,000)

- 3.5 Alongside the final settlement, the Government confirmed that it will require councils to publish local productivity plans, agreed by Council Leaders and Members, by 28 July 2024, identifying ways to unlock productivity improvements and setting out the key implementation milestones.

4 Earmarked and Unearmarked Reserves Policy

- 4.1 Sensitivity analysis and risk analysis – The figures within the Budget proposals have been subject to a sensitivity analysis and a risk analysis. This has identified a potential adverse revenue effect of £751,250 (from the sensitivity analysis in Appendix G). Therefore the current level of £1.623million (March 24) is still above these levels.
- 4.2 Revenue Reserves are recommended to be maintained at a minimum of £900,000 (as set in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2023), but at an operating level of a minimum of £1.25 million. Appendix G also sets out the CIPFA Financial Resilience Index for 2023, a comparative tool that can be used by S151 Officers as part of the annual budget report. The S151 Officer therefore confirms the robustness of the Budget Proposals and the adequacy of the reserves.
- 4.3 Unearmarked Reserves total £1.569 million at 31 March 2023 and are predicted to be £1.623m at March 2024.
- 4.4 There was a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda of 21st November 2023, regarding a fundamental review of Earmarked Reserves and the Capital Programme. This report identified £0.871m of Earmarked Reserves and £0.263m of capital resources to support the delivery of the Council Plan (£1.134m in total).
- 4.5 The proposed contributions to/from Earmarked Reserves for 2024/25 are shown in Appendix D. It is recommended to make an annual contribution of £50,000 to a JLP reserve, to commence the JLP review.
- 4.6 Reserve levels have been kept under constant review to consider commitments against Earmarked Reserves, their unallocated balance and the contributions to/from Earmarked Reserves for 2024/25 and future years also.
- 4.7 Legislation does not prescribe how much the minimum level of reserves should be. The Section 151 Officer is tasked with recommending the minimum level of reserves required as part of the budget setting process having regard to elements of risk in the Council's finances (this was recommended at £900,000 being the minimum level in February 2023, with an operating level of £1.25million). Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Section 151 officer to report on the adequacy of the Council's financial resources on an annual basis. This is attached in Appendix G.

- 4.8 The provision of an appropriate level of balances is a fundamental part of prudent financial management, enabling the Council to build up funds to meet known and potential financial commitments.
- 4.9 As highlighted above there is a high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government. However, the Section 151 Officer is keeping a close watch on developments and planning for this longer-term uncertainty to secure financial stability.

5 CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND PRUDENTIAL BORROWING

- 5.1 The Capital Programme is set by the Council and may be funded by sale proceeds from the disposal of assets (capital receipts), external grants and contributions, directly from revenue or from borrowing.
- 5.2 Capital projects are scored on the following criteria:
- Health and Safety compliance
 - Essential to keep operational assets open
 - Fit with the Council's Delivery Plans for the new Council Plan
 - To rationalise service delivery or service improvement
 - To generate income, capital value or to reduce revenue costs
- 5.3 It is important that capital bids are aligned with the emerging Council Plan. The Hub Committee has also recommended the Year 1 Delivery Plan of the Council Plan to Council. The Capital expenditure within the Year 1 Delivery Plan totals £16,379,137 as below.

Capital Expenditure	24/25 Financial Year		Total
	<i>To be financed from £1.134m identified in 4.1 of the Council Plan report (£)</i>	<i>To be financed from existing core budgets and grants (£)</i>	
TOTAL	£50,000	£16,329,137	£16,379,137

There is a recommendation within the Council Plan report that £50,000 of capital expenditure is funded from the New Homes Bonus Earmarked Reserve (this is the £0.263m of capital resources identified for the Council Plan).

- 5.4 The Capital Budget Proposals for 2024/25 are set out within Appendix E.
- 5.5 Appendix F sets out the Council's current capital programme for 2023/24 and new capital projects for 2024/25 will be added to the existing Capital Programme.

6 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND TIMESCALES

- 6.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy is the starting point for developing a meaningful three year strategy that sets out the strategic intention for different strands of funding available to the Council (Hub Committee 19th September 2023).
- 6.2 The Council's budget is essentially fixed in cash terms and its ability to raise income is limited as there are national controls in place around council tax and business rates.
- 6.3 The Council will continue to assess various options for closing the budget gap for 2025/26 onwards, and in the longer term, to achieve long term financial sustainability and further reports will be presented to Members.
- 6.4 On 5th December 2023, the Audit and Governance Committee considered an interim Auditor's Annual Report from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton. This gave commentary on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. It also gave commentary on financial sustainability.
- 6.5 Under the category of 'Financial sustainability', the report stated: that 'West Devon Borough Council (the Council) continues to perform well with regard to financial sustainability, with a record of stable financial and budgetary management. Despite the challenging environment in which it continued to operate in during 2021/22 and 2022/23, the Council has achieved a balanced budget. Our work has not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements to secure financial stability.'

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>The Hub Committee is responsible for recommending to Council the budgetary framework. It is the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the Budget proposals being proposed by the Council on an annual basis. In accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules, Council must decide the general level of Reserves and the use of Earmarked Reserves.</p> <p>The preparation of the Budget report is evidence of whether the Council has considered and taken into account all relevant information and proper advice when determining its financial arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements, and in particular, that it will set a lawful budget.</p>

		<p>Appendix F to this report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and is therefore exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>The public interest in whether the information should be made public has been assessed and it is considered that the public interest will be better served by not disclosing the information.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		<p>The report sets out proposals for the Council to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25, as shown in Appendix B. The Council is currently forecasting a £372,943 budget gap by the following year, 2025/26. The cumulative aggregated Budget Gap by 2026/27 is £1.62million, if no action has been taken in each individual year to close the budget gap annually.</p> <p>On 5th December 2023, the Audit and Governance Committee considered an interim Auditor's Annual Report from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton. This gave commentary on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.</p> <p>The report stated that 'The Council has demonstrated an appropriate understanding of its role in securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Our work has not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements.'</p>
Risk		Each of the budget options taken forward by Members will consider the risks of the option.
Supporting Council Plan		<p>The Council Plan 2024-2028 and the Year 1 (2024/25) delivery plan is also an item on this Council agenda. The Council Plan and delivery plans have been refined following a seven-week consultation and engagement period with the public and partners.</p> <p>The delivery of the Council Plan represents an overall financial commitment of £17,301,887 for 2024/25, with £16,914,387 financed from existing resources and allocations of government grants (such as UK Shared Prosperity Funding) and £387,500 of new monies allocated from the £1.134million set out in 4.4 of the Council Plan report on the Council agenda for 20.2.24.</p>

Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		<p>A report was presented to Council on 8th December 2020 'Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan update'.</p> <p>The Council Plan sets out our primary commitments to tackling climate change and increasing biodiversity as part of the Natural Environment theme.</p> <p>The investment in the Natural Environment Theme is shown in 4.2 of the Council Plan report (which is also an item on this Council agenda).</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Consultation and Engagement Strategy		<p>External consultation and engagement has not been undertaken with regard to this report.</p> <p>The Council Plan and delivery plans have been refined following a seven-week consultation and engagement period with the public and partners.</p>
Equality and Diversity		Equality Impact Assessments are completed for the budget proposals.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None directly arising from this report.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A – Budget pressures and savings;

Appendix B – Modelling of the Budget Position;

Appendix C – Schedule of Reserves for 2023-24 and 2024-25

Appendix D – Contribution to/from Earmarked Reserves

Appendix E – Proposals for the Capital Programme 2024-25

EXEMPT Appendix F – Current Capital Programme for 2023-24

Appendix G – Sensitivity analysis and risk analysis 2024-25

Appendix H – Reserves Strategy

Appendix I – Hub Committee Budget report – 30th January 2024

Appendix J – Draft Budget Book 2024-25

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WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

BUDGET PRESSURES

	BASE 2023/24 £	Yr 1 2024/25 £	Yr 2 2025/26 £	Yr 3 2026/27 £
Waste collection, recycling and cleansing contract inflation (estimate) - assume 7.5% 2023/24 onwards (23/24 also includes some extra inflation provision from 22/23)	345,000	245,000	245,000	245,000
Waste collection, recycling and cleansing contract - Council 19 July 2022	400,000	0	0	0
Waste collection, recycling and cleansing - additional properties	50,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Triennial Pension revaluation (increase in Pension Employer primary rate contributions)	50,000	0	0	75,000
Inflation on goods and services	150,000	150,000	180,000	180,000
Salaries - provision for pay award at 4% (£216,000) for 2024/25 (total pay of £5.4m), reducing to 3% in 25/26 and 26/27	0	216,000	170,000	170,000
Salaries - 22/23 award of £1,925 per Scale point has been modelled (an extra £210,000 on top of the 2% provided for)	360,000	0	0	0
Pay award 2023-24 - Initial figures of £1,925 per Scale Point or a 3.88% increase for Scale Point 44 upwards. (£147,000 is the amount over the current budget provision). This will need to be built into the Base Budget in 2024-25.	0	147,000	0	0
Increase in salaries - increments and pay and grading	175,000	75,000	75,000	75,000
IT inflationary cost pressures - increases in prices	0	110,000	0	0
Flooding - recent events have highlighted the need to add a cost pressure for dealing with the impacts of climate change, such as flooding, on our communities	0	50,000	0	0
Business continuity and cyber security	0	75,000	0	0
Extra insurance costs	0	30,000	0	0
Reduction in car parking income - Income targets were reduced in 2023/24 - There is a report to the Hub Committee in November 2023 on fees and charges for car parking - This is shown in the savings section further down.	150,000	0	0	0
Increase in external audit fees	60,000	30,000	0	0
Housing Delivery Team - Hub Committee 7th June 2022	29,800	0	0	0
Head of Revenues and Benefits - Hub Committee 12th April 2022	30,000	0	0	0
The Planning Improvement Plan, Hub Committee 7 June 2022, noted that the cost of the restructure, £33K per annum, will be funded for the first three years from the additional planning income held in the planning earmarked reserve.	33,000	0	0	0
A Plan for West Devon - Council 28.9.21 - £122,000 cost pressure for 22/23 and £168,000 for 2023/24 (Base Budget of £168,000 in 2024/25 onwards)	46,000	0	0	0
Reduction in Housing Benefit administration subsidy	10,000	10,000	0	0
National Insurance and National Living Wage (NLW increases)	40,000	30,000	20,000	20,000
Revenue expenditure for Year 1 delivery plan of the Council Plan (2024/25)	0	337,500	(337,500)	0
TOTAL IDENTIFIED BUDGET PRESSURES	1,928,800	1,605,500	452,500	865,000

WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contribution to Earmarked Reserves

(This line shows the annual contributions into the Reserve)

Contribution from Earmarked Reserves to fund the revenue expenditure within the Year 1 Delivery Plan of the Council Plan (2024/25)

	BASE 2023/24 £	Yr 1 2024/25 £	Yr2 2025/26 £	Yr 3 2026/27 £
Contribution from Earmarked Reserves to fund the revenue expenditure within the Year 1 Delivery Plan of the Council Plan (2024/25)	0	(337,500)	0	0
Contribution to IT Development Reserve (£50K per annum)	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Contribution to Planning Reserve (£25K per annum)	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Contribution to Elections Reserve (20K per annum)	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Contribution to a Joint Local Plan Earmarked Reserve - to commence the JLP review	0	50,000	50,000	50,000
Contribution from the Planning Reserve for the cost of the restructure within the planning service - Hub Committee 7 June 2022 - to be funded for the first three years from the additional planning income held in the planning earmarked reserve	(33,000)	(33,000)	(33,000)	0
Contribution from Business Rates Retention Reserve to smooth the volatility in business rates income from the baseline reset	(150,000)	(70,000)	(70,000)	(70,000)
Contribution from Strategic Change Earmarked Reserve	(32,567)	0	0	0
Contribution to Vehicles Replacement Reserve (£50K per annum) - An increase to £300,000 per annum per year has been built in as a cost pressure. An options report will be brought to Members in early 2024.	50,000	300,000	300,000	300,000
Increase the contribution to the Management, Maintenance and Risk Management Reserve for Investment properties - This increases the contribution from 10% of annual rental income in 23/24 to 15% in 24/25 and 20% for 25/26 onwards.	0	55,000	110,000	110,000

Contribution to Joint Local Plan Earmarked Reserve (staffing costs)	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
Total Contribution to/ (from) Earmarked Reserves	(45,567)	84,500	477,000	510,000

SAVINGS AND INCOME GENERATION IDENTIFIED

	BASE 2023/24 £	Yr 1 2024/25 £	Yr 2 2025/26 £	Yr 3 2026/27 £
Income from Investment properties (£350,000 is in the Base Budget for 2023/24) - periodic upwards rental reviews on investment properties	50,000	0	0	0
Management fee income from external contracts such as leisure - Council 15 February 2022	45,500	0	0	200,000
IT FIT Project - software savings	10,000	0	0	0
Establishment savings (salary savings) gained from IT and digital communications	50,000	0	0	0
Extra recycling income - this income has already been achieved in 2021-22 (Base budget of £515,000 in 2023-24)	190,000	0	0	0
Extra trade waste income (Base budget of £45,000 in 2023-24)	30,000	0	0	0
Extra treasury management income to reflect increases in the Bank Base rate (Base Budget of £400,000 in 2023-24)	375,000	400,000	(200,000)	0
Car parking income (Hub Committee report 21st November 2023 - inflationary increases since March 2021)	0	150,000	0	0
Vacancy saving target on salaries - equates to around 1.5% of salaries (total pay of £5.4m)	0	80,000	0	0
Extra garden waste income from an increased customer base and an inflationary increase in the annual subscription amount (Base budget of £305,000 in 2023-24)	60,000	55,000	0	0
Environmental Health fees and charges - inflationary increases	0	20,000	0	0
Savings on staff and Member travel and expenses	30,000	0	0	0
Housing Benefit overpayments	40,000	0	0	0
Additional Employments estates income (Base budget of £427,000 in 2023-24)	50,000	0	0	0
Funding from Homelessness prevention government grant (this funds housing posts - funding to be reflected within the base budget)	180,000	0	0	0
TOTAL SAVINGS AND INCOME GENERATION	1,110,500	705,000	(200,000)	200,000

Memorandum note on Planning Fee Income

The Government has confirmed that a 35% increase for major applications and 25% for all other applications will apply from 6th December 2023. This is expected to generate around £60,000 to £70,000 of additional planning income. In 2022-23, the Council experienced a shortfall in planning income of £185,000 (39%) against the budgeted income target of £473,000. Therefore no additional income has been built into the base budget for 2024/25.

	BASE 2023/24 £	Yr 1 2024/25 £	Yr 2 2025/26 £	Yr 3 2026/27 £
Second Homes 200% council tax - Projected Income and Expenditure				
Discretion to charge up to an extra 100% extra council tax on Second Homes (timescale is that legislation has been introduced for 25-26). There is a separate report on the Council agenda of 20 February 2024 regarding this. The estimated additional yield from council tax would be £1.6m, of which the Council's share would be approximately £0.17m (11%).		0	(170,000)	(170,000)
Expenditure: The Council is experiencing additional temporary accommodation costs		150,000	150,000	150,000
This has been identified in the latest Budget Monitoring report (30.1.2024) as being an on-going cost pressure. Significant increases are anticipated in the expenditure on temporary accommodation over and above what is claimable back through DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) subsidy. This is reflective of the national picture.				

Modelling assumptions: Assumes Council Tax is increased by 2.99% annually				
Line	BASE	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3
No.	2023/24 £	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £
Modelling for the financial years 2023/24 onwards				
1	7,769,695	8,587,995	9,488,495	9,768,052
2	1,928,800	1,605,500	452,500	865,000
3	(1,110,500)	(705,000)	200,000	(200,000)
4	8,587,995	9,488,495	10,140,995	10,433,052
<u>Funded By:-</u>				
5	5,391,371	5,627,384	5,876,433	6,135,259
Council Tax income - Modelling a 2.99% increase in council tax each year (Taxbase 24/25 = 21,512.23 Band D Equivalent properties)				
6	377,000	151,000	150,000	150,000
Collection Fund Surplus				
7	1,761,000	2,322,565	2,420,000	2,550,000
Localised Business Rates (estimate of business rates resources received in the year)				
8	0	135,000	150,000	160,000
Increase in Revenues in year collection and recovery (Revenues and Benefits Review)				
9	0	0	0	(117,000)
Business Rates Tariff/Top Up Adjustment amount (Negative Revenue Support Grant change to baseline need assumed to start in 2026/27)				
10	89,000	94,416	100,000	0
Revenue Support Grant				
11	200,000	200,000	200,000	0
Business Rates Pooling Gain				
12	544,625	630,619	630,619	630,619
Funding from Rural Services Delivery Grant				
13	51,044	91,325	398,000	0
Funding from Funding Guarantee (4% increase in Core Spending Power) - this was a new grant for 23/24 onwards. Assume discontinued when the Fair Funding Review is implemented in 26-27.				
14	(88,262)	0	0	0
Less grants rolled into the Funding Guarantee amount				
15	0	0	0	250,000
Transitional funding - assume the introduction of the business rates baseline reset and the Fair Funding Review will translate into some transitional funding being available to Councils				
16	150,000	309,180	310,000	310,000
Funding from New Homes Bonus (or a replacement scheme)				
17	66,650	11,506	10,000	0
Funding from New Services Grant				
18	45,567	(84,500)	(477,000)	(510,000)
Less: Contribution to Earmarked Reserves				
19	8,587,995	9,488,495	9,768,052	9,558,878
Total Projected Funding Sources				
20	0	0	372,943	874,174
Budget gap per year (Projected Expenditure line 4 - Projected Funding line 19)				
Actual Predicted Cumulative Budget Gap				
	0	0	372,943	1,247,117
Aggregated Budget Gap (if no action is taken in each individual year to close the budget gap annually)				
	0	0	372,943	1,620,060

Modelling Assumptions: (Assumes an increase in Band D Equivalent properties of 300 per annum)				
Council Tax (Band D) (an increase of 2.99% per annum has been modelled)				
	254.00	261.59	269.41	277.46
Council TaxBase	21,225.87	21,512.23	21,812.23	22,112.23

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RESERVES - PROJECTED BALANCES									APPENDIX C
	Cost Centre Code	Opening balance 01.04.2023 £000's	Additions to Reserve 2023/24 £000's	Predicted Spend 2023/24 £000's	Closing balance 31.03.2024 £000's	Additions to Reserve 2024/25 £000's	Predicted Spend 2024/25 £000's	Closing balance 31.03.2025 £000's	
EARMARKED RESERVES									
Specific Reserves - General Fund									
Earmarked Reserves which are essential for operational core service delivery (for example programmed renewal and replacement of plant and equipment)									
Business Rates Retention Reserve (remainder of the reserve needed to manage Business Rates volatility each year)	W0824	(971)	(212)	150	(1,033)		70	(963)	
Car Park Maintenance Reserve	W0833	(534)	0	3	(531)			(531)	
District Elections Reserve	W0903	(61)	(20)	0	(81)	(20)		(101)	
Environmental Health Initiatives Reserve	W0857	(104)	0	17	(87)			(87)	
Grounds Maintenance Reserve	W0901	(99)	0	10	(89)			(89)	
Homelessness Prevention Reserve	W0924	(184)	0	24	(160)		67	(93)	
ICT Development Reserve	W0836	(45)	(50)	79	(16)	(50)		(66)	
Leisure Services Reserve	W0855	(133)	0	133	0			0	
Maintenance Funds Reserve (Employment Estates)	W0927	(436)	0	30	(406)			(406)	
Maintenance, Management and Risk Management Reserve	W0861	(418)	(117)	60	(475)	(165)		(640)	
New Homes Bonus Reserve (Revenue Base Budget Funding)	W0804	(150)	0	150	0			0	
New Homes Bonus Reserve (2)	W0804	(363)	(384)	201	(546)	(449)	449	(546)	
Planning Policy & Major Developments Reserve	W0840	(123)	(25)	67	(81)	(25)	33	(73)	
Joint Local Plan Reserve	W0860	(25)	(25)	0	(50)	(50)		(100)	
Section 106 Technical Support Reserve	W0862	(3)	0	0	(3)			(3)	
Organisational Development Reserve	W0856	(20)	0	11	(9)			(9)	
Vehicle Replacement Reserve	W0931	(376)	(50)	406	(20)	(300)	300	(20)	
Waste & Cleansing Options Review Reserve	W0853	(678)	0	180	(498)		270	(228)	
Tree Maintenance Reserve	W0934	(14)	0	0	(14)			(14)	
Affordable Housing Reserve	W0822	(159)	0	60	(99)		50	(49)	
Tamar Trails Reserve	W0876	(55)	0	35	(20)		20	0	
Total		(4,951)	(883)	1,616	(4,218)	(1,059)	1,259	(4,018)	
Earmarked Reserves which are being used to fund new corporate initiatives and corporate priorities									
Broadband Community Support Reserve	W0932	(50)	0	0	(50)	0	0	(50)	
Business Rates Retention Reserve (2) (Corporate Strategy)	W0824	(104)	0	104	0	0	0	0	
Innovation Fund (Invest to Earn Reserve)	W0850	(376)	0	130	(246)	0	246	0	
Recovery Plan & Corporate Strategy Reserve	W0864	(159)	0	159	0	0	0	0	
Strategic Change (T18) Reserve	W0925	(67)	0	33	(34)	0	0	(34)	
Total		(756)	0	426	(330)	0	246	(84)	
Earmarked Reserves which is Government Grant funding being used for the purposes of the grant determination letter									
Neighbourhood Planning Reserve	W0897	(45)	0	2	(43)	0		(43)	
Revenue Grants Reserve	W0821	(1,303)	0	189	(1,114)	(200)	54	(1,260)	
Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Reserve - Government Grant funding	W0875	(669)	0	497	(172)	0	172	0	
Total		(2,017)	0	688	(1,329)	(200)	226	(1,303)	
Notional Earmarked Reserves which are held for a technical accounting purpose for the Collection Fund (this is not funding available to the Council to spend)									
S.31 Compensation Grant (Business Rates Section 31 Grants for business rates relief)	W0866	(307)	(2,173)	0	(2,480)		0	(2,480)	
Total		(307)	(2,173)	0	(2,480)	0	0	(2,480)	
Earmarked Reserves available for the Council Plan - £337,500 to be spent in 24/25									
COVID-19 Reserve	W0930	(254)	0	0	(254)	0	0	(254)	
Financial Stability Reserve	W0859	(617)	0	0	(617)	0	338	(279)	
Total		(871)	0	0	(871)	0	338	(533)	
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVES		(8,902)	(3,056)	2,730	(9,228)	(1,259)	2,069	(8,418)	
TOTAL UNEARMARKED RESERVES (General Fund Balance)	(General W0950)	(1,569)	(54)	0	(1,623)		0	(1,623)	
TOTAL REVENUE RESERVES (EARMARKED AND UNEARMARKED RESERVES)		(10,471)	(3,110)	2,730	(10,851)	(1,259)	2,069	(10,041)	
Reserves		10,471,000			10,851,000			10,041,000	
Net Revenue Budget		7,769,695			8,587,995			9,488,495	
Reserves as a percentage of Net Revenue Budget		135%			126%			106%	
The main reason the percentage has decreased is due to the net Revenue Budget increasing to £9.5m in 24-25.									
Levels of Reserve are predicted to remain at a constant level of around £10million.									

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ANALYSIS OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO/(FROM) EARMARKED RESERVES

Budget 2023/24			Estimate 2024/25		Estimate 2025/26	
To £	(From) £		To £	(From) £	To £	(From) £
0		Revenue expenditure for the Year 1 Delivery Plan of the Council Plan (2024/25) to be funded by Earmarked Reserves		(337,500)		TBA
	(150,000)	New Homes Bonus (assumes a replacement scheme in 25/26 onwards)		(309,180)		(310,000)
	(150,000)	Business Rates Retention Reserve		(70,000)		(70,000)
	(32,567)	Strategic Change Reserve		0		0
20,000		District Elections	20,000		20,000	
110,000		Contribution to Management, Maintenance and Risk Management Reserve for Investment Properties - This increases the contribution to 15% of annual rental income in 24/25 and 20% for 25/26 onwards	165,000		220,000	
50,000		Vehicles & Plant Renewals and additions	300,000		300,000	
50,000		IT Development Reserve	50,000		50,000	
25,000		Planning Policy and Major Developments	25,000		25,000	
	(33,000)	Planning Policy and Major Developments (to fund salary costs)		(33,000)		(33,000)
0		Joint Local Plan - to commence the JLP process	50,000		50,000	
255,000	(365,567)	TOTALS	610,000	(749,680)	665,000	(413,000)
(110,567)		GRAND TOTAL	(139,680)		252,000	

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Capital Bids for 2024/25					
Priority Criteria					
Statutory Obligations	1	Compliance, H&S, DDA			
	2	Essential to keep Operational Assets open			
Strategic Plan	3	Fit with the Council's Year 1 Delivery Plan for the Council Plan			
Good Asset Management	4	Rationalise service delivery or service improvement			
	5	Generate income, capital value or reduce revenue costs			
Council Theme		Project	Funding Source	Capital Bids for 2024/25 £	Priority code
Built Environment	BE2.3	Delivery of Okehampton Parkway Station and Integrated Transport Hub	Levelling Up funding	13,575,000	2,3,4,5
Housing	H1.1	Work with housing associations and community land trusts to improve the number of affordable, safe and good quality homes delivered for our residents.	New Homes Bonus funding Reserve	50,000	3, 4, 5
Housing	H2.1	Progress plans with the redevelopment of Council owned office space (20 Plymouth Road, Tavistock) for temporary accommodation.	Internal borrowing over a 50 year period of up to £500,000 and £150,000 in housing revenue grants.	650,000	3, 4, 5
Housing	H5.1	Conduct targeted activity to ensure maximum uptake of Home Upgrade Grants facilitated by the Council. Plan to retrofit 55 properties (subject to installer quotes).	Home Upgrade Grant funding (Government Grant)	990,000	3, 4, 5
Health and Wellbeing	HW2.1	Effectively deliver schemes to support independent living (Disabled Facilities Grants) by increasing awareness of funding availability - maximising spend of available budgets. The Better Care funding is passported from DCC to WDBC to administer the scheme.	Better Care Funding (Government Grant)	994,137	1, 3, 4, 5
People and Community	PC2.2	Ensure that developer contributions available through the planning process contribute to enhancements to recreation and leisure schemes within the Borough	S106 funding	120,000	1, 2, 3, 4
SUB-TOTAL OF CAPITAL PROJECTS WITHIN THE COUNCIL PLAN		The total capital expenditure within the Council Plan is £16,379,137 (being £50,000 as shaded being funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve) and £16,329,137 from existing core budgets and grants.		16,379,137	
Waste		Waste Fleet Replacement - annual contribution (already approved as per the Council minute from December 2018) - included here for completeness	Contribution from the Waste Earmarked Reserve	300,000	1,2,3,4,5
IT		Bank reconciliation software - to be utilised by multiple service areas. To renew and upgrade the Councils' bank reconciliation software (This is 50% of the projected cost, which is shared with SHDC).	New Homes Bonus funding from 2024-25	90,000	1,2,3,5
Assets		Annual amount set aside for a provision for the roof at Kilworthy Park	New Homes Bonus funding from 2024-25	50,000	1,2,3,4,5
Total				16,819,137	

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Sensitivity analysis and risk analysis of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – Section 25 assessment

On an annual basis when the Council is agreeing its budget for the next financial year and the council tax level, the S151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) is required to report to Council on the robustness of the estimates made within the Budget Proposals and the adequacy of the proposed level of reserves. This is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2003 (section 25).

1. The budget assumes approximately £5 million of income from fees and charges, recycling and investments. Given the position of the economy there is a risk that income could fall or be less than anticipated. A 5% reduction in income would result in a loss of £250,000.
2. The MTFS relies on proposed savings and income generation over the next 3 years of £705,000. A 5% reduction in this figure would equate to £35,250.
3. The MTFS assumes budget pressures over the next 3 years of £2.92 million. A 5% increase in the budget pressures would equate to £146,000.
4. Council Tax Income has been modelled based on an extra 300 Band D Equivalent properties per annum increase. If this figure were to actually be say 200 properties (i.e. 100 properties less), this would mean that Council Tax Income would be £26,000 less.
5. Council Tax has been modelled in the MTFS to increase by £5 over each of the next three years. For example, for 2024-25 this would equate to a Band D of £261.59 (an increase of £7.59). The additional council tax income this would generate is £163,000. If council tax for 2024/25 were to remain at £254.00, the income from council tax would be overstated by this amount in the MTFS.

6. If Council Tax income collection fell by 1% (collection in 22/23 was 98.34% which was top quartile of all Councils nationally), this would mean a reduction of council tax income of around £56,000. Similarly if Business Rates income collection fell by 1% (collection in 22/23 was 98.95%, which was top quartile of all Councils nationally), this would mean a reduction in business rates income of £25,000.
7. Income from investments has been assumed to increase in line with the expected interest rate forecasts. A 0.25% variation in interest rates on investment income equates to £50,000.

Borrowing Levels

Exempt Appendix G of the Medium Term Financial Strategy from September 2018 gave advice on the borrowing level for the Council (maximum borrowing of £50m) and the Interest payments on the borrowing as a percentage of available Reserves. The table below shows the impact of current interest payable of 2.6% on existing debt of £26.4m and modelling Interest payable at 5% on borrowing headroom (£23.6m) has on this Indicator. Interest payments would equate to 18.8% of the level of reserves if the Council had a total of £50m of borrowing. The current level of borrowing is £26.4m as at 31.3.2024 as shown.

Total Borrowing	Interest repayments	Level of Reserves (£1.6m Unearmarked Reserves and £8.42m Earmarked Reserves) – predicted 31.3.2025 – as per Appendix C	Interest payments as % of available Reserves
£26.4m (current debt level)	£690,000 (at 2.6%)	£10,041,000	18.8%
£23.6m (headroom)	£1,200,000 (at 5%)		
TOTAL £50m	£1,890,000		

8. The capital programme is financed by known capital receipts, government grants, and contributions. Realistic assumptions about these have been made for the future.
9. Known liabilities have been provided for and there are no significant outstanding claims.

CIPFA'S Financial Resilience Index 2023

CIPFA has published a Financial Resilience Index which is a comparative analytical tool that can be used by Chief Financial Officers (S151 Officers) to support good financial management and to provide a common understanding within a Council of its financial position. The index shows a Council's position on a range of measures associated with financial risk. Section 151 Officers can use the index in the annual budget report.

The extracts below show the financial resilience indicators for West Devon Borough Council for 2023, when compared against Nearest Neighbours and Non-Metropolitan Districts. Bars on the left show a higher risk of financial stress for different categories e.g. Gross External Debt, interest payments as a proportion of net revenue expenditure etc. Similarly bars on the right show a lower risk of financial stress for each indicator.

CIPFA Financial Resilience Index 2023 (based on the 2022-23 financial year)



The tables show that when compared against nearest neighbours and non metropolitan districts, West Devon has a lower than median risk around its level of reserves and a very low risk around reserves sustainability and change in reserves. ***The level of reserves for 23-24 and 24-25 have been modelled in Appendix C and reserves are predicted to remain at a constant level of around 10million (between 135% and 106% of the net revenue budgets).***

Interest payable on borrowings and gross external debt are higher than average risk due to the investment properties which the Councils holds. Fees and charges are also higher risk due to the smaller net budget of the Council and the higher proportion of the budget which fees and charges account for. There is a lower risk around the reliance on council tax income to fund the net revenue expenditure and business rates growth above the baseline.

Assumptions within the Budget for 2024/25 onwards

The Hub Committee report of 30 January 2024 (attached in Appendix I) set out the key assumptions within the Budget Proposals for 2024/25 and are as follows:

- The business rates baseline reset will be deferred until 2026/27 at the earliest (with no negative Revenue Support Grant in 2024/25 or 2025/26)
- There will be a phasing in of negative Revenue Support Grant as part of the business rates baseline reset (predicted to be in 2026/27) with a transition period, to avoid Local Authorities losing/gaining too much in one go. The modelling assumes negative RSG of £117,000 in 2026/27. Some of the negative RSG could be offset by growth.
- It is assumed Council Tax limits for District Councils will remain at the higher of 2.99% or £5 for the next three years.
- 2024/25 is another roll over settlement, which will give an amount of £449,180 of New Homes Bonus funding that it is proposed is used to fund the 2024/25 revenue base budget.
- A business rates pooling gain of £200,000 has been modelled for 2024/25 and 2025/26, with no further gains for 2026/27 onwards.
- A council tax surplus of £151,000 for 24/25 has been assumed, with a council tax collection rate of 97.75% built into the 24/25 TaxBase calculation (98.34% was achieved in 2022/23 which was top quartile performance)
- Rural Services Delivery Grant will continue annually at the same level for 24/25 (£630,619)
- A 4% pay increase has been modelled from 2024/25 onwards (4% equates to £216,000 on total pay of £5.4m). The pay assumption has been reduced to 3% in 2025/26 and 2026/27
- It is predicted that bank base rate will remain at 5.25% until September 2024 when it is predicted to reduce to 5%, with a predicted reduction to 4.5% by December 2024 and 4% by March 2025. An income target of £0.8m has been set for 24/25, with a reduced income target of £0.6m for 2025/26.
- It is assumed that New Homes Bonus (or a replacement similar scheme) will continue and this seems reasonable based upon past events and the 4% funding guarantee grant.

Detailed numbers are only available for 2024/25 in the Finance Settlement and there remains significant uncertainties for 2025/26, particularly for District Councils. These include the future of the New Homes Bonus Scheme, which is now simply a one-year retrospective payment. The Fair Funding Review, business rates baseline reset, and other funding reforms now look set to be pushed back to 2026/27 although this has not been confirmed by the Government so the MTFs assumes that these changes could happen in 2026/27. The 2025/26 finance settlement will be the first year of a new spending review period.

The Council has used local government finance modelling tools which are available, to predict the level of resources that the Council will have available for 2025/26 and 2026/27. If significant local government reforms happen in 2026/27, an assumption has been made that a 'damping mechanism' and 'transitional funding' will be introduced alongside those reforms, to ensure any single authority does not lose or gain a significant change in its resources level in one single year. This will smooth in any changes over a longer period.

The Council will continue to assess various options for closing the budget gap for 2025/26 onwards, and in the longer term, to achieve long term financial sustainability and further options will be presented to Members in further budget reports. This will consider ways to reduce the Council's operating costs and generating further income and savings.

Prudent financial management in the past, has meant that the Council was in a relatively healthy position financially before the pandemic hit. The management of risk and promoting financial resilience is a key principle of our budget strategy and this has helped facilitate our response. Key to the authority's financial resilience are our reserves, which are at a prudent level.

Financial metrics

The Office for Local Government has set out financial metrics and these are set out below for 2024-25:-

Unearmarked Reserves as a % of net revenue spend - $\text{£1,623,000} / \text{£9,488,495} = 17.1\%$

Reserves as % of net revenue spend (as shown in Appendix C) – $\text{£10,041,000} / \text{£9,488,495} = 106\%$

Total core spending power per dwelling – $\text{£9,032,000} / 27,087 = \text{£333}$

Debt servicing as a % of core spending power – $\text{£1,377,000} / \text{£9,032,000} = 15.2\%$

Total debt as a % of core spending power - $\text{£26,371,000} / \text{£9,032,000} = 292\%$

The Council has complied with a number of Codes including the Accounting Code of Practice issued by CIPFA annually to guide how the Council produces its statutory Accounts and the Prudential Code which covers our treasury management activities and setting prudential indicators including the level of borrowing. The Council budgets for a prudent level of MRP (Minimum Revenue Provision – capital repayment of debt) in line with guidance. All current borrowing has been taken out longer term and at fixed interest rates (so the Council is not exposed to interest rate risk).

The capital programme is financed for 2024-25 (see Appendix E) using realistic estimates of capital receipts, government grants, prudential borrowing and other funding such as developer contributions (S106 funding). The projects within the current capital programme for 2023/24 are all within their allocated capital budgets (as set out in the Hub Committee report 30 January 2024).

The latest forecast of the revenue budget monitoring report (Hub Committee 30 January 2024) is forecasting a surplus of £54,000 for 2023-24 (0.6% of the total Budget of £8.588 million). This is very close to a break-even position.

Summary & conclusion

Sensitivity analysis and risks are identified above with a potential total adverse revenue effect for 2024/25 of **£751,250**. However, revenue reserves are recommended to be maintained at a minimum level of £900,000, with an operating level of £1.25million. Unearmarked Reserves of £1.623m (March 24) are predicted to be 17.1% of the net revenue spend for 2024/25 of £9.49m.

I therefore confirm the robustness of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals and the adequacy of the level of reserves.

Mrs Lisa Buckle, Corporate Director for Strategic Finance (S151 Officer)

9 February 2024

RESERVES STRATEGY

What are reserves?

CIPFA states that “the aim of the authority’s financial reserves is to provide funding for investment in future activities and to act as a safety net in case of short-term financial challenges.”

What is a reserves strategy?

The Reserves Strategy defines the level and purposes for which the Council holds reserves.

It consists of three key elements:

1. Strategy: what the Council is seeking to achieve through holding reserves;
2. Financial Planning: linking the level of reserves with plans for their use over the period of Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS); and
3. Operational Framework: how the Council determines the level of reserves, manages those reserves and plans for their use in line with best practice and statutory requirements.

How are the level of reserves set?

CIPFA’s Local Authority Accounting Panel states , it is for the Council, on the advice of its Chief Finance Officer, to make its own judgement on the level of reserves set, taking into account all relevant local circumstances. The relevant circumstances will vary between areas.

In assessing the appropriate level of reserves, the Council will ensure that the reserves are not only adequate, but also are necessary. It is worth noting that not all reserves are usable. Some reserves arise out of the interaction of legislation and proper accounting practice. These are termed ‘unusable reserves’ as they cannot be used for any other purpose. They are not considered further as there is no need to set their level and there is no discretion over their creation, purpose or usage.

Types of Reserve

As set out in Appendix C, reserves have been categorised into the following categories:-

- Earmarked Reserves which are essential for operational core service delivery (for example programmed renewal and replacement of plant and equipment)
- Earmarked Reserves which are being used to fund new corporate initiatives and corporate priorities
- Earmarked Reserves which is Government grant funding being used for the purposes of the grant determination letter
- Notional Earmarked Reserves which are held for a technical accounting purpose for the Collection Fund
- Earmarked Reserves held for the Council Plan
- Unearmarked Reserves

Monitoring

The level of all reserves are kept under continuous review by the S151 Officer and are reported to Members through reports on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget monitoring reports to the Hub Committee. The annual accounts are also presented to the Audit and Governance Committee giving a list of Earmarked Reserves and their purpose.

The level of Reserves

The level of reserves for 23-24 and 24-25 have been modelled in Appendix C and reserves are predicted to remain at a constant level of around 10million (between 135% and 106% of the net revenue budgets).

The Office for Local Government has set out financial metrics and these are set out below for 2024-25:-

Unearmarked Reserves as a % of net revenue spend - £1,623,000/ £9,488,495 = 17.1%

Reserves as % of net revenue spend (as shown in Appendix C) – £10,041,000/£9,488,495 = 106%

Sensitivity analysis and risks are identified in Appendix G. These have a potential total adverse revenue effect for 2024/25 of **£751,250**. However, unearmarked revenue reserves are recommended to be maintained at a minimum level of £900,000, with an operating level of £1.25million.

Unearmarked Reserves are currently above this level and are predicted to be £1.623m at 31 March 2024, which equates to 17.1% of the net revenue spend for 2024/25 of £9.49m.

Guiding principles for managing and using Reserves

Our guiding principles for managing and using reserves are:

- The primary purpose is to manage financial risk and promote financial sustainability.

Subject to meeting this requirement we will:

- Maximise the ability to use reserves flexibly to deliver the Council's priorities;
- Control the amount of resources held in reserves; and
- The planned use of reserves will be agreed as part of the annual budget setting and medium term financial planning process and through any reports to Members mid-year.

- All reserves will be subject to an annual review to ensure the reason for holding the reserve and the plans for their use aligns with the MTFs and this strategy. This took place in November 2023 (Hub Committee report 21.11.23)
- There was a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda of 21st November 2023, regarding a fundamental review of Earmarked Reserves and the Capital Programme. This report identified £0.871m of Earmarked Reserves which are available to support the delivery of the Council Plan and £0.263m of capital resources. These are one-off amounts, so £1.134million in total. This was subsequently approved at Council on 19 December 2023 (Minute HC 29/23).
- Reserves are reported as part of budget monitoring reports on each reserve

Use of Reserves

The maintenance and use of reserves play a key role in long-term financial sustainability. The funding the Council has in reserves is proportionate to the risks and uncertainties the Council faces, promotes financial resilience and is actively managed to identify where one-off resources can be invested in support of our outcomes and key objectives.

The reserves strategy is part of a suite of supporting strategies that supplement the Council Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Constitution sets out our accountability and governance arrangements around the retention and use of reserves. In doing so, it balances speed of decision-making with Member oversight and accountability for decisions about the effective use of the Council's resources.

Lisa Buckle, S151 Officer

9 February 2024

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Appendix E to this report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **30 January 2024**

Title: **Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2024-25**

Portfolio Area: **Cllr M Ewings – Budget Setting Process**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Lisa Buckle** Role: **Corporate Director for Strategic Finance**

Contact: Email: lisa.buckle@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Hub Committee RESOLVES to RECOMMEND to Council:

- i) To increase Council Tax for 2024/25 by 2.99% (This would increase a Band D council tax for 24/25 from £254.00 to £261.59 – an increase of £7.59 per year or under 15pence per week);**
- ii) The financial pressures shown in Appendix A of £1,655,500;**
- iii) The savings/additional income of £(705,000) as shown in Appendix A; and**
- iv) The revenue expenditure (£337,500) and capital expenditure (£50,000) for the Year 1 delivery plan of the Council Plan (2024/25), totalling £387,500, as set out in section 3.30 of the report.**
- v) The net contributions to/(from) Earmarked Reserves of £(45,500) as shown in Appendix A, including using £150,000 from the Business Rates Retention Earmarked Reserve as set out in 3.14 of the report;**

- vi) The proposed use of £309,180 of New Homes Bonus funding to fund the 2024/25 Revenue Budget as set out in 3.20 of the report.**
- vii) The proposed two capital bids (total of £140,000) set out in 8.4 and the proposal to finance these from New Homes Bonus funding.**
- viii) That Unearmarked Reserves should continue to have a minimum level of £900,000 (as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in September 2023), but an operating level of a minimum of £1.25million.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is based on a financial forecast over a rolling three-year period to 2026/27. The Hub Committee considered the MTFS at its meeting on 19 September 2023.
- 1.2 The Council, along with other local authorities, has faced unprecedented reductions in Government funding. Between 2009/10 and 2020/21, the Council's Core Government funding has reduced by £3 million. The Council now receives minimal Government Grant (Revenue Support Grant) of £94,416 in 2024/25 to fund its services and the Council must be self-sufficient.
- 1.3 The Council has continued to work in partnership with South Hams District Council which has allowed West Devon to achieve annual savings of £2.2 million and more importantly protect all statutory front line services. Between both Councils the annual shared services savings being achieved are over £6 million per annum. However, the Councils continue to face considerable financial challenges because of uncertainty in the wider economy and constraints on public sector spending.
- 1.4 It is important to note that the MTFS set out the budget strategy for the Council for the next three years, with regular reviews (at least annually) and updates when items are further known or are announced by the Government. Prudent financial management in the past, has meant that the Council was in a relatively healthy position financially before the pandemic hit. The management of risk and promoting financial resilience is a key principle of our budget strategy and this has helped facilitate our response. Key to the Council's financial resilience is its reserves, which are at a prudent level.
- 1.5 The Fair Funding Review, business rates baseline reset, and other funding reforms now look set to be pushed back to 2026/27 although this has not been confirmed by the Government so the MTFS and Budget Proposals for 2024/25 assumes that these changes will happen in 2026/27.

1.6 The key assumptions within the Budget Proposals for 2024/25 are as below. Each of these is described in more detail in Section 3.

- The business rates baseline reset will be deferred until 2026/27 at the earliest (with no negative Revenue Support Grant in 2024/25 or 2025/26)
- There will be a phasing in of negative Revenue Support Grant as part of the business rates baseline reset (predicted to be in 2026/27) with a transition period, to avoid Local Authorities losing/gaining too much in one go. The modelling assumes negative RSG of £117,000 in 2026/27.
- It is assumed Council Tax limits for District Councils will remain at the higher of 2.99% or £5 for the next three years.
- 2024/25 is another roll over settlement, which will give an amount of £309,180 of New Homes Bonus funding that it is proposed is used to fund the 2024/25 revenue base budget (see 3.20).
- A business rates pooling gain of £200,000 has been modelled for 2024/25 and 2025/26, with no further gains for 2026/27 onwards.
- A council tax surplus of £151,000 for 24/25 has been assumed, with a council tax collection rate of 97.75% built into the 24/25 TaxBase calculation (98.34% was achieved in 2022/23 which was in the top quartile nationally)
- Rural Services Delivery Grant will continue annually at the same level for 24/25 (£544,625)
- A 4% pay increase has been modelled from 2024/25 onwards (4% equates to £216,000 on total pay of £5.4m). The pay assumption has been reduced to 3% in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

1.7 The report sets out proposals for the Council to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25, as shown in **Appendix B**. The Council is currently forecasting a £418,937 budget gap by the following year, 2025/26. The cumulative aggregated Budget Gap by 2026/27 is £1.7 million, if no action has been taken in each individual year to close the budget gap.

Budget Gaps	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	Total Aggregated Budget Gap £
'New' Budget Gap each year	Nil – Balance budget proposed	418,937	874,174	1,293,111
*Cumulative Budget Gap	Nil – Balance budget proposed	418,937	1,293,111	1,712,048

* (Cumulative Budget Gap assumes annual new budget gaps have not been addressed)

- 1.8 The budget gap for 2025/26 of £418,937 is very much in line with the level expected at this point in the financial planning cycle. In the year after, the budget gap is £0.87million, due to the local government reforms that are expected (see 3.14). These are the reset of the business rates baseline, the fair funding review and the impact of negative RSG (Revenue Support Grant), coupled with the loss of the business rates pooling gain.
- 1.9 Below shows the summary of proposed changes to the Budget report for 2024/25, following the announcement of the Draft Local Government Finance Settlement. Proposals for a balanced budget are shown below:

	£
<i>Budget gap for 24/25 reported in the Hub Committee Budget report on 21st November 2023</i>	142,030
Additional cost pressures identified £80,000	
Cost pressure for business continuity and cyber security (This is 50% of the total cost – SHDC will also pay 50%)	75,000
Stepped increase of another 5% to the contribution to the Maintenance Management and Risk Management Reserve (MMRM Reserve) for Investment properties. This would increase the contribution from 10% of annual rental income of £1.1m to 15% in 24/25 (with an aim to increase it to 20% for 2025/26 financial year). There was a recommendation to review the reserve contribution from the Audit and Governance Committee.	55,000
Reduce the proposed annual contribution into the Vehicles Replacement Reserve from £350K per annum to £300K per annum, with an options report being brought to Members in early 2024.	(50,000)
Changes to Financing of the Base Budget £(32,030)	
Increase the amount of New Homes Bonus used to fund the Base Budget from £300,000 to £309,180 (see section 3.20 of the report)	(9,180)
The 2024/25 Council Tax Base has been calculated at 21,512.23 Band D equivalent properties (which is slightly lower than the estimate at November 23 of 21,525). This difference in the modelling generates slightly less council tax income of £3,568.	3,568
Extra Revenue Support Grant (Actual amount is £94,416 which is £1,416 higher than the previous estimate of £93,000)	(1,416)
More funding from Funding Guarantee (3% increase in Core Spending Power) - Actual amount is £93,067 which is £69,329 higher than the previous estimate of £23,738. This is based on a complicated formula that takes into account other Government grants such as New Homes Bonus (which has increased for 24/25).	(69,329)

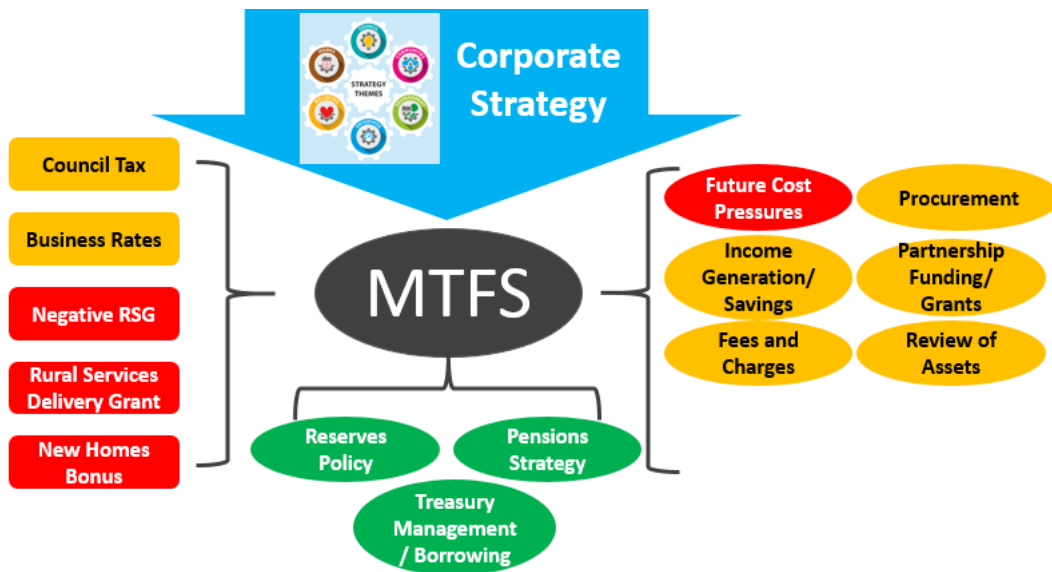
Less funding from Services Grant – Actual amount is £10,488 which is £56,162 less than the previous estimate of £66,650	56,162
Increase the amount of funding from business rates income from £2,316,000 to £2,327,835	(11,835)
Additional income/savings identified (£190,000)	
Introduce a vacancy saving target on salaries – equates to around 1.5% of salaries (total pay of £5.4m)	(80,000)
Increase the income target for income from treasury management investments from an extra £350,000 to an extra £400,000. This would set a base budget of £800,000 income target for 2024-25.	(50,000)
Environmental Health fees and charges – increase in line with inflation	(20,000)
Garden Waste charges – Increase the amount of extra garden waste income from an increased customer base and an inflationary increase in the annual subscription amount.	(30,000)
Reduce the cost pressure for national insurance and national living wage from an extra £40,000 to an extra £30,000 for 2024-25	(10,000)
<i>Revised Budget gap for 2024/25 as set out in this report (as at January 2024) - (A balanced budget position is presented for Members' consideration)</i>	Nil (Balanced Budget)

- 1.10 A meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held on 16th January 2024. The Committee recommended to the Hub Committee the recommendations in this report of i), ii), iii), v), vi) and vii). Recommendations iv), viii) are new recommendations within this report.

2 COMPONENTS OF THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Diagram below sets out all the component parts which constitute the make-up of the MTFs. Items in Green denote those elements where the Council has a large degree of control in the setting of policies and strategies. Items in Amber denote those components of the MTFs where the Council has a degree of control. Red items signal components where the Council has hardly any control over funding allocations which are decided by the Government and future cost pressures which can be outside of the Council's control or influence.

2023/24 Net Budget £8.59 million



- 2.2 The key assumptions within the Budget Proposals are set out in Section 3.

OVERALL POSITION – BUDGET GAP

- 2.3 Financial modelling has been undertaken for the next three years to predict the Council's financial situation for the short and medium term.
- 2.4 **Appendix A** to the Budget report sets out the Budget Pressures forecast for the next three years and the additional savings and income forecast. **Appendix B** illustrates the overall financial forecast for the forthcoming five years. The Council's Net Budget is £8.59 million in 2023/24.
- 2.5 A Summary forecast is shown below of the potential budget situation if all the budget pressures and the savings and income generation in Appendix A were approved. It also shows the situation if the Council Tax is increased by 2.99% per annum (shown in Appendix B).
- 2.6 The report sets out proposals for the Council to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25, as shown in Appendix B. The Council is currently forecasting a £418,937 budget gap by the following year, 2025/26. The cumulative aggregated Budget Gap by 2026/27 is £1.7 million, if no action has been taken in each individual year to close the budget gap annually.

Budget Gaps	2024/25 £	2025/26 £	2026/27 £	Total Aggregated Budget Gap £
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* (Cumulative Budget Gap assumes annual new budget gaps have not been addressed)

- 2.7 The Council will continue to assess various options for closing the budget gap for 2025/26 onwards, and in the longer term, to achieve long term financial sustainability and further reports will be presented to Members.

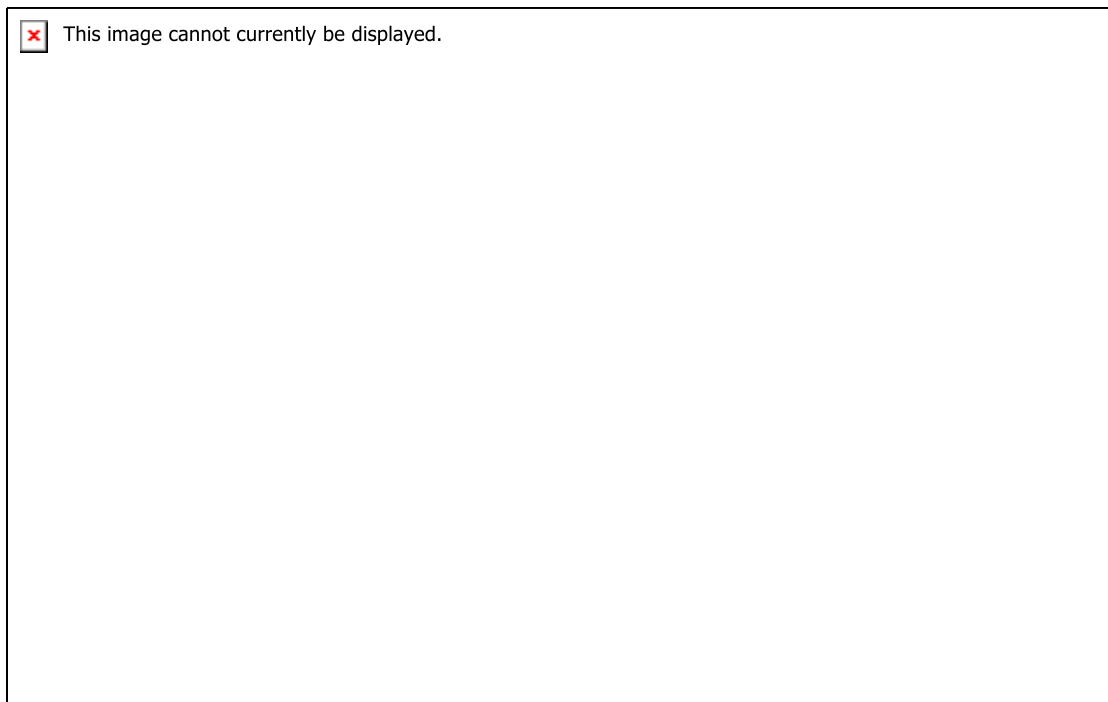
3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT FOR 2024/25

- 3.1 On 18th December 2023, the Government published for statutory consultation, the provisional local government finance settlement for 2024/25. This followed a policy statement published on 5th December.
- 3.2 The provisional settlement is once again a holding position, designed for stability and certainty for planning purposes for 2024/25. The broad approach is based on a uniform roll-over of the core elements of the settlement. No announcements were made regarding funding reform and this has been deferred.
- 3.3 Detailed numbers are only available for 2024/25 in the Finance Settlement and there remains significant uncertainties for 2025/26, particularly for District Councils. These include the future of the New Homes Bonus Scheme, which is now simply a one-year retrospective payment.
- 3.4 The 'Core Spending Power' is a headline figure used by the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to represent the key revenue resources available to local authorities, including an estimate of actual and potential council tax, as below. The Council now receives minimal Government grant (Revenue Support Grant of £94,416 for 2024/25 (see 1.2).

3.5 **Core Spending Power for West Devon (which is a measure of how much extra funding a Council has received for next year) increased by 4.9% for 2024/25 from £8.527m to £8.947m as shown below.**

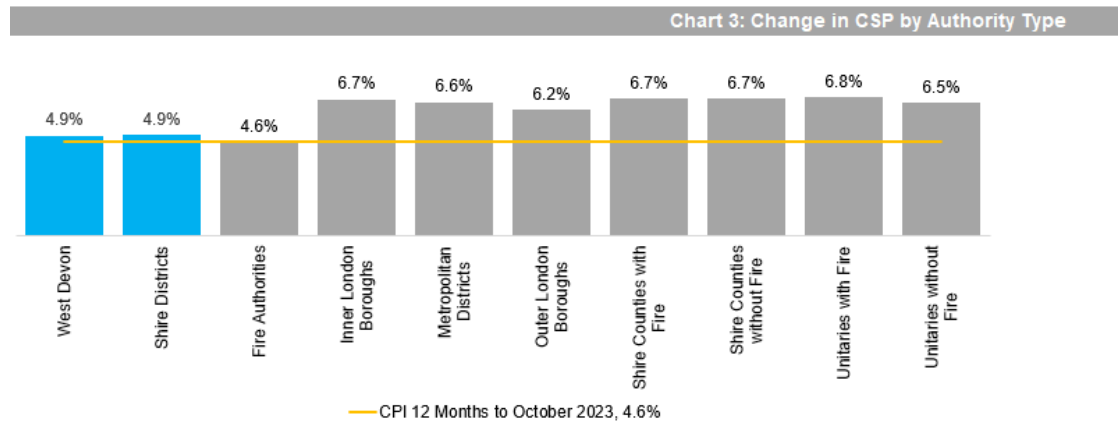
3.6 Core Spending Power (CSP) is the term the Government use to say how much money Councils have to run their services. CSP includes Business rates, Council Tax, NHB and the various different Grants. On average nationally Core Spending Power is increasing by 6.5% for 2024/25. The average for Shire Districts is a Core Spending Power increase of 4.9%. Shire Counties are increasing by 6.7% in their CSP. A large part of the increase in CSP is an assumed increase in Council Tax, which the Government build into the CSP calculation, as shown below.

Table 1 - Core Spending Power (CSP), £m



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Table 2 – Analysis of Core Spending Power % increases by Authority Type



Council Tax

3.7 The Council Tax Referendum limits for District Councils for 2024/25 is the higher of 2.99% or £5. A 2.99% increase is higher for West Devon Borough Council as this equates to an increase of £7.59 on a Band D property.

An increase in council tax of 2.99% for the next three years has been modelled for council tax purposes in the budget report. This would equate to a Band D council tax for the Borough Council of £261.59 in 2024/25 as shown in Appendix B (an increase of £7.59 for the year or under 15 pence per week), which equates to a 2.99% increase. The Council's share of the council tax for 2024/25, will be set at the Council meeting on 20th February 2024.

(A 1% increase in council tax generates £55,000 of extra council tax income). A 2.99% increase in council tax generates extra council tax income of £0.165m.

Council Tax legislation sets out that Council Tax is partly a form of general taxation on a property and partly a tax on the people living in a property. Council Tax funds essential services in an area and the cost of public services is spread across all taxpayers in the same way, regardless of which services residents use or receive. Council Tax is a form of general taxation rather than a service charge.

- 3.8 The table below shows how an average Band D council bill is made up for West Devon Borough Council for 2023/24, compared to 2022/23. Of an average Band D Council Tax within the Borough of £2,346.79, **an amount of £254.00 is the element of a council tax bill set by West Devon Borough Council.** Therefore 11pence of every £1 paid (11%) in council tax is received by West Devon Borough Council to pay for our services. The rest of the council tax bill is set by Devon County Council, the Fire, the Police and Town and Parish Councils to fund the services they provide. In 2023/24, the council tax for an average Band D property in West Devon increased by £116.15 per annum (5.21% as shown below).

Precepting Authority	Band D 2022/23	Band D 2023/24	£ Increase	% Increase
West Devon Borough Council	£246.63	£254.00	£7.37	2.99%
Devon County Council Precept	£1,372.59	£1,419.21	£46.62	4.99%
Adult Social Care Precept *	£183.87	£214.92	£31.05	
Devon & Cornwall Police & Crime Commissioner	£246.56	£261.56	£15.00	6.08%
Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue	£91.79	£96.79	£5.00	5.45%
Average Parishes/Towns	£89.20	£100.31	£11.11	12.46%
TOTAL	£2,230.64	£2,346.79	£116.15	5.21%

Town and Parish Precepts for 2023/24 are shown in Appendix D. The largest Parish Precepts are North Tawton (£203.24), Okehampton Town (£186.42) and Tavistock (£204.72), with the smallest Precept being Gidleigh (£0.00) for a Band D property.

- 3.9 The Council Tax Referendum Limits that will apply for 2024/25 are as follows:
- Shire Districts – 2.99% limit or £5, whichever is the higher
 - Police - £13 referendum limit.
 - Fire – 2.99% limit
 - Upper Tier – 4.99%
 - No referendum limits will be set for Town and Parish Councils for 2024/25

- 3.10 A council tax collection rate of 97.75% has been assumed for 2024/25 within the TaxBase calculation. **The Council collected 98.34% in council tax in 2022/23 which was in the top quartile of all Councils nationally.** It has been assumed that the number of properties within the Borough will increase by 300 per annum from 2024/25 onwards.

Business Rates and Negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

- 3.11 It has been assumed that the Business Rates Reset will be delayed to 2026/27. Whilst this change is not confirmed by the Government, a reset based on the current taxbase would appear very unlikely.
- 3.12 Estimates have been made of the business rates baseline funding levels for 2024/25 onwards and the relative deductions for negative RSG in 2026/27. For example in 2024/25, the £2.4m is the amount the Council is projected to retain from its business rates income collected of around £9 million (this equates to around 27p in every £1 collected of business rates). The 2022/23 collection rate for West Devon for business rates was 98.95%, which was in the top quartile of all Councils nationally. It was announced, as part of the Autumn Statement 2023, that the small business rates multiplier for 2023/24 will remain frozen at 49.9p and there will be an increase to the standard rate multiplier of 6.7% (from 51.2p to 54.6p).
- 3.13 It is recommended to take £150,000 funding from the business rates retention on an annual basis to fund the base budget. This would reduce the business rates retention reserve by £0.45m over the next 3 years to smooth the impact of the business rates baseline reset and the future loss of pooling gains. This reserve is predicted to have more business rates income being set aside into the reserve in 23/24, due to the way that business rates income flows through the collection fund over a period of years.
- 3.14 The Fair Funding Review, business rates baseline reset, and other funding reforms now look set to be pushed back to 2026/27 although this has not been confirmed by the Government so the MTFS assumes that these changes could happen in 2026/27. The 2025/26 finance settlement will be the first year of a new spending review period.

The table below shows the modelling of business rates income over the next three financial years.

Business Rates Income	2024/25 (£m)	2025/26 (£m)	2026/27 (£m)
			Potential Baseline Reset
Business Rates Income	2.402	2.440	2.550
Less: Negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) due to the Baseline reset			(0.117)
Anticipated Pooling Gain (Nil in 26/27 due to the baseline reset)	0.200	0.200	Nil
Funding proposed to be taken from the Business Rates Retention Reserve to smooth the volatility in business rates income	0.150	0.150	0.150
Total Business Rates Income	2.752	2.790	2.583

It is this reduction in Business rates income predicted in 2026/27 which is increasing the budget gap in 2026/27 to £0.874million. A part of the 26/27 budget gap is caused by the predicted drop in business rates income of around £200,000. This is due to the potential business rates baseline reset and the loss of the pooling gain from being in a Devon business rates pool at the same time. It is very uncertain as to when the baseline reset will happen. This has been anticipated for a number of years but the timetable has continually been put back. This modelling assumes it will happen in 2026/27 but there has been no firm timescale announced by the Government.

3.15 The MTFs assumes that the full range of changes from the Fair Funding Review will be implemented based on the proposals in the December 2018 consultation paper, plus the latest population estimates (2022) and the latest council tax data. It is assumed that the business rates baseline reset will happen in 2026/27.

3.16 This means the Council wouldn't have to forego some of its business rates income (£117,000) by paying some of it back to Government in the form of 'negative government grant' in 24/25. Negative RSG is effectively the Council's further predicted funding cuts. The modelling assumes negative RSG of £117,000 in 2026/27. Some of the negative RSG could be offset by growth. The Government consultation paper on the Finance Settlement for 2024/25 states (under para 1.3.1) that: "We are confirming that we have no plans to introduce negative Revenue Support Grant".

Devon Business Rates Pool

3.17 West Devon Borough Council has elected to remain part of the Devon-wide Business Rates Pool for 2024/25. The latest modelling shows that a pooling gain in the region of £9.7million is forecast for 2024/25, with the Council's share of the pooling gain being in the region of £200,000.

Rural Services Delivery Grant

- 3.18 Rural Services Delivery Grant will continue for 2024/25 at previous levels (WDBC share of £544,625) and the methodology for distribution is assumed to remain unchanged from 2023/24. This is Government grant to recognise the additional cost of delivering services in rural areas.

New Homes Bonus (NHB)

- 3.19 NHB has been 'rolled over' for another year, with no legacy payments being paid. The Council's provisional allocation is **£449,180 for 2024-25** (higher than the amount estimated in the previous budget report of £440,000).
- 3.20 This is based on a property increase of 371 properties. (The amount received is 371 less the baseline of 0.4% (103 properties) at 80% of £2,065 which is an average national council tax). It is proposed that the allocation of NHB for 2024/25 could be used in the way set out below.

NHB Provisional allocation for 2024/25	£449,180
Amount used to fund the 2024/25 revenue base budget	£(309,180)
Funding for capital projects for 2024/25, to set aside an annual provision for the roof at Kilworthy Park and a capital budget for the bank reconciliation software. (see 8.4)	£(140,000)

Other Government Grants

- 3.21 The 'Funding Guarantee' has been continued, which ensures every Authority has at least a 3% increase in Core Spending Power. A Funding Guarantee grant of £93,067 has been announced for 2024-25 for West Devon (this is higher by £69,329 than the previous budget report which estimated £23,738). This is based on a complicated formula that takes into account other Government grants such as New Homes Bonus (which has increased for 24/25).
- 3.22 Revenue Support Grant (RSG) will be £94,416 for 2024/25. The Council now receives minimal main Government Grant in the form of RSG. See 1.2 of the report.

Other Budget Items

- 3.23 The Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 3.9% (November 2023 CPI), which is down from 4.6% in October. Inflation over the past 18 months has been at a 40 year high. An extra £150,000 cost pressure for inflation on goods and services and increases in utility costs has been included within the cost pressures in Appendix A. The previous minutes from the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) state that it is expected that inflation will drop back to 4.8% by the end of 2023, accounted for by lower energy, and to a lesser degree, food and core goods price inflation. At present, there is no indication from Government of any additional funding to meet inflationary cost pressures.
- 3.24 A provision for the 2024/25 pay award has been modelled in the MTF5 at 4% (£216,000), with total pay being £5.4million. This has been reduced to 3% in 2025/26 and 2026/27. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy is not an expression of Council Policy on pay awards, but a means of ensuring an appropriate provision is made as part of the overall financial planning of the Council. The Council is particularly affected by inflation in terms of the Local Government Pay Award as staffing forms a significant proportion of the Council's budget.
- 3.25 The pay award for 2023-24 has now been agreed. This is for £1,925 per Scale Point or a 3.88% increase for Scale Point 44 upwards. This would cost an extra £147,000 and this amount also needs to be built into the Base Budget for 2024-25 as a 'catch up' as the budget for 23/24 has already been set.
- 3.26 The current Bank Base Rate will increase the Council's income from treasury management investments and additional income of £400,000 has been built into the Budget for 2024/25. This would set an income target of £0.8million for 2024/25 for treasury management income and it is proposed to reduce the target to £0.6million for 2025/26. It is predicted that bank base rate will remain at 5.25% until September 2024 when it is predicted to reduce to 5%, with a predicted reduction to 4.5% by December 2024 and 4% by March 2025.
- 3.27 Cost pressures for insurance (£30,000) and IT inflation cost pressures for increases in prices and additional software and security (£110,000) have been built into the Budget Proposals for 2024/25.
- 3.28 A cost pressure of £75,000 has also been built in for business continuity and cyber security.

COUNCIL PLAN

- 3.29 The Council Plan 2024-2028 and the Year 1 (2024/25) delivery plan is also an item on this agenda. Proposals will be recommended to Full Council to adopt 'The Council Plan' and delivery plan at its meeting on 20 February 2024. The Council Plan and delivery plans have been refined following a seven week consultation and engagement period with the public and partners.
- 3.30 The delivery of The Council Plan represents an overall financial commitment of £17,301,887 for 2024/25, with £16,914,387 financed from realignment of existing resources and allocations of government grants (such as UK Shared Prosperity Funding) and £387,500 of new monies from the £1.134m. The allocation against each theme area for the 2024/25 financial year is as follows:

Theme	24/25 Financial Year	
	<i>To be financed from £1.134m identified in 5.1 above (£)</i>	<i>To be financed from existing core budgets (£)</i>
Natural Environment	£87,000	
Built Environment	£100,000	£13,575,000
Housing	£50,000	£1,640,000
Health and Wellbeing	£25,000	£1,004,137
People and Community	£40,500	£120,000
Economy and Jobs	£60,000	£498,750
Performance and Resources	£22,000	£76,500
Inclusive Services and Communication	£3,000	
TOTAL (£17,301,887)	£387,500	£16,914,387

- 3.31 The analysis between Revenue and Capital expenditure is as below:

	<i>To be financed from £1.134m identified in 5.1 above (£)</i>	<i>To be financed from existing core budgets (£)</i>
Revenue expenditure	£337,500	£585,250 (of which £498,750 is UKSPF revenue funding)
Capital expenditure	£50,000	£16,329,137 (of which £15.4 m is Government grant funding)
TOTAL (£17,301,887)	£387,500	£16,914,387

- 3.32 It is recommended that the £337,500 of revenue expenditure is funded from the £0.871m of Earmarked Reserves (as per the Hub report of 21 November 2023) which were identified as being available to support the delivery of the emerging Council Plan. In addition, it is recommended that the £50,000 of capital expenditure is funded from the New Homes Bonus Earmarked Reserve (this is the £0.263m of capital resources identified for The Council Plan).
- 3.33 Once adopted, the strategy will be the Council's overarching strategic document setting out our ambitions and priorities for the Borough.

Climate and Biodiversity

- 3.34 The Council Plan sets out the Council's primary commitments to tackling climate change and increasing biodiversity as part of the Natural Environment theme. The proposed financial commitment and investment for this Theme is set out in 3.30. This will then be recommended to Full Council on 20th February 2024.

Second homeowners council tax premium

- 3.35 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 allows Billing Authorities the discretion to charge second homeowners a council tax premium of 100% (so a second home dwelling would pay double the council tax charge). The Act requires Billing Authorities to have a minimum period of 12 months between making its first determination and the financial year in which it takes effect. That means the earliest that Councils can introduce it is for the start of the 2025-26 financial year, i.e. 1 April 2025. At Council on 21 February 2023, Council approved charging up to an extra 100% council tax in second homes.
- 3.36 Now that the legislation has been passed, it is recommended to Council to adopt a further resolution to charge a council tax premium on second homes from 1 April 2025. This will be a separate report to the Hub Committee in January 2024 and a recommendation to Council in February 2024. The estimated additional yield from council tax would be £1.6m of which the Council's share would be approximately £0.17m (11%) – see Memorandum Note in Appendix A. There are currently 692 properties on our council tax records classified as a second home.
- 3.37 The key impact of second homes is to remove a significant number of homes from the local housing market, with properties that would otherwise be available to provide permanent homes for local people being used as holiday homes by people whose primary residency is outside the Borough. For this reason, the Council believes that the additional money raised by the second homes premium should be invested back into housing. West Devon Borough Council is working with other councils across Devon to make the case that all the additional tax raised should be ringfenced to address housing challenges, including to acquire existing properties to provide temporary accommodation, to

support people with complex needs and the provision of specialist accommodation with supported facilities for care leavers.

- 3.38 There was a separate report on the Hub Committee agenda on 21st November 2023 regarding the long stay car parking pay and display charges review. It must be noted that in the 2023/24 Budget the Council reduced its income target for car parking income by £150k. Therefore, the review of car parking charges as is proposed in this report by an inflationary amount (since March 2021) is taking the Council's car parking income back to pre-pandemic levels and a pre pandemic budget position. It is proposed to increase the long stay car parks tariffs only, ensuring that short stay shopping opportunities are not impacted.

4. Treasury Management and Borrowing Strategy

- 4.1 The Council has previously taken external treasury management advice on the Council's overall borrowing levels and debt levels. The Council set an Upper Limit on External Borrowing (for all Council services) as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy of £50 million in 2019 and it is not proposed to change this limit at present.

- 4.2 In 2022/23 the long-term borrowing of the Council decreased from £27,726,000 (2021/22) to £27,012,000. Short-term borrowing increased from £615,000 to £714,000. This is due to the profiling of the debt repayments where long term borrowing has moved to short term borrowing. Total borrowing as at 31 March 2023 has reduced from £28,341,000 to £27,726,000. No further external borrowing took place during 2022/23.

5 FEES AND CHARGES

- 5.1 As part of the budget process, fees and charges will be reviewed. A delegation is in place to enable service managers to increase fees and charges by inflation where these are not material changes or increases.
- 5.2 DEFRA has confirmed that the implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) will be deferred from October 2024 to October 2025.

6 BUDGET FOR 2025/26 AND TIMESCALES

- 6.1 The Council will continue to assess the options for closing the budget gap for 2024/25 onwards, and in the longer term, to achieve long-term financial sustainability and further options will be presented to Members in further budget reports. This will consider ways to reduce the Council's operating costs and generating further income and savings.

6.2 Making the best use of our resources and setting a balanced budget annually is within the 'Delivering Quality Services' Delivery Plan.

6.3 The revenue budget monitoring report to the Hub Committee on 19th September shows an overall projected deficit of £37,000 for the 2023/24 financial year. This is 0.4% of the overall net budget set of £8.588million and this is very close to a break-even position.

7 Earmarked and Unearmarked Reserves Policy

7.1 Unearmarked Reserves total £1.569 million at 31 March 2023. There was a surplus of £79,000 on the outturn position for 2022/23 (1.0% of the net budget of £7.770m) as shown in the Draft Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 published by the end of June 2023. In accordance with normal accounting practice, this underspend has gone into Unearmarked Reserves.

7.2 At Council on 21 February 2023, Members set a minimum balance for Unearmarked Reserves of £900,000, with an operating level of a minimum of £1.25million (Minute reference CM 66/22). This was based on a risk assessment basis and a sensitivity analysis. Therefore, the current level of Unearmarked Reserves of £1.569million at 31 March 2023 is still above these minimum levels to be held which are set annually. An updated risk assessment and sensitivity analysis will be presented to Council in February 2024.

7.3 Legislation does not prescribe how much the minimum level of reserves should be. The Section 151 Officer is tasked with recommending the minimum level of reserves required as part of the budget setting process having regard to elements of risk in the Council's finances (this was recommended at £900,000 being the minimum level in February 2023, with an operating level of £1.25million). Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Section 151 officer to report on the adequacy of the Council's financial resources on an annual basis.

7.4 **Earmarked Reserves** have reduced by £0.287m in 2022/23 moving from £9.189m on 1 April 2022 to **£8.902m at 31 March 2023 as shown in Appendix C**. This is an extract from the report to the Hub Committee on 21.11.23 on the review of Reserves. See 3.30 of this report which gives further detail.

7.5 Reserve levels will be kept under constant review and will be reviewed throughout the budget setting process to consider commitments against Earmarked Reserves, their unallocated balance, and the contributions to/from Earmarked Reserves for 2024/25 and future years also. This will be further set out in the Budget report to the Hub Committee in January 2024.

- 7.6 The proposed contributions to/from Earmarked Reserves for 2024/25 are shown in Appendix A. It is recommended to make an annual contribution of £50,000 to a JLP reserve, to commence the JLP review and to also commence making a £300,000 annual contribution to the vehicle replacement reserve for the future replacement of the waste fleet. An options report on waste vehicles will be presented to Members in 2024.
- 7.7 The Council currently puts 10% of its annual income from investment properties into a Management, Maintenance and Risk Earmarked Reserve. It is recommended to have a stepped increase of another 5% to the contribution to the Maintenance Management and Risk Management Reserve (MMRM Reserve) for Investment properties. This would increase the contribution from 10% of annual rental income of £1.1m to 15% in 24/25 (with an aim to increase it to 20% for 2025/26 financial year). There was a recommendation to review the reserve contribution from the Audit and Governance Committee. Increasing the contribution from 10% to 15% would be an extra annual cost of £55,000 per annum.
- 7.8 The provision of an appropriate level of balances is a fundamental part of prudent financial management, enabling the Council to build up funds to meet known and potential financial commitments.
- 7.9 As highlighted above there is a high degree of uncertainty about future levels of funding for local government. However, the Section 151 Officer is keeping a close watch on developments and planning for this longer-term uncertainty.

8 CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND PRUDENTIAL BORROWING

- 8.1 The Capital Programme is set by the Council and may be funded by sale proceeds from the disposal of assets (capital receipts), external grants and contributions, directly from revenue or from borrowing.
- 8.2 Capital projects will be scored on the following criteria:
- Health and Safety compliance
 - Essential to keep operational assets open
 - Fit with the Council's Delivery Plans for the new emerging Council Plan
 - To rationalise service delivery or service improvement
 - To generate income, capital value or to reduce revenue costs
- 8.3 It is important that capital bids are aligned with the emerging Council Plan. There is a recommendation within the Council Plan report that £50,000 of capital expenditure is funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve (this is the £0.263m of capital resources identified for the Council Plan).

8.4 In addition there are two capital bids for 2024/25 (total of £140,000) that it is recommended form part of the Capital Budget Proposals for 2024/25 and be funded from New Homes Bonus funding. These are as below: -

- £90,000 – to renew and upgrade the Councils’ bank reconciliation software (This is 50% of the projected cost, which is shared with SHDC)
- £50,000 – Annual amount set aside for a provision for the roof at Kilworthy Park

This will be a recommendation as part of the Budget Proposals report to Council in February 2024.

8.5 Appendix E sets out the Council’s current capital programme for 2023/24 and new capital projects for 2024/25 will be added to the existing Capital Programme. ***The Capital Budget Proposals for 2024/25 will be set out within the Council report on 20th February and will include the capital budget proposals within the Council Plan (£50,000) being recommended to Council.***

8.6 The Council’s Asset Base is £38.3 million at 31 March 2023. The Council will continually review and challenge its asset base in order to deliver the optimum value for money from the Council’s Assets.

9 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND TIMESCALES

9.1 The MTFs is the starting point for developing a meaningful three year strategy that sets out the strategic intention for different strands of funding available to the Council (Hub Committee 19th September 2023).

9.2 The Council’s budget is essentially fixed in cash terms and its ability to raise income is limited as there are national controls in place around council tax and business rates.

9.3 The Council will continue to assess various options for closing the budget gap for 2025/26 onwards, and in the longer term, to achieve long term financial sustainability and further reports will be presented to Members.

9.4 On 5th December 2023, the Audit and Governance Committee considered an interim Auditor’s Annual Report from the Council’s external auditors, Grant Thornton. This gave commentary on the Council’s arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (see Section 10 of this report). It also gave commentary on financial sustainability.

- 9.5 Under the category of 'Financial sustainability', the report stated: that 'West Devon Borough Council (the Council) continues to perform well with regard to financial sustainability, with a record of stable financial and budgetary management. Despite the challenging environment in which it continued to operate in during 2021/22 and 2022/23, the Council has maintained a good financial position and achieved a balanced budget. Our work has not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements to secure financial stability.'
- 9.6 An All Member Briefing on the Draft Budget Proposals for 2024/25 will take place on **Wednesday 10th January 2024**.
- 9.7 The table below shows the budget timetable for the 2024/25 Budget process.

19 th September 2023	Hub Committee – To consider the three-year MTFs (Medium Term Financial Strategy) for 2024/25 to 2026/27
21 st November 2023	Hub Committee – To consider draft proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budget for 2024/25.
Wednesday 10 th January 2024 (4pm)	All Member Briefing on the Budget Proposals for 2024/25
16 th January 2024	Overview & Scrutiny Committee - To consider draft proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budget for 2024/25.
30 th January 2024	Hub Committee – To recommend Final Budget Proposals to Council for 2024/25
15th February 2024 (9am)	Date which Council Procedure Rule 16 applies
20 th February 2024	Full Council – To approve Final Budget Proposals for 2024/25 and set the WDBC share of the Council Tax
22 February 2024	Council Tax Setting Panel – to agree the Council Tax Resolution for 2024/25 (This is WDBC share plus all other precepting authorities share).

Note 1- Council Procedure Rule 16 states that 'Where a member intends to move a motion or amendment in relation to the Budget, the text of that motion or amendment must be put in writing and submitted to the Head of Paid Service by 9am on the third working day before the meeting, in order that officers may have sufficient time to consider and advise the Council of the financial implications of any such motion or amendment'. As per the timetable above, this would need to be submitted by 9am on Thursday 15 February 2024.

10. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>The Hub Committee is responsible for recommending to Council the budgetary framework. It is the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the Budget proposals being proposed by the Council on an annual basis. In accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules, Council must decide the general level of Reserves and the use of Earmarked Reserves.</p> <p>The preparation of the Budget report is evidence of whether the Council has considered all relevant information and proper advice when determining its financial arrangements in accordance with statutory requirements, and, that it will set a lawful budget.</p> <p>Appendix E to this report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and is therefore exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>The public interest in whether the information should be made public has been assessed and it is considered that the public interest will be better served by not disclosing the information.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		<p>The report sets out proposals for the Council to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25, as shown in Appendix B. The Council is currently forecasting a £418,937 budget gap by the following year, 2025/26. The cumulative aggregated Budget Gap by 2026/27 is £1.7million, if no action has been taken in each individual year to close the budget gap annually.</p> <p>On 5 December 2023, the Audit and Governance Committee considered an interim Auditor's Annual Report from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton. This gave commentary on the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.</p>

		The report stated that ‘The Council has demonstrated a good understanding of its role in securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Our work has not identified any significant weaknesses in arrangements.’
Risk		Each of the budget options taken forward by Members will consider the risks of the option.
Council Plan		At the Hub Committee meeting on 30 January 2024, the Hub Committee will consider the Council Plan and the Year 1 (2024/25) delivery plan. Once adopted, the Council Plan will be the Council’s overarching strategic document setting out our ambitions and priorities for the Borough.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		A report was presented to Council on 8 th December 2020 ‘Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan update’. In March 2021, Council approved to set up an Earmarked Reserve for £200,000 for the Recovery Plan and Corporate Strategy. The proposed financial commitment and investment for this Theme will be set out in the report to the Hub Committee on 30 th January 2024. This will then be recommended to Full Council on 20 th February 2024.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Consultation and Engagement Strategy		External consultation and engagement have not been undertaken regarding this report. The Council Plan and delivery plans have been refined following a seven-week consultation and engagement period with the public and partners.
Equality and Diversity		Equality Impact Assessments are completed for the budget proposals.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None directly arising from this report.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A – Budget pressures and savings

Appendix B – Modelling of the Budget Position

Appendix C – Schedule of Earmarked Reserves – Extract of the Hub Committee report of 21st November 2023.

Appendix D – Town and Parish Precepts for 2023/24

EXEMPT Appendix E – Current Capital Programme for 2023/24

Service Group	SLT Director	(1)	(2)	(1)+(2)= 2a	(3)	(4)	(5)	(2a)+(3)+(4)+(5)	
		23/24 Base Net Budget £'s	23/24 Virements £'s	23/24 Revised Net Budget £'s	24/25 Pressures/ (Savings) £'s	24/25 Budget Preparation Virements £'s	24/25 Salary Estimate Virements £'s	24/25 Final Base Budget £'s	
a)	Customer Service & Delivery	Steve Mullineaux	5,568,506	0	5,568,506	679,750	0	114,500	6,362,756
b)	Place & Enterprise	Chris Brook	126,510	0	126,510	95,650	0	68,700	290,860
c)	Governance & Assurance	Drew Powell	1,284,282	0	1,284,282	400,000	0	103,000	1,787,282
d)	Strategic Finance	Lisa Buckle	2,162,885	0	2,162,885	(274,900)	0	(286,200)	1,601,785
Total			9,142,183	0	9,142,183	900,500	0	0	10,042,683
Reversal of Depreciation			(554,188)						(554,188)
Net Budget Total			8,587,995						9,488,495
Funded by:									
Localised Business Rates			1,761,000						2,322,565
Business Rates Pooling Gain			200,000						200,000
New Homes Bonus			150,000						309,180
Council Tax (an increase of 2.99% in 24/25)			5,391,371						5,627,384
Collection Fund Surplus			377,000						151,000
Increase in Revenues in year collection and recovery (Revenues and Benefits Review)			0						135,000
Rural Services Delivery Grant			544,625						630,619
Services Grant			66,650						11,506
Revenue Support Grant			89,000						94,416
Funding Guarantee Grant			51,044						91,325
Less grants rolled into the Funding Guarantee amount			(88,262)						0
Contributions (to)/from Earmarked Reserves			45,567						(84,500)
Total			8,587,995						9,488,495

a)	Customer Service & Delivery	Budget Manager	(1)	(2)	(1)+(2)= 2a	(3)	(4)	(5)	(2a)+(3)+(4)+(5)
			23/24 Base Net Budget £'s	23/24 Virements £'s	23/24 Revised Net Budget £'s	24/25 Pressures/ (Savings) £'s	24/25 Budget Preparation Virements £'s	24/25 Salary Estimate Virements £'s	24/25 Final Base Budget £'s
W1001	Operations Team Leader	Sarah Moody	50,600	0	50,600	4,900	0	300	55,800
W1010	Customer Contact Centre Salaries	Jim Davis	191,900	0	191,900	8,700	0	(25,100)	175,500
W1013	Localities Team Salaries	Stuart Noyce	285,600	0	285,600	23,600	0	(67,300)	241,900
W1304	Grounds Maintenance	Stuart Noyce	116,227	0	116,227	5,800	0	200	122,227
W1309	Tree Maintenance	Stuart Noyce	20,000	0	20,000	0	0	0	20,000
W1565	Housing Benefit Payments	Geni Hotchkiss	145,953	0	145,953	0	0	0	145,953
W1568	Housing Benefit Administration	Geni Hotchkiss	(100,800)	0	(100,800)	10,000	0	0	(90,800)
W1571	Council Tax Collection	Geni Hotchkiss	(201,694)	0	(201,694)	0	0	0	(201,694)
W1574	Council Tax Support	Geni Hotchkiss	(56,000)	0	(56,000)	0	0	0	(56,000)
W1988	ICT Team Salaries	Mike Ward	332,179	0	332,179	9,500	0	33,400	375,079
W1989	Waste & Cleansing Team Salaries	Sarah Moody	66,600	0	66,600	8,500	0	2,500	77,600
W1992	Benefits Team Salaries	Geni Hotchkiss	216,000	0	216,000	2,100	0	(27,300)	190,800
W1995	Revenues Team Salaries	Geni Hotchkiss	214,800	0	214,800	10,500	0	88,500	313,800
W2017	Street and Beach Cleaning	Sarah Moody	525,445	0	525,445	22,050	0	0	547,495
W2701	Waste & Recycling Collection Contract	Sarah Moody	2,135,089	0	2,135,089	296,000	0	0	2,431,089
W2713	Trade Waste Services	Sarah Moody	(39,850)	0	(39,850)	2,450	0	0	(37,400)
W2715	Garden Waste Collection	Sarah Moody	0	0	0	(32,950)	0	0	(32,950)
W2721	Hayedown Depot	Sarah Moody	68,851	0	68,851	0	0	0	68,851
W2881	Waste Supervisor & Managerial Salaries	Sarah Moody	0	0	0	5,700	0	(5,700)	0
W4001	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	Andy Bates	285,225	0	285,225	33,800	0	13,300	332,325
W4002	Heads of Service Salaries	Andy Bates	516,500	0	516,500	76,100	0	103,400	696,000
W4082	Landline Telephones	Mike Ward	21,000	0	21,000	0	0	0	21,000
W4084	ICT Support Contracts	Mike Ward	488,284	0	488,284	185,000	0	0	673,284
W4085	Mobile Phones	Mike Ward	14,000	0	14,000	0	0	0	14,000
W4086	ICT Hardware Replacement	Mike Ward	51,697	0	51,697	0	0	0	51,697
W4087	Photocopiers/MFD's	Mike Ward	10,000	0	10,000	0	0	0	10,000
W4155	Digital Mail Room Team (DMR) Salaries	Jim Davis	106,600	0	106,600	0	0	(3,400)	103,200
W4501	Performance & Intelligence Team Salaries	Jim Davis	104,300	0	104,300	8,000	0	1,700	114,000
			5,568,506	0	5,568,506	679,750	0	114,500	6,362,756

b)	Place & Enterprise	Budget Manager	(1)	(2)	(1)+(2)= 2a	(3)	(4)	(5)	(2a)+(3)+(4)+(5)
			23/24 Base Net Budget £'s	23/24 Virements £'s	23/24 Revised Net Budget £'s	24/25 Pressures/ (Savings) £'s	24/25 Budget Preparation Virements £'s	24/25 Salary Estimate Virements £'s	24/25 Final Base Budget £'s
W1030	Economic Development	Chris Shears	92,291	0	92,291	0	0	0	92,291
W1060	Community Development	Chris Shears	67,500	0	67,500	0	0	0	67,500
New Cost Centre	Community Development Salaries	Chris Shears	0	0	0	0	0	77,000	77,000
W1082	Strategic Planning Salaries	Chris Shears	93,700	0	93,700	0	0	12,300	106,000
W1092a	Planning Development Salaries	Ian Sosnowski	0	0	0	4,900	0	(4,800)	100
W1102	Tamar Valley Trust	Head of Assets	63,482	0	63,482	0	0	0	63,482
W1104	Land & Investment Properties	Head of Assets	(1,131,600)	0	(1,131,600)	0	0	0	(1,131,600)
W1161	Kilworthy Park Offices	Head of Assets	273,392	0	273,392	9,700	0	0	283,092

W1200	Public Transport Assistance	Chris Shears	13,185	0	13,185	0	0	0	13,185
W1306	Countryside Recreation	Head of Assets	61,080	0	61,080	0	0	0	61,080
W1310	Leisure Centres	Jon Parkinson	(25,262)	0	(25,262)	0	0	0	(25,262)
W1311	Outdoor Sports & Recreation	Head of Assets	12,810	0	12,810	0	0	0	12,810
W1400	Employment Estates	Head of Assets	(140,531)	0	(140,531)	0	0	0	(140,531)
W1501	General Health	Ian Luscombe	14,170	0	14,170	0	0	0	14,170
W1531	Licensing	Ian Luscombe	(90,551)	0	(90,551)	(20,000)	0	0	(110,551)
W1533	Pest Control	Ian Luscombe	16,293	0	16,293	0	0	0	16,293
W1534	Pollution Control	Ian Luscombe	(2,071)	0	(2,071)	0	0	0	(2,071)
W1535	Food Safety	Ian Luscombe	698	0	698	0	0	0	698
W1536	Health & Safety at Work	Ian Luscombe	1,500	0	1,500	0	0	0	1,500
W1544	Community Safety	Ian Luscombe	6,500	0	6,500	0	0	0	6,500
W1545	Emergency Planning	Ian Luscombe	5,370	0	5,370	0	0	0	5,370
W1551	Homelessness	Isabel Blake	153,777	0	153,777	0	0	0	153,777
W1552	Housing Advice	Isabel Blake	1,200	0	1,200	0	0	0	1,200
W1553	Housing Enabling	Head of Assets	240	0	240	0	0	0	240
W1555	Private Sector Housing Renewal	Ian Luscombe	31,595	0	31,595	0	0	0	31,595
W1993	Environmental Health Salaries	Ian Luscombe	431,600	0	431,600	41,600	0	(1,800)	471,400
W1994	Assets Team Salaries	Head of Assets	279,700	0	279,700	35,800	0	(44,400)	271,100
W1999	Housing Team Salaries	Isabel Blake	119,600	0	119,600	29,700	0	26,900	176,200
W2101	Car & Boat Parking	Emma Widdicombe	(419,329)	0	(419,329)	(139,400)	0	800	(557,929)
W2310	Dog Warden Service	Emma Widdicombe	3,422	0	3,422	0	0	0	3,422
W2400	Public Conveniences	Emma Widdicombe	121,749	0	121,749	2,450	0	0	124,199
W4105	Economy Service Salaries	Chris Shears	71,000	0	71,000	5,400	0	2,700	79,100
New Cost Centre	Health and Wellbeing - Council Plan	Jon Parkinson	0	0	0	25,000	0	0	25,000
New Cost Centre	People and Community - Council Plan	Neil Hawke	0	0	0	40,500	0	0	40,500
New Cost Centre	Economy and Jobs - Council Plan	Chris Shears	0	0	0	60,000	0	0	60,000
			126,510	0	126,510	95,650	0	68,700	290,860

		(1)	(2)	(1)+(2)= 2a	(3)	(4)	(5)	(2a)+(3)+(4)+(5)	
c)	Governance & Assurance	Budget Manager	23/24 Base Net Budget	23/24 Virements	23/24 Revised Net Budget	24/25 Pressures/ (Savings)	24/25 Budget Preparation Virements	24/25 Salary Estimate Virements	24/25 Final Base Budget
			£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
W1003	Land Charges Salaries	Helen Smart	44,700	0	44,700	4,400	0	(1,300)	47,800
W1020	Planning Applications and Advice	Pat Whymer	(440,795)	0	(440,795)	0	0	0	(440,795)
W1040	Local Land Charges	Pat Whymer	(73,806)	0	(73,806)	0	0	0	(73,806)
W1996	Human Resources Salaries	Andy Wilson	40,240	0	40,240	0	0	6,300	46,540
W1997	Strategy & Governance Salaries	Neil Hawke	131,800	0	131,800	18,300	0	(4,100)	146,000
W1998	Planning Service Salaries	Helen Smart	576,500	0	576,500	48,100	0	11,700	636,300
W2707	Climate Change	Adam Williams	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	50,000
W3001	Electorat Registration	Geoff Waxman	107,645	0	107,645	7,600	0	21,100	136,345
W3030	Staff Forum	Michelle Pierce	5,000	0	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
W3041	Communications & Media Team Salaries	Michelle Pierce	67,230	0	67,230	0	0	5,400	72,630
W3050	Democratic Representation & Management	Darryl White	254,935	0	254,935	0	0	0	254,935
W3051	Member Support & Democratic Services	Darryl White	155,450	0	155,450	12,100	0	2,400	169,950
W4004	Corporate Training & Occupational Health	Andy Wilson	18,183	0	18,183	0	0	0	18,183
W4005	Case Management Service Based Training	Andy Wilson	11,700	0	11,700	0	0	0	11,700
W4015	Specialists Service Based Training	Andy Wilson	12,400	0	12,400	0	0	0	12,400
W4041	Internal Audit	Neil Hawke	43,900	0	43,900	0	0	29,300	73,200
W4101	Legal Team Salaries	David Fairbairn	184,800	0	184,800	17,500	0	29,900	232,200
W4102	Design Team Salaries	Michelle Pierce	22,700	0	22,700	0	0	2,300	25,000
W4200	Insurance	Neil Hawke	83,231	0	83,231	30,000	0	0	113,231
W4511	Building Control Services	Jacqueline Houslander	38,469	0	38,469	0	0	0	38,469
New Cost Centre	Built Environment - Council Plan	Alistair Wagstaff	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	100,000
New Cost Centre	Natural Environment - Council Plan	Adam Williams	0	0	0	87,000	0	0	87,000
New Cost Centre	Performance and Resources - Council Plan	Neil Hawke	0	0	0	22,000	0	0	22,000
New Cost Centre	Accessibility and Communications - Council Plan	Head of Assets	0	0	0	3,000	0	0	3,000
			1,284,282	0	1,284,282	400,000	0	103,000	1,787,282

		(1)	(2)	(1)+(2)= 2a	(3)	(4)	(5)	(2a)+(3)+(4)+(5)	
d)	Strategic Finance	Budget Manager	23/24 Base Net Budget	23/24 Virements	23/24 Revised Net Budget	24/25 Pressures/ (Savings)	24/25 Budget Preparation Virements	24/25 Salary Estimate Virements	24/25 Final Base Budget
			£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
W1991	Finance Team Salaries	Pauline Henstock	328,263	0	328,263	25,100	0	600	353,963
W4009	Non Distributed Costs	Pauline Henstock	778,042	0	778,042	0	0	(286,800)	491,242
W4010	Inflation/Pension Provision	Pauline Henstock	0	0	0	150,000	0	0	150,000
W4160	Corporate Management	Pauline Henstock	175,345	0	175,345	(50,000)	0	0	125,345
W4199	Central Service Overheads	Pauline Henstock	17,642	0	17,642	0	0	0	17,642
W6040	Borrowing Costs	Pauline Henstock	1,303,914	0	1,303,914	0	0	0	1,303,914
W6050	Interest & Investment Income	Pauline Henstock	(400,321)	0	(400,321)	(400,000)	0	0	(800,321)
W6101	Business Rates Income	Pauline Henstock	(40,000)	0	(40,000)	0	0	0	(40,000)
			2,162,885	0	2,162,885	(274,900)	0	(286,200)	1,601,785

Note 1 - The new revenue cost centres for the Council Plan total £337,500 as per the Council report on the Council Plan. This is the revenue expenditure for the Council Plan. There is also £50,000 of capital expenditure shown in the Capital Programme (Appendix E)

Report to: **Council**

Date: **20 February 2024**

Title: **The Council Plan 2024-2028**

Portfolio Area: **Councillor Mandy Ewings**
Leader of the Council

Wards Affected: **All**

Author: **Andy Bates** Role: **Chief Executive**
Neil Hawke **Assistant Director Strategy**

Contact: Directors@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council APPROVES the:

- 1. Council Plan 2024-2028 as set out in Appendix A and Year 1 (2024/25) delivery plan in Appendix B;**
- 2. funding for the 2024-25 delivery plan (as set out in section 4.2 of this report)**
- 3. RECOMMEND to Council to approve the funding for the 2024-25 Delivery Plan (as set out in section 5.4 of this report).**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Hub Committee considered a final draft of The Council Plan and Year 1 delivery plan at its meeting on 30 January 2024 and agreed to recommend adoption of the plan to full Council.
- 1.2 The Council Plan and Year 1 delivery plan has been developed over a six-month period, which included consultation with the public and partner organisations. Importantly, the plans have been shaped by Advisory Groups open to all Council Members.
- 1.3 The last version of The Council Plan and delivery plan for 2024/25 are set out in Appendix A and B of the report.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council Plan sets out our longer-term ambition for the borough. To support this ambition, we have developed thematic action plans for each of the key priority areas, which together form the Annual Delivery Plan, covering the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

- 2.2 The thematic action plans have been developed by Hub Lead Members in consultation with officers and have been informed by Advisory Groups open to all Members of the Council.
- 2.3 The delivery plan ensures that our resources are aligned to supporting Members' priorities and that our residents are clear about what we will do on their behalf. Wherever possible SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) targets have been developed to enable the Council to monitor progress against the plan.
- 2.4 The delivery plan is intended to be dynamic – able to be updated in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. Once adopted by Council, the delivery plan will be subject to regular monitoring, annual updates and reporting through Hub and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.5 The Council Plan and year 1 delivery plan was considered by the Hub at its meeting on 30 January and recommended for adoption by full Council.

3. The Council Plan implementation and Performance Management

- 3.1 To ensure that the Council remains on track with delivering its plans, the final delivery plan (Appendix B) includes an outline of the Performance Management Framework for the Council.
- 3.2 The performance management framework sets out how the Council plans and organises its resources to achieve its vision and priorities.
- 3.3 Directors and managers across the Council will ensure that their service plans for the coming year align to the aims and ambitions within the plan and deliver on the key actions they are responsible for. In turn, service plans will inform individual employee's objectives for the coming year which will ensure the whole organisation is aligned with the plan.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 At its meeting on 21 November 2023 the Hub Committee considered (Minute HC 29/23 refers) the outcome of a review of Earmarked Reserves and the Capital Programme. This report identified £0.871m of Earmarked Reserves which are potentially available to support the delivery of The Council Plan and £0.263m of capital resources. These are one-off amounts, so £1.134m in total. This was subsequently approved at Council on 19 December 2023 (Item 8 (IV)).

4.2 The delivery of The Council Plan represents an overall financial commitment of £17,301,887 for 2024/25, with £16,914,387 financed from realignment of existing resources and allocations of government grants (such as UK Shared Prosperity Funding) and £387,500 of new monies from the £1.134m. The allocation against each theme area for the 2024/25 financial year is as follows:

Theme	24/25 Financial Year	
	<i>To be financed from £1.134m identified in 5.1 above (£)</i>	<i>To be financed from existing core budgets (£)</i>
Natural Environment	£87,000	
Built Environment	£100,000	£13,575,000
Housing	£50,000	£1,640,000
Health and Wellbeing	£25,000	£1,004,137
People and Community	£40,500	£120,000
Economy and Jobs	£60,000	£498,750
Performance and Resources	£22,000	£76,500
Inclusive Services and Communication	£3,000	
TOTAL (£17,301,887)	£387,500	£16,914,387

4.3 The analysis between Revenue and Capital expenditure is as below:

	<i>To be financed from £1.134m identified in 5.1 above (£)</i>	<i>To be financed from existing core budgets (£)</i>
Revenue expenditure	£337,500	£585,250 (of which £498,750 is UKSPF revenue funding)
Capital expenditure	£50,000	£16,329,137 (of which £15.4m is Government grant funding)
TOTAL (£17,301,887)	£387,500	£16,914,387

4.4 It is recommended that the £337,500 of revenue expenditure is funded from the £0.871m of Earmarked Reserves (as per the Hub report of 21 November 2023) which were identified as being available to support the delivery of the emerging Council Plan. In addition, it is recommended that the £50,000 of capital expenditure is funded from the New Homes Bonus Earmarked Reserve (this is the £0.263m of capital resources identified for The Council Plan).

4.5 The financial implications set out in this section have been included within the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2024/25.

5. Proposed next steps

5.1 That full Council approves The Council Plan at Appendix A, the Annual Delivery Plan at Appendix B and the funding associated to delivery as set out in section 4 to this report.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council Plan is one of the plans and policies that comprise the Council's Policy Framework. Consequently, decisions to approve, adopt or amend The Council Plan and themes will be decisions of the Full Council.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>The report recommends an overall financial envelope for each theme based on the actions set out within the delivery plan.</p> <p>The delivery of The Council Plan represents an overall financial commitment of £17,301,887 for 2024/25, with £16,914,387 financed from realignment of existing resources and allocations of government grants (such as UK Shared Prosperity Funding) and £387,500 of new monies from the £1.134m. The allocation against each theme area for the 2024/25 financial year is set out in section 4.2 above.</p> <p>This has been included in the Revenue Budget for 2024/25 being considered by Council today.</p>
Risk	Y	Having an agreed corporate plan ensures that Council resources are aligned to delivering on agreed priorities and plans. There is a risk that the plan is not agreed when finally considered by Council however this is mitigated through our consultation and engagement activity and by forming the West Devon Vision and Strategy and delivery plans.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	This report sets out the progress in developing the four-year strategy for the Council.
Consultation & Engagement Strategy	Y	The Council Plan and delivery plan have been refined following a seven-week consultation and engagement period with the public and partners.

		The responses to the consultation were set out in the Hub report of 30 th January 2024.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	The Council Plan sets out our primary commitments to tackling climate change and increasing biodiversity as part of the Natural Environment theme. The investment in the Natural Environment Theme is shown in 4.2 of this report.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Equality and Diversity Implications have been considered for The Council Plan and overall contribute to a positive impact for our residents. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out for specific projects within the delivery plan as they commence delivery.
Safeguarding		No direct implications – specific implications will be considered alongside the delivery of specific projects within the plan
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		No direct implications – specific implications will be considered alongside the delivery of specific projects within the plan
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No direct implications – specific implications will be considered alongside the delivery of specific projects within the plan
Other implications		None at this stage

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A – The Council Plan;

Appendix B – Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25; and

Background Papers:

Hub Committee 30 January 2023 – Minute HC 41/23

<https://democracy.swdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=221&MId=1867&Ver=4>

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The Council Plan 2024-2028

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West Devon
Borough Council



Introduction from the Leader

West Devon is an incredibly special and important place, home to a World Heritage Site, bustling market towns and stunning moorland.

However, there are challenges which many residents face. The ongoing cost of living is putting a squeeze on household incomes and the affordability of housing means that many of our younger residents may struggle to access good quality housing in the future, in the area they have grown up in. There is also the real and current threat of climate change and biodiversity loss. We cannot wait to act; we must continue to deliver on our plans and make sure that we encourage others to do the same.

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Cllr Mandy Ewings

Leader
West Devon Borough Council

Our agricultural community is making great strides in exploring innovative ways to diversify, and we will continue to support them to do so by delivering our UK Shared and Rural Prosperity Funding programmes.

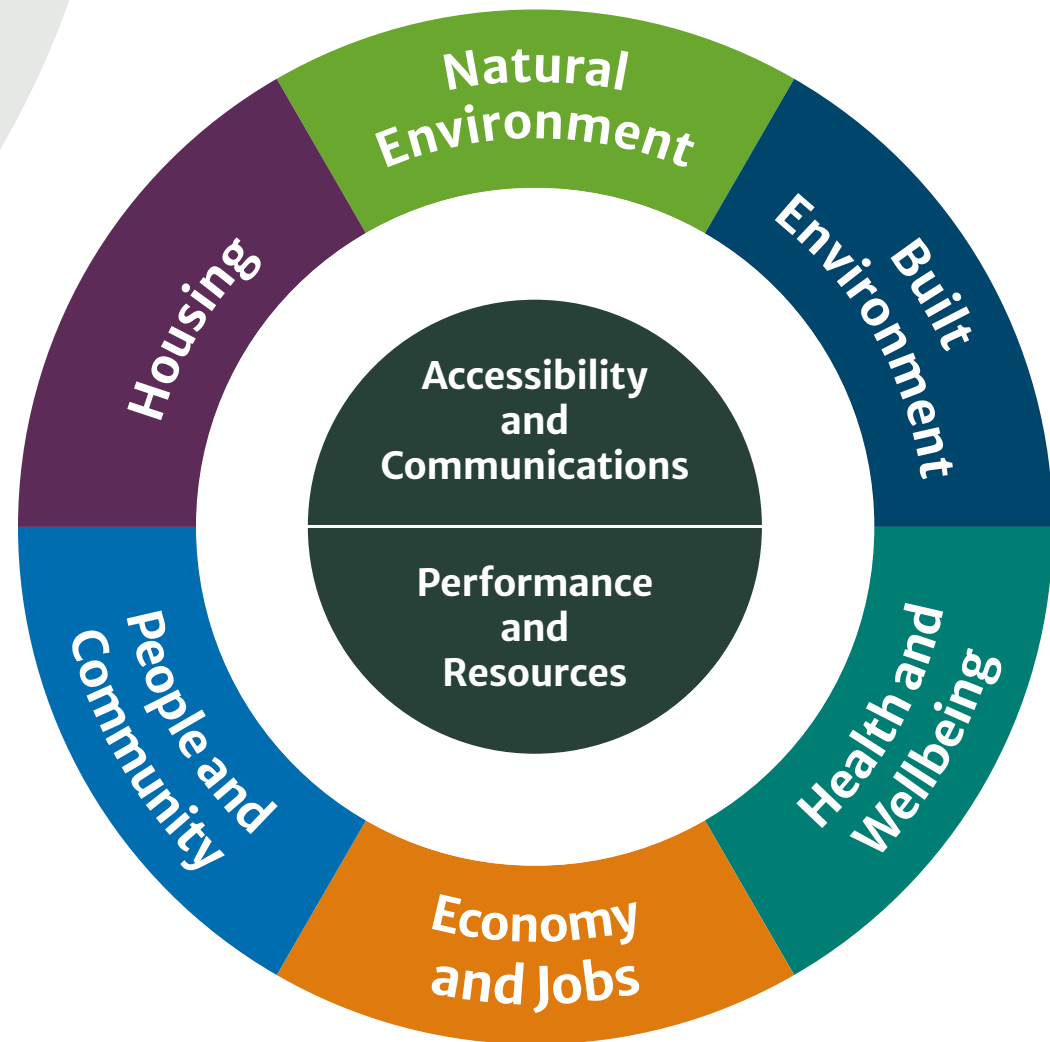
We will also make sure that we provide focused support for our less advantaged groups. We have already taken steps on this by buying our own temporary accommodation properties, developing a package of support for care leavers and guaranteeing interviews for ex-forces personnel.

To do all of this, we must make sure the Council is modern, efficient and innovative – delivering value for money and responsive services that meet the needs of our communities.

We must do all we can to support our residents and to protect West Devon for our future generations. The actions set out in this plan aim to deliver on our commitment.



Our priorities



We have eight key priorities to focus on for the next four years.

None of them can be delivered in isolation and all will contribute to the overall wellbeing of West Devon residents.

We know that we cannot achieve our ambitions for West Devon alone and so we will work with our communities and key partners in delivering this strategy.



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Working together for West Devon.

Our priorities

Progressing our plans

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We are not
starting with
a blank sheet
of paper ...

Since May 2023, we have taken steps to deliver a number of schemes alongside the development of The Council Plan, which include:-

- Launching a Young Persons' Climate Award;
- Buying 5 properties for temporary accommodation for those displaced by conflict;
- Leading the Devon Housing Taskforce and been a founder member of a new Devon Housing Commission, a partnership of Devon Councils that will develop recommendations to start to address the broken housing market;
- Launching a £136k Household Support Fund for residents struggling with the cost of living;
- Attending community events such as Tavistock and Okehampton Community Health and Wellbeing Fairs, Chagford Show and Tavistock Pride to directly talk to our residents;
- Launching a new website to make it even easier for online residents to interact with us;
- Progressing delivery of a number of projects funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

While we are making positive progress on delivering our wider ambitions, The Council Plan builds on the above and sets out where we are going next.



Our plan will be underpinned by

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Financial Sustainability

Our financial sustainability is important in ensuring that we can deliver our priorities and good quality services to our residents. For many years local councils have received single year finance settlements. We will continue to lobby government for longer term certainty of our budgets, allowing us to make longer term plans.

Good Governance

We will make sure that we have a robust governance framework, effective decision making, and that we shape our policies and strategies in consultation with our communities and key stakeholders.

Community Development

We know that we cannot deliver a better future for West Devon alone. Our communities and the voluntary sector play a critical part in this. We will work with them and where we can, support them to deliver projects and schemes that will enhance the area for us all. We will also ensure that we invest in our own staff, making sure that they are equipped with the right skills and tools to provide responsive services.



Natural Environment

Our Ambition

The natural environment of West Devon is one of the things that makes it such a special place, one that we must protect for the future. Climate change and biodiversity loss continue to be a significant threat to our area and while any action we take will be small in terms of the required global change, we can and must do all we can. We will lead by example, encouraging our communities to also play their part.

The latest science from The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UK Government's Climate Change Committee, as well as real world extreme weather events, have demonstrated how critical joined up action is at reducing the very worst of future climate change scenarios.

Having declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity crisis in 2020, we will now take steps to revise our action plan. This is aligned to the Devon Carbon Plan

which sets out a roadmap for how Devon can achieve net-zero carbon by 2050 at the latest. In the meantime, there is a target of 50% reduction (below 2010 levels) by 2030.

We have secured funding to deliver a number of projects to support the Borough on the journey to net zero. This includes developing plans for active travel schemes (walking and cycling) and importantly supporting our agricultural sector to consider opportunities to future proof their businesses in regenerative sustainable ways. We will also develop plans to support and incentivise renewable energy projects such as solar panels and wind turbines to reduce carbon emissions.

We will make sure that the climate and biodiversity impact of all decisions and service changes made is fully considered from the outset, doing all we possibly can to make climate-positive decisions.



Cllr Lynn Daniel
Lead Member for
Natural Environment

Our Primary Aims

1. An increase in biodiversity across the Borough over the next 4 years.

2. Continue to make reductions in eCO2 emissions across the Borough to stay on track for net zero by 2050.

3. To encourage others to take action to lessen their own climate impact.

Our Initial Actions

- Develop and begin to implement our Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- Increase Electric Charging Points including exploring in-house delivery opportunities for EV charging point on council property.
- Implement a revised grounds maintenance programme for Council land to increase biodiversity.
- Update our 2020 Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Take a vigorous stance on the climate and biodiversity crisis leading by example and communicating what we are doing to encourage others to take similar steps, including a Use Less / Reuse / Recycle campaign.
- Promote the use of renewable energy sources within the West Devon Community.
- Launch a Thermal Imaging Camera lending scheme to enable residents and community facilities to identify areas for improving insulation in properties.
- Create allotments at South Tawton on West Devon Borough Council land – allowing residents to grow their own produce and reduce food miles.
- Organise visits to Energy from Waste plants and biodigesters to inspire improved levels of recycling and reduction in residual waste:-
 - Learn from successful regenerative farming and natural regeneration sites to inspire our future plans.
- Lobby and encourage partners to address issues not directly in the Council's control:-
 - Work with South West Water (SWW) and the Environment Agency (EA) with a 'Call for Evidence' on discharge of raw sewage into rivers;
 - Collaborate with relevant authorities and stakeholders to improve sewage treatment infrastructure;
 - Develop a plan for Wildlife Wardens.



Built Environment

Our Ambition

From the western edge of Dartmoor through to the east of Cornwall, West Devon has a built environment of global importance through the World Heritage Site. We will conserve and maintain existing historic fabric and retain and reflect locally distinctive features in the design of buildings, layouts and landscapes to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage Site.

West Devon, together with South Hams and Plymouth, have a strategic plan for the area (Joint Local Plan) which sets out the future vision, policies and plans for our built environment up to 2034.

We will work with our communities to produce new visions for all our towns; setting out the opportunities and actions needed to make sure they remain thriving, active and accessible places. We will look to reflect these ambitions in the future Joint Local Plan.

In our urban centres, we will develop and review Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans to preserve and enhance important historic buildings and places across West Devon. We will also work with our communities to support the development of Neighbourhood Plans. These plans will reflect their hopes and aims and create local policies which will be considered in the determination of planning application to help them shape and manage their communities.



Cllr Caroline Mott

Lead Member for
Built Environment

Our Primary Aims

1. Conserve and enhance existing historic fabric and retain locally distinctive features in the design of building, layouts, street scene and landscapes to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage Site to maintain it for future generations.

2. Ensure that we have the infrastructure in place to meet the future needs of our communities and that these are secured and delivered by new development.

Our Initial Actions

- Support town and parish councils / neighbourhood forums in the making of at least two neighbourhood plans a year (including modifications required to existing plans) in West Devon.
- Support the refresh and expansion of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans throughout the Conservation areas.
- Deliver Planning training sessions to Town and Parish Councils – upskilling them to understand what is important when considering applications.
- Update our enforcement procedures and strategy to ensure alignment with local priorities.
- Develop a plan for preserving the Duke of Bedford Cottages.
- Contribute to the World Heritage Site partnership and promote its importance to West Devon.
- Support the delivery of more affordable housing through the planning process.
- Deliver on our Planning Improvement Plan to make sure applicants continue to receive a better service.
- Progress with the Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- Delivery of Okehampton Transport Hub.
- Support community infrastructure and facilities through timely allocation of developer contributions to community schemes.
- Support Network Rail and Devon County Council with the development of the business case to reinstate five miles of track and deliver a new single platform station at Tavistock, which would serve communities in Tavistock, Horrabridge, Lamerton, and Mary Tavy.

Housing

Our Ambition

West Devon Borough Council has been striving to tackle the 'housing crisis'; the real term cost of housing compared to earnings and the critically low availability of rented accommodation. Strong headwinds in the private rented sector as government legislation bites, are forcing landlords to sell or increase their rents, making it difficult to find houses which are available and affordable.

The cost of energy is placing an ever greater strain on essential income, leaving many in fuel poverty. The quality of our existing housing stock is some of the worst performing, in terms of energy efficiency, in northern Europe. This mirrors the rest of the UK, which, as a whole, is responsible for around 40% of all of the country's carbon emissions.

Tens of thousands of homes already exist in West Devon, whereas only a few thousand new ones have been built in the last 5 years, and even fewer of those are affordable. To improve housing outcomes, we must therefore apply our efforts proportionally to where the biggest challenges lie.

We are, and will continue to be, a force for good, looking for opportunities to improve housing outcomes that make the greatest difference to our residents.



Cllr Mark Renders

Deputy Leader and
Lead Member for Housing

Our Primary Aims

1. Help our communities to bring affordable housing in their areas.
2. Support the needs of Homeless households and provide good quality temporary accommodation and value for money.
3. Improve outcomes for care-experienced young people by supporting them to access the housing they need.
4. Tackle damp and disrepair in rented homes.
5. Decarbonise the existing social and affordable housing stock to improve living standards, lift people out of fuel poverty and reduce energy costs for residents.

Our Initial Actions

- Progress plans with redevelopment of Council owned office space (Plymouth Road, Tavistock) for temporary accommodation.
- Work with housing associations and community land trusts to improve the number of affordable, safe and good quality homes delivered for our residents.
- Lobby government for:-
 - Changes to Right to Buy legislation to reduce the loss of existing rented housing stock particularly in rural areas;
 - An increase in the local area housing allowance, which does not reflect the true cost of rented accommodation.
- Work with residents, social and private landlords to promote better standards of housing in West Devon.
- Update our Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy Delivery plans.
- Develop new policies that influence the proportion of new development that is affordable and social rented accommodation particularly in rural areas.
- Implement 200% Council Tax charging on second homes as soon as Government allows in 2025.
- Help where possible in the delivery of affordable homes where conditions for housing need, finance, partner involvement, deliverability and social outcomes align:-
 - Support communities to bring forward housing within their locality which may include Council land;
 - Support Registered Providers (RPs) with grant applications, planning applications and communities, Towns & Parishes (Enabling Housing Team).

Health and Wellbeing

Our Ambition

The health, wellbeing and safety of residents is vitally important to achieving a better quality of life and promoting independence across the Borough.

We will support healthier, safer and fairer communities through a range of measures and by working in partnership with other agencies. We will also play a direct role in this through delivery of a range of Council services such as inspecting food premises, carrying our environmental protection schemes and responding to concerns about private sector housing standards.

Enabling residents to remain as independent as possible in their own community will continue to be a focus for us. We will achieve this through delivering of grant schemes such as disabled facility grants and supporting residents who may be struggling financially by making sure that they access benefits and grants that they are entitled to.

We will deliver this by working, and actively participating, with partner agencies like Citizens Advice and the Community Safety Partnership to support the health and wellbeing of our residents. This will mean West Devon is a place where all residents and visitors feel safe, happy and healthy.



Cllr Tony Leech
Lead Member for
Health and Wellbeing

Our Primary Aims

1. To protect and improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.
2. Provide direct support to residents through the provision of schemes such as Homes Upgrade Grant, Disabled Facilities Grants and energy grants.

Our Initial Actions

- Efficiently deliver schemes that will directly contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents – Disabled Facilities Grants, Energy Efficiency Grants and Household Support Funding.
- Support young people with their Mental Health by commissioning a programme of support in schools.
- Delivery of Junior Life Skills Programme.
- Work with the Community Safety Partnership to maximise impact in the Borough to deal with anti-social behaviour and safeguarding, violence prevention, domestic abuse, drugs, changing youth culture, exploitation and hate crime.
- Implement a Council Tax Discount Scheme and Leisure Centre Access Schemes for Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- Lobby the NHS to financially support exercise referral for those unable to pay and work with Fusion Leisure to promote activities already available.



People and Community

Our Ambition

Our communities are the beating heart of West Devon, they work together to overcome local challenges and deliver action to improve the Borough for our future generations.

As a Council, our role is to enhance community action and to support local groups to deliver their own ambitions. We will increase our capacity and ability to support our communities to bring forward projects that are important to them including a focus on delivering projects promoting arts and culture within the Borough.

Looking to our own services, we will ensure that our frontline services (such as Grounds Maintenance and Localities) are responsive, keeping West Devon's open spaces tidy and enabling them to be enjoyed by residents.

We know that our communities are at the forefront of making West Devon the best place to live, and we will make sure we celebrate the work of individuals and organisations.

Finally, many causes of frustration for our residents, such as poor condition of roads and provision of youth services, are outside of our direct control, but we can, and will, lobby those responsible organisations for action.



Cllr Adam Bridgewater

Lead Member for
People and Community

Our Primary Aims

1. To ensure that we provide responsive support and good quality frontline services.

2. Build effective relationships with key partners, working together to address local challenges.

3. Be a voice for our communities, calling partners to action.

Our Initial Actions

- Progress with the Okehampton and Sydenham Damerell Community Governance Reviews.
- Implement enhanced council community services.
- Support our communities to deliver projects to enhance open spaces, parks, play pitches and other community assets by awarding funding from developer contributions (Section 106) and capital projects funds.
- Carry out a review of funding for key partners to ensure alignment to our aims and ambitions.
- Work with the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) to co-produce a Community Development Action Plan.
- Raise the profile of the Council within the community by attending a range of events to promote Council services.
- Introduce a Young Persons' Climate and Biodiversity Award (Mayor).
- Lobby partners for better service provision in West Devon – for example Devon County Council (DCC) for Potholes and youth provision.
- Develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment for the Council, so that we can be sure we're able to meet the needs of all residents in the future.
- Support communities to develop community resilience plans.
- Develop an Arts and Culture Plan for the Borough.
- Re-establish Town and Parish Council Link meetings to facilitate sharing of best practices and collaboration to address local issues.



Economy and Jobs

Our Ambition

We will create the environment for all sizes of business to flourish, through direct and indirect support and policy. This will include infrastructure and development aligned to our priorities.

We will strengthen our visitor economy, maximising the promotion of our unique cultural and heritage offer. We will identify opportunities to lobby for the best outcomes for our agricultural sector and make sure that we seize on future opportunities to attract additional funding through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity, Community Renewal Funds and other sources.

As a Council, we have a good track record of securing government funding for schemes and we will continue to leverage and improve strategic infrastructure as a means of attracting business and higher earning jobs for our residents. For example, by championing for improvements to broadband and mobile connectivity across the area.

We will also support the delivery of town plans to shape the economy of West Devon and take steps to enrich the Borough through promotion of cultural, heritage and sport activities to draw people into the area.



Cllr Neil Jory

Lead Member for
Economy and Jobs

Our Primary Aims

1. Deliver on the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Funding programmes.
2. Ensure improvements to strategic infrastructure (including digital connectivity) and influencing partners to act.
3. Create an environment in which business in all sectors can innovate.

Our Initial Actions

- Deliver our UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programmes across West Devon.
- Support the progress of the Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan and work towards its implementation.
- Focus on boosting digital connectivity across the Borough – including broadband and 4G services.
- Delivery of Okehampton Transport Hub by March 2025.
- Support key business sectors in West Devon:-
 - Work with partners such as Devon Agri-tech alliance to facilitate networking between and with farms to support the implementation of regenerative farming methods;
 - Explore ways to support local farms through grants and funding opportunities to support agricultural diversification;
 - Develop a culture and arts support plan for the borough.
- Work with Town Councils and partners to develop town plans to help shape the economy of our places.
- Consult on the formation of a Okehampton Business Improvement District or Chamber of Commerce.



Performance and Resources

Our Ambition

At the core of delivering on our ambitions for West Devon, is the need for us to deliver good quality services that respond to the needs of our residents and that we demonstrate value for money through everything we do.

Delivering rural services is expensive and we will continue to lobby Government for fairer funding for rural authorities.

Recruiting and retaining skilled employees is difficult, more so since the changing working practices coming from the pandemic – you can now live in the Southwest but work for an organisation anywhere in the country. We will focus on ensuring we invest in training and support for our employees, with the aim of being an employer of choice, where each and every employee has the right skills and tools to deliver the best service for our residents.

We will also ensure we make the best use of Council assets including our buildings, taking steps to ensure we maximise occupancy at our Kilworthy Park offices.

Only by delivering good quality, value for money services can we achieve our wider ambitions for the Borough.

Cllr Chris Edmonds

Lead Member for
Performance and
Resources

Our Primary Aims

1. Support the wellbeing of our staff with training and development, the right tools to do the job and recognition of successes.

2. Make sure that we manage Council finances and assets well.

3. Guarantee efficiency in service delivery by managing performance.

4. Lead by example, ensuring that Council assets respond to our climate ambitions.

Our Initial Actions

- Deliver targeted and refreshed recruitment approaches to overcome local government job challenges.
- Identify further areas for service reviews to make sure our teams provide a good quality service.
- Carry out an annual staff survey to get feedback from staff on how we are doing.
- Apply an IT Strategy which includes a clear roadmap to adopting developing technology such as artificial intelligence (AI).
- Work with the Rural Services Network to lobby Government for fairer funding for rural services.
- Respond to the Government consultation on the Finance Settlement.
- Set a balanced budget for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026.
- Update our procurement strategy to guarantee greater emphasis on reducing climate impact of the Council supply chain and increased social value.
- Hold a 'Meet the Buyer' event to support local businesses bid for future Council contracts.
- Prepare an asset management strategy to set out how we will maximise use of our assets.

Accessibility and Communications

Our Ambition

As a Council, it is important that we constantly consider how best to deliver our services, making sure that all residents can access the services they need as easily as possible.

Most West Devon residents are able to interact with us online, and we have taken proactive steps to make our website easy to use. We have also implemented online accessibility tools to help as many people as possible to find online support. We encourage a digital first approach – which means that residents can carry out tasks with the Council 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, we are aware that some residents in West Devon, whether by choice or due to the lack of internet access in rural area, do not have internet access. For these residents, we will do all we can to assist them to access Council services in alternate ways.

We will ensure that West Devon residents will be consistently updated regarding Council business and services, and any local issues involving the Council – putting our community at the centre of our communications.

We will continue to be a Council that takes pride in listening and responding to our residents' concerns, ideas and aspirations.



Cllr Jeff Moody

Lead Member for
Accessibility and
Communications

Our Primary Aims

1. To communicate the work of the Council and how it benefits our communities.
2. To strive for, and achieve, a high level of customer satisfaction.

Our Initial Actions

- Digital Accessibility 24/7 – Continuing Website enhancement, continuing to give customers around the clock access to Council services online.
- For those residents who are unable to access Council services digitally or by phone, we will offer, where necessary, a Face to Face service. This service will be promoted through key partners such as Citizens Advice.
- Proactively and continuously improve our customer communication channels so they are fully accessible and inclusive for all residents.
- Continuous review of our new Consultation & Engagement Portal.
- Engage with our community through Customer Satisfaction Surveys.
- Provide a planned programme of regular ‘Customer Engagement Roadshow Events’ to promote Council Services and to obtain feedback from residents.
- Implement a regular ‘information programme’ featuring important Council information through the local press, online videos, social media and various digital platforms.

Our contribution to a global blueprint

Adopted by the United Nations Members States in 2015, the sustainable development goals provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet now and into the future.

They are an urgent call to action by all countries, recognising that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. This plan directly contributes to 11 of the 17 goals as highlighted throughout the document.

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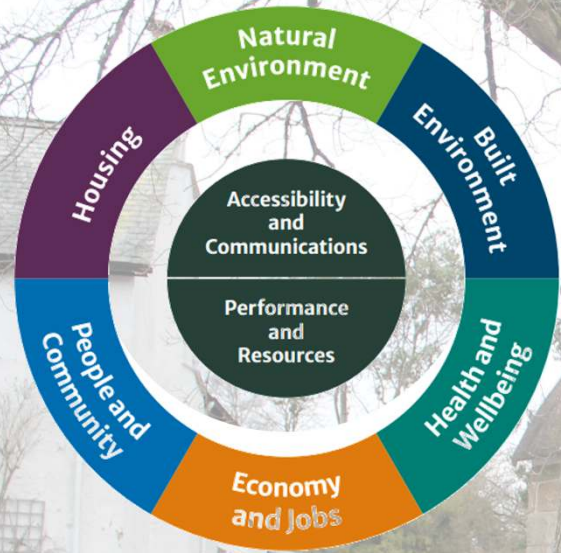
West Devon
Borough
Council

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS

West Devon Borough Council supports the Sustainable Development Goals

Want to know more?
<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

www.westdevon.gov.uk



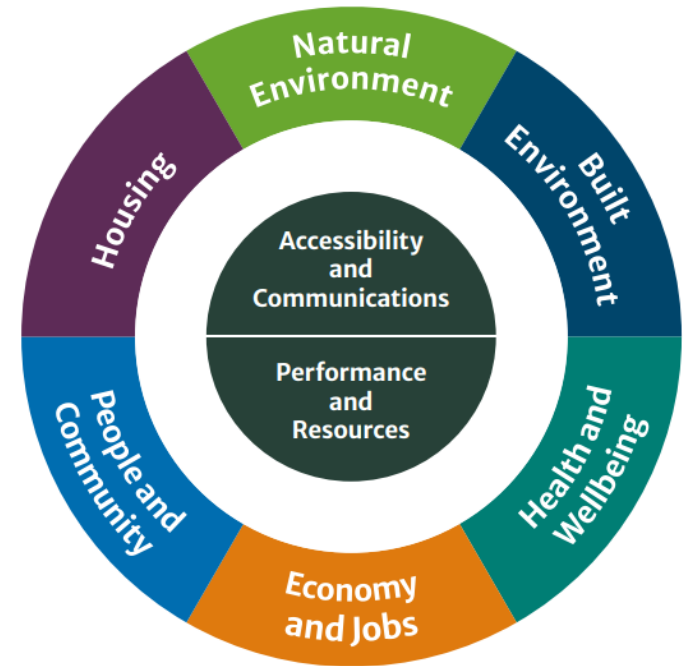
West Devon Borough Council ‘The Council Plan’

Delivery Plan 2024/25



Introduction

- The West Devon Council Plan sets out our overall aims and ambitions for the borough for the next four years. It is supported by annual delivery plans with the first (2024-25) being set out in this document.
- The delivery plan is developed alongside our annual budget to ensure sufficient resource to deliver on our ambitions.
- The delivery plans are of course not all that the Council will do. We will continue to deliver good quality core services that represent value for money for our residents and businesses.



How our plan is resourced

The delivery plan for 2024/25 represents a commitment of £17.18m in delivering on the Council's priorities for the borough. This is a mix of freeing up existing earmarked reserves, reprioritisation of existing core budgets and government grants that have been secured (for example UK Shared Prosperity Funding).

	Funding for delivery of new activities	Funding provided from other sources (existing budget or government grants)	Total Funding by priority for 2024/25
Natural Environment	£87,000		£87,000
Built Environment	£100,000	£13,575,000	
Economy and Jobs	£60,000	£498,750	
Health and Wellbeing	£25,000	£1,004,137	
People and Community	£40,050		
Housing	£50,000	£1,640,000	
Inclusive Services	£3,000		
Performance and Resources	£22,000	£76,500	
2024/25 Total	£387,500	£16,794,387	£17,181,887

Over the coming pages, we set out the specific actions we will deliver during the 2024/25 year.

Natural Environment

Clr Lynn Daniel
 Lead Member for Natural
 Environment



Overarching Actions

Action Reference	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
NE0.1	Refresh our 2020 Climate and Biodiversity Action Plan in line with the Devon Carbon Plan	A refreshed plan
NE0.2	Support Devon Climate Emergency Partnership	Support for the communications and engagement function of the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership

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Primary Aim 1 - A 12% per year reduction in eCO2 emissions across West Devon with a 40% reduction in 4 years

Action Reference	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
NE1.1	Implement a revised grounds maintenance programme for council land to increase biodiversity	Develop specification and identify route to procure / lease equipment
NE1.2	Promote successful regenerative farming and natural regeneration sites to inspire our future plans	Create a baseline of agriculture activity
NE1.3	Develop a plan for Wildlife wardens with the intention this becomes self-funding in future years	Part-time (2.5 days pw) Wildlife Warden Officer Appointed (12 month fixed term)
	Work with Plymouth and South Devon Community forest to identify opportunities for tree planting and biodiversity in the borough	Develop the plan for increasing within WD and to understand the carbon credits

Natural Environment

Cllr Lynn Daniel
 Lead Member for Natural
 Environment



Primary Aim 2 - Continue to make reductions in eCO2 emissions across the Borough to stay on track for net zero by 2050

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
NE2.1	Develop, review and adopt a Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan for the Borough to inform future strategic planning	An adopted LCWIP
NE2.2	Implement the Councils adopted Electric Vehicle charging strategy	Delivery of EV Strategy delivery plan
NE2.3	Promote the use of renewable energy sources within the West Devon community	Delivered through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
NE2.4	Promote a thermal imaging camera lending scheme to enable residents and community facilities to identify areas for improving insulation in properties	Review trial and extend (including additional cameras)
NE2.5	Work with communities, Town and Parish Councils to understand existing plans for, and Identify any future areas within the borough that could be used as allotments	Identify sites that could potentially be used for allotments (such as South Tawton) Develop proposals for consideration
NE2.6	Implement a decision-making tool to assess climate and biodiversity (in addition to social value / other implications)	

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Natural Environment

Clr Lynn Daniel
 Lead Member for Natural
 Environment



Primary Aim 3 - Lead by example to promote positive action on climate change and biodiversity

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverable
NE3.1	Reduce Scope 1 and 2 Emissions to Net Zero by 2030 and work towards reducing scope 3 emissions by working with suppliers	Net zero for 2030
		Complete feasibility study for fleet conversion and costs, bringing proposals forward to Council during 2024/25 Develop plans for Decarbonisation of buildings - Kilworthy and wider estate, bringing proposals forward to Council during 2024/25
NE3.2	Improve recycling rates and reduction in residual waste.	Organise visits to Energy from Waste plants and biodigesters to inspire improved levels of recycling and reduction in residual waste
		Delivery of capital improvements (such as Hayedown) and infrastructure to support an increase in recycling
		Deliver a communications campaign to promote reduce / reuse / recycle / garden waste collections etc
NE3.3	Work with South West Water and the Environment Agency with a 'Call for Evidence' on discharge of raw sewage into rivers	South West Water & Environment Agency to attend Overview and Scrutiny
		Collaborate with relevant authorities and stakeholders to encourage improvement of sewage treatment infrastructure

Built Environment

Cllr Caroline Mott
Lead Member for Built
Environment



Primary Aim 1 - Conserve and enhance existing historic fabric and retain locally distinctive features in the design of building, layouts, street scene and landscapes to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage Site to maintain it for future generations.

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
BE1.1	Support Town and Parish Councils/ neighbourhood forums in the making of at least two neighbourhood plans a year (including modifications required to existing plans)	Two neighbourhood plans made / modified each year Develop proposals to promote Neighbourhood Plans to Towns and Parishes including case studies of where they have positively supported communities
	Plan and prepare for the review of the Local Plan (JLP) to ensure that this supports the Council's plan and meets the needs of our communities.	JLP review preparation and work programming (Phase 1). Review Climate Emergency Impact Statement (DEV32 requires all development to contribute to the 50% carbon reduction target by 2034, against a 2005 baseline, as well as increasing the use and production of decentralised energy). Housing Position Statement
BE1.2		
BE1.3	Support the refresh and expansion of conservation area appraisals and management plans throughout conservation areas	Rolling programme of 2-3 CAA's coming forward each year based on prioritisation in line with the JLP hierarchy set out in Policy TTV1, where they contain a Conservation Area: - Main towns - Smaller Towns and Key villages - Sustainable Villages - smaller village hamlets
BE1.4	Develop a plan for preserving Duke of Bedford Cottages	Plan, developed and agreed to create a Local Listed Development Order with design code to positively manage the Duke of Bedford Cottages
BE1.5	Contribute and promote the World Heritage Site and partnership and provide a longer-term funding agreement	Invite WHS to O&S / Planning Board in order to support and align to the WHS Management Plan Take steps to raise the profile of the World Heritage Site
BE1.6	Deliver on our planning improvement plan to make sure applicants continue to receive a better service	Review and update as necessary our Planning Customer Charter. Deliver a planning training session to Town and Parish Councils within 6 months following elections. Enabling them to understand what is important when considering applications Review the current Planning Enforcement policy to ensure we improve transparency of the process Consider progress against the Planning Improvement Plan through future meetings of the Built Environment Advisory Group

Built Environment

CLlr Caroline Mott
Lead Member for Built
Environment



Primary Aim 2 - Ensure that we have the infrastructure in place to meet the future needs of our communities and that these are secured and delivered by new development

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
BE2.1	Support the delivery of more affordable and social housing through the planning process	Challenge viability studies to ensure we maximise the amount of affordable and social housing delivered in the borough
BE2.2	Ensure that through our planning processes that the natural environment is fully considered and managed	Delivering Biodiversity net gain through the planning process
		Managing trees and hedgerows positively through the consideration of PLanning and other applications to preserve important trees and hedgerows and protect trees through appropriate legislation.
BE2.2	Progress with the Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan	Delivery of the Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan (linked to Economy Deliverable)
		Promoting accessible routes to/from the Transport Hub - promoting them to residents.
BE2.3	Delivery of Okehampton Parkway Station and Integrated Transport Hub	Progress with the delivery of the Transport Hub
BE2.4	Support community infrastructure and facilities through timely allocation of developer contributions to community schemes	Securing funding through S106 (Developer Contributions) towards local facilities and ensuring contributions are received and directed towards delivering these.
		Work with WDBC Members, town and parish councils to identify appropriate schemes for S106 allocation
BE2.5	Support Network Rail and Devon County Council with the development of the business case to reinstate five miles of track and deliver a new single platform station at Tavistock, which would serve communities in Tavistock, Horrabridge, Lamerton, and Mary Tavy	Co-ordinate and champion local support for the project including with local MP's and other stakeholders



Overarching Actions

Action ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
H0.1	Update our Housing Strategy delivery plans	An update to the annual delivery plans for the Housing Strategy.

Primary Aim 1 - Help our communities to bring forward affordable housing in the area

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Action ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
H1.1	Work with housing associations and community land trusts to improve the number of affordable, safe and good quality homes delivered for our residents	Develop a package of support for adoption by the council to deliver these outcomes. Including WDBC working with landowners etc to identify opportunities pre-planning and to understand from Housing Associations their future plans for acquisitions and disposals within the borough.
H1.2	Lobby government for changes to right to buy legislation to reduce the loss of existing rented housing stock particularly in rural areas	
H1.3	Lobby Government for an increase in the local housing allowance, which does not reflect the true cost of rented accommodation	increased LHA already implemented
H1.5	Develop new policies that influence the proportion of new development that is affordable and social rented accommodation particularly in rural areas.	Council policies to support outcomes
H1.6	Implement 200% Council Tax Charging on second homes in 2025.	Countywide discussion on utilising the additional Council Tax contributions
		The Council will continue to lobby for legislative and regulatory change to address the challenges that the district faces around second homes and short-term let holiday accommodation. Specifically, the Council will lobby for the ability to register short-term lets and to licence them. The Council will then seek the ability to limit the number of holiday lets in a particular area when market penetration of short-term holiday lets exceeds a given proportion of total homes. Finally, we'll continue to lobby to Support the introduction of a new use class for short term lets, and not to allow changes between the new use class and residential properties without planning permission
		Policy report to Council to implement 100% premium charging

Housing

Clr Mark Renders
 Deputy Leader and Lead
 Member for Housing



Primary Aim 2 - Support the needs of homeless households to provide good quality temporary accommodation and value for money

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
H2.1	Develop new temporary accommodation	<p>Progress plans with the redevelopment of Council owned office space (20 Plymouth Road, Tavistock) for temporary accommodation</p> <p>Delivery of Local Authority Housing Fund properties for temporary accommodation initially for refugees (Homes for Ukraine / Afghan Resettlement scheme)</p> <p>Consider options for submitting a further bid to Local Authority Housing round 3 to secure additional temporary accommodation within the Borough</p> <p>Identify future potential opportunities for temporary accommodation within the Borough with business cases brought forward to Hub and Council</p>
H2.2	Update our Homelessness strategy delivery plans	

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Primary Aim 3 - Improve outcomes for care-experienced young people by supporting them to access the housing they need

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
H3.1	Work with Devon County Council and districts through the Corporate Parenting Group to support care leavers access housing	
H3.2	Promote Council Tax reduction scheme for care-experienced young people	

Housing

Cllr Mark Renders
Deputy Leader and Lead
Member for Housing



Primary Aim 4 - Tackle damp and disrepair in rented homes

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
H4.1	Deliver on our Housing Standards Commitment - working with residents and social and private landlords to promote better quality housing in West Devon	<p>Deliver a campaign to educate private and social landlords to be aware of their responsibilities by promoting good housing standards via newsletters and social media</p> <p>Ensure all registered providers understand requirements at an operational level</p> <p>Evaluate the introduction of the Social Housing Bill through to legislation and seek to carry out any opportunity that the legislation presents to improve the housing stock</p> <p>Provide an annual update to Members on numbers of Housing Standards issues the Council have addressed</p>

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Primary Aim 5 - Decarbonise the existing housing stock to improve living standards, lift people out of fuel poverty and reduce energy costs for residents

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
H5.1	Improve the efficiency of the existing housing stock within the borough, removing people from fuel poverty and having a positive impact on climate change	Plan to retrofit 55 properties (subject to installer quotes)



Health and Wellbeing

CLr Tony Leech
 Lead Member Health and Wellbeing



Primary Aim 1 - To protect and improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors

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Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
HW1.1	Support young people with their mental health by commissioning a programme of support in schools	Programme of Mental Health Assemblies
HW1.2	Delivery and enhancement of Junior Life skills programme	Junior Lifeskills delivered annually
HW1.3	Work with the Community Safety Partnership to maximise impact in the Borough to deal with anti-social behaviour and safeguarding, violence prevention, domestic abuse, drugs changing youth culture, exploitation and hate crimes	An agreed annual plan for the Community Safety Partnership working across West Devon
HW1.4	Lobby the NHS to financially support exercise referral for those unable to pay and work with Fusion Leisure to promote activities already available	Continue to support the work of CVS particularly around Social Prescribing Communicate the existing programmes available from Fusion Leisure
HW1.5	Develop a strategy for the longer-term sustainable delivery plan for leisure services within the borough	Commissioned report into longer term solutions



Health and Wellbeing

Clr Tony Leech
 Lead Member Health and
 Wellbeing



Primary Aim 2 - Provide direct support to residents through the provision of schemes such as Homes Upgrade Grant, Disabled Facilities Grants and energy grants

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
HW2.1	Efficiently deliver schemes that will directly contribute to the wellbeing of residents	Provision of Disabled Facilities Grants to enable residents to remain in their own homes
HW2.2	Implement a leisure centre access schemes for Children in Care and Care Leavers	Scheme promoted with our leisure provider
HW2.3	Work with organisations supporting elderly and isolated residents to promote support that is available	Conversations with organisations via Health and Wellbeing alliances to understand existing support in our communities
		Promote available support through our online support directory

People and Community

Cllr Adam Bridgewater
Lead Member People and
Community



Primary Aim 1 - To ensure that we provide responsive support and good quality frontline services

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
PC1.1	Carry out a review to ensure we continue to provide good quality, responsive frontline services	Review of our Localities Service to ensure they remain responsive to our priorities. Implement recommendations of Localities Service review to deliver good quality services Monitor the impact of 2023 car parking review
PC1.2	Continue to monitor our commissioned frontline services	Contract monitoring and performance of our Waste and Street Scene services (FCC)

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Primary Aim 2 - Build effective relationships with key partners, working together to address local challenges

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Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
PC2.1	Formation of Community Development Team	<p>Develop service action plan for the Community Development Team</p> <p>Review of partners aligned to new corporate strategy. Potential inflationary increase (not applied for 5 years)</p> <p>Support Community projects through Member Locality budget including reviewing the criteria. Extra £500 each (£1,000 each total per year)</p> <p>Develop a plan to support Arts and Culture across the Borough</p> <p>Work with the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) to co-produce a Community Development Action Plan.</p> <p>Support communities to develop community resilience plans.</p> <p>Raise the profile of the Council within the community by attending a series of events to promote Council Services and support</p>
PC2.2	Support our communities to deliver projects to enhance open spaces, parks, play pitches and other community assets by awarding funding from developer contributions (Section 106) and capital projects funds.	Utilisation of developer contributions through the planning process for recreation and leisure schemes within the borough.
PC2.3	Community Governance Reviews	<p>Progress with the Okehampton Community Governance Review</p> <p>Progress with Sydenham Damerell Community Governance Review</p>
PC2.4	Provision of Rural England Community Resillience Grants	Grants provided up to £10,000 match funded
PC2.5	Introduce a Young Person's Climate and Biodiversity Award to promote positive community action	Continue with awards
PC2.6	Lobby partners for better service provision in West Devon - for example Devon County Council for potholes and youth provision	
PC2.7	Develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment for the Council	

Economy and Jobs

Cllr Neil Jory Lead Member for
Economy and Jobs



Primary Aim 1 - Maximise on the benefits for business and communities from the successful UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Funding Programmes

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Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverable
EJ1.1	Decarbonisation Plans provided through contract with Libraries Unlimited	Provision of decarbonisation support planning for businesses
EJ1.2	Support community energy groups to promote and maximise the impact of their work for West Devon communities	
EJ1.3	Enable the development of local food and drink distribution projects,	
EJ1.4	Construction sector decarbonisation support	Audit and support programme for construction businesses
EJ1.5	Support businesses to decarbonise	Grants of up to £10,000 (match funded) to businesses Clean diversification grants programme

Primary Aim 2 - Ensure improvement to strategic infrastructure (including digital connectivity) and influencing partners to act

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverable
EJ2.1	Support the progress of the Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan and work towards its implementation	Delivery of LCWIP and behaviour change strategy
EJ2.2	Review the opportunities provided by the Government's new Digital access programme and what that means for broadband and 4g services across the borough	

Economy and Jobs

Cllr Neil Jory Lead Member for
Economy and Jobs



Primary Aim 3 - Create an environment in which business in all sectors can innovate

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverable
EJ3.1	Work with partners such as Devon Agri-Tech alliance to facilitate networking between and with farms to support the implementation of regenerative farming methods	Provision of agri-tech innovation grants of up to £10,000
EJ3.2	Work with local farms to support agricultural diversification	Delivery of Agri-Tech Innovation Project Regenerative Farming Support (up to a year of support to diversify per Farm from the Apricot Centre) Provision of Land Management Support consultancy to WD farms from The Apricot Centre
EJ3.3	Work with Town Councils and partners to develop town plans to help shape the economy of our places.	Support each of our Towns to develop Economic Plans should they wish to do so
EJ3.4	Work with businesses in Okehampton to develop plans for a Business Improvement District.	Consult on the formation of a Okehampton Business Improvement District or Chamber of Commerce. Ballot on formation
EJ3.5	Continue to support Tavistock BID	Continuation of existing support for BID operation - WDBC costs for collection of Levy fees
EJ3.6	Continue with advice and support for businesses looking to start-up or scale-up within the Borough	Continuation of Business Advice



Performance and Resources

Cllr Chris Edmonds, Lead
Member for Performance and
Resources



Overarching aim: Be the best organisation we can be to deliver for our communities

Primary Aim 1 - Implement the Councils Organisational Development Plan to support our staff

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
PR1.1	Implement Year 2 of the Council's Organisational Development Plan	Deliver targeted and refreshed recruitment approaches to overcome local government recruitment challenges
		Carry out an annual staff survey to get feedback from staff on how we are doing
		Implement our guaranteed interview scheme for Care Leavers, Ex-Forces personnel and candidates with disabilities where they meet the minimum requirements for the role
		Implement our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment and plan
		Promote apprenticeship opportunities to develop our own talent.

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Primary Aim 2 - Make sure that we manage the Council's finances well

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
PR2.1	Set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26	Work with the Rural Services Network to lobby Government for fairer funding for rural services
		Respond to the Government consultation on the Finance Settlement
		Regular all Member briefings on financial matters and budget setting including via formal reporting process - Capital, Revenue and Treasury Management monitoring reports
		Carry out a consultation of businesses on our Council Tax setting
		Annual training or Members on Treasury Management
PR2.2	Demonstrate value for money and efficiency of services through independent assessments	Maintain a high standard judgement from our external auditors on their Annual Audit Report.
		Continue to make improvements in internal audit assessments
		Work with Devon Audit Partnership to decide priority internal audit focus for coming year

Performance and Resources

Cllr Chris Edmonds, Lead
Member for Performance and
Resources



Primary Aim 3 - Guarantee efficiency in service delivery by managing performance

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
PR3.1	Identify further areas for service reviews to make sure our teams provide a good quality service	Localities and Frontline service review Ensure that our KPI's reflect our Council plan and the needs of our communities - launching updated KPI's from April 2024
PR3.2	Develop and implement systems that support our staff to deliver the best services for our residents.	Maximise the IT systems currently in use eg. the new Planning and Land Charges systems Develop the resilience of our IT systems Secure Council resilience for emergency planning, business continuity & safety. One off piece of work
PR3.3	Develop and implement a sustainable procurement strategy to secure value for money and support local businesses	Update our procurement strategy to guarantee greater emphasis on reducing climate impact of the Council supply chain and increased social value Commission updated spend and supply chain analysis to inform future strategies

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Primary Aim 4 - Council buildings and land meet our future needs

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
PR4.1	Prepare an asset management strategy to set out how we will maximise the use of our assets	Agree Asset Management Strategy and develop delivery plan

Accessibility and Communications

Cllr Jeff Moody, Lead Member
for service accessibility and
communications



Primary Aim 1 - To communicate the work of the Council and how it benefits the community

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverables
AC1.1	Proactively and continuously improve the Council communication channels	<p>Develop an annual communications plan aligned to the Councils new priorities including how we'll use all communication channels to promote key messages</p> <p>Refresh the 'Who Does What' Council tax leaflet so that our residents know who to go to in order to get things done</p> <p>Develop a clear commitment to our customers, setting out what they can expect and what we expect of them in working with the Council</p>
AC1.2	Continue to enhance our online communications	<p>Monitor satisfaction of online processes and webpages and make improvements where required</p> <p>Improve clarity on our website so customers know when they need to contact someone else (such as Devon County or Town and Parish Councils)</p>
AC1.3	Develop other (offline) communication channels	<p>Launch a 'Leaders' Column supported by Lead Members in local newspapers to share key Council news</p> <p>Develop a refreshed Annual Report for the Council setting out what we've delivered in the past 12 months</p> <p>Improve signage and facility of the Kilworthy Park reception area and entrance to the site to include opening days / hours</p> <p>Review our Member resources to enable our Members to actively engage with residents on key council priorities</p> <p>Measure the effectiveness of our outreach programmes - monitoring levels of engagement</p> <p>Consider plans for highlighting how residents can access Council services to those not online - for example posters for parish noticeboards and promote the locality support to partners</p>
AC1.4	Review the effectiveness of consultations	<p>Ensure that our platform is user friendly with good response rates</p> <p>Include a summary of our consultations within our Annual Report</p>
AC1.5	Planned programme of community event attendance to promote the work of the Council	Health and Wellbeing Conferences / Okehampton Show / Chagford Show / Dickensian /

Accessibility and Communications

Cllr Jeff Moody, Lead Member
for service accessibility and
communications



Primary Aim 2 - To strive for and achieve a high level of customer satisfaction

Action Ref	Action Description	Specific Deliverable
AC2.1	Customer satisfaction survey	Carry out an annual Institute of Customer Service satisfaction survey
AC2.2	Digital Accessibility - continue to monitor online uptake and improve functionality online	Enhance our KPI's to include a measure of satisfaction with online processes
AC2.3	Respond to complaints in a timely manner, and implement learning	Refresh our KPI to report on complaints performance



How will we monitor progress?

Good business planning and effective performance management at the Council are strongly linked. Our strategic priorities and plans identify the objectives that we aim to deliver, with our performance management framework providing the mechanism for how we achieve these objectives and how we monitor progress.

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The Council Plan sets out what we will be doing over the period 2024 – 2028 against our adopted aims and ambitions.

The annual delivery plan as set out in this document will be embedded across the Council through service plans and individual objective setting and monitored closely to ensure we deliver what we say we will.

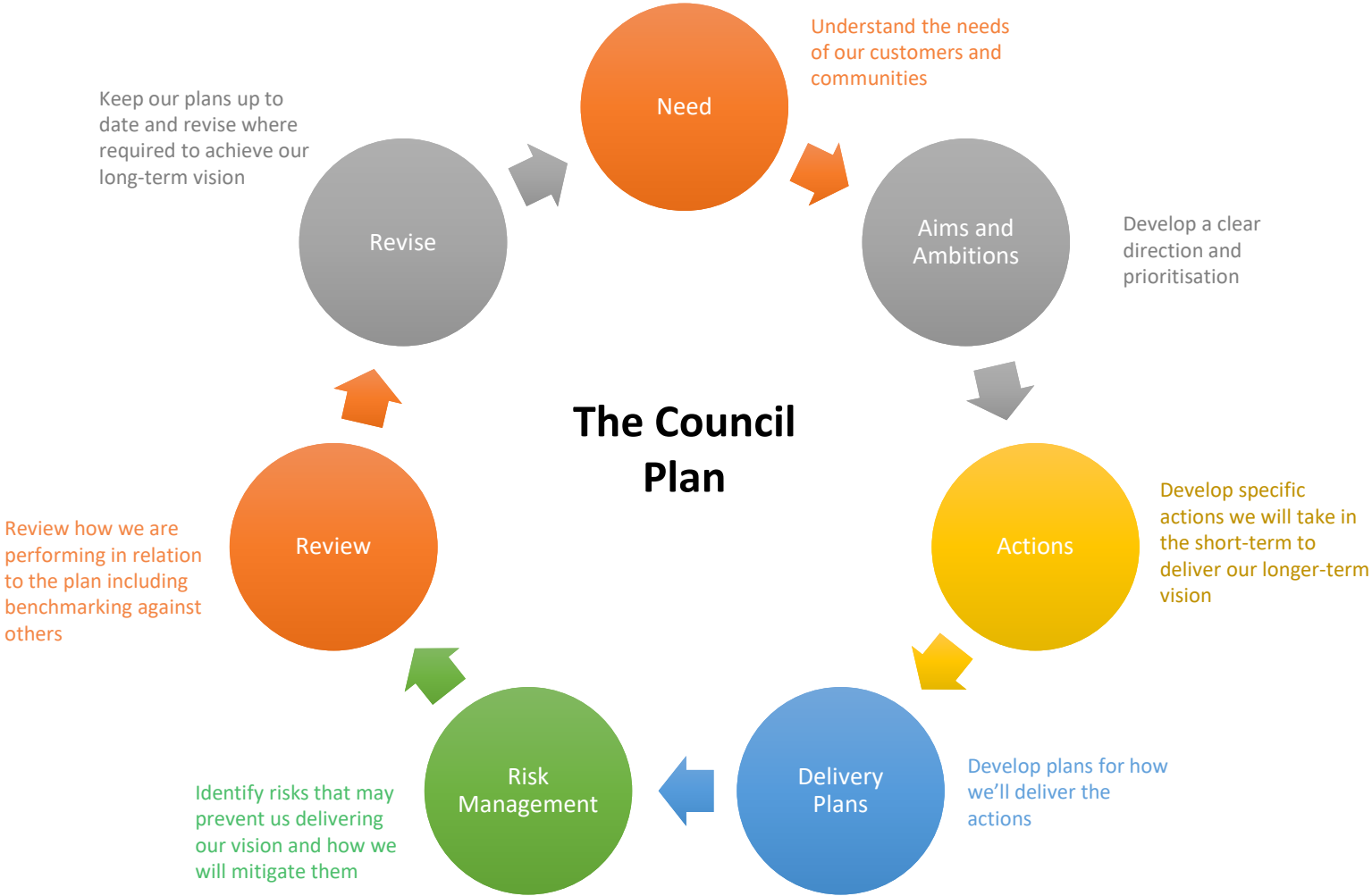
The following pages set out the broad process for monitoring progress.



Performance Management Framework: **Key elements**

We'll keep our plans relevant and manage delivery of them by ensuring we follow these steps.

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Performance Management: The Golden Thread

From Strategic priorities to individual targets

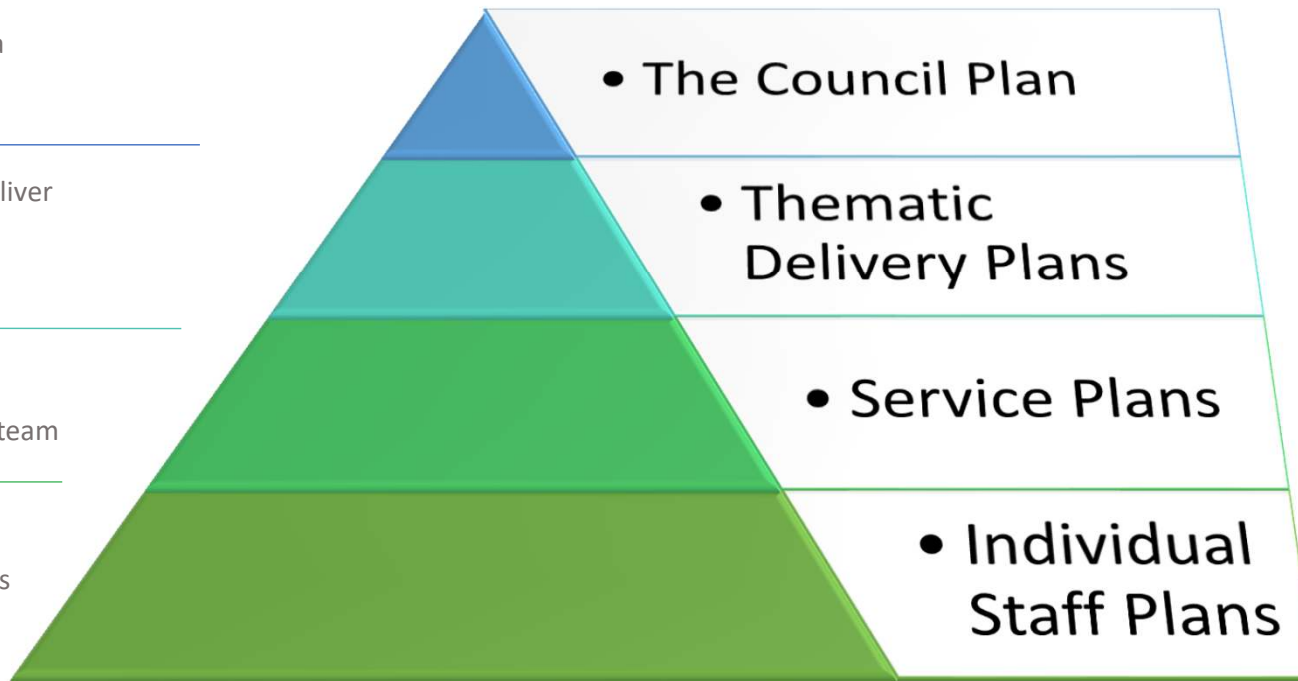
Key Elements:

- Longer term vision for the area
- Our top priorities

- Detailed plans for how we'll deliver the vision
- Resourcing

- Business as usual
- Improvement projects
- Key Performance measures for team

- Task and Behavioural objectives
- Individual performance measures
- Development Objectives



Monitoring Progress:

- Review The Council Plan document with Annual Delivery Plan Updates

- Quarterly Integrated Performance Report to Hub
- Schedule of 'Theme' Updates to O&S

- SLT oversight & reporting
- Regular Service Performance monitoring including KPI's to O&S

- Annual Objective Setting for individuals
- Regular 1:1's

Report to: **Council**

Date: **20 February 2024**

Title: **OKEHAMPTON & SYDENHAM DAMEREL
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS –
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Portfolio Area: **Strategy & Governance**

Lead Member: **Cllr Bridgewater – Communities and
Chairman of the People & Community Hub
Advisory Group**

Wards Affected: **Okehampton South, Okehampton North and
Milton Ford**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or
implementation of substantive decision)

Following the decisions of Full Council, officers will then contact the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)

Author: **Darryl White –
Head of
Democratic
Services**

Contact: darryl.white@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the People & Community Hub Advisory Group RECOMMEND to Council that:

- 1. the submissions received on the Community Governance Reviews for the published draft proposals for Okehampton and Sydenham Damerel be noted;**
- 2. the final recommendations in relation to these Reviews be approved as follows:**

For Okehampton

- 1. That the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council be amended in line with Appendix B; and**
- 2. That the Council strongly encourages the Town and Parish Council to work more closely together for the benefit of their local communities.**

For Sydenham Damerel

That the Parish Council be abolished and replaced by a 'Parish Meeting' form of governance; and

- 3. the Monitoring Officer be granted delegated authority, in consultation with the lead Hub Committee Member for Communities and the Leader of Council, to execute the Reorganisation Orders in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.**

1. Executive summary

1.1 At its meeting held on 3 October 2023, Full Council resolved (Minute CM 44/23 refers):

- 1. That the initial submissions received on the Community Governance Reviews for Okehampton and Sydenham Damerel be noted;*
- 2. That a second public consultation exercise be undertaken on the following proposals:*

Okehampton

Option 1 – *that the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council be amended in line with Appendix A of the presented agenda report; and*

Option 2 – *that the status quo be retained in relation to the parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council.*

Sydenham Damerel

That the Parish Council be abolished and replaced by a 'Parish Meeting' form of governance; and

3. *That, in line with the adopted Terms of Reference as presented at Appendix B of the published agenda report, the final Review recommendations be considered by the People & Community Hub Advisory Group and presented back to the Full Council meeting to be held on 20 February 2024."*

1.2 In accordance with the timelines set out in the adopted Community Governance Review Terms of Reference (Appendix A refers), the second round of public consultation ran from 5 October to 1 December 2023;

1.3 Upon the expiry of the consultation deadline, the People & Community Hub Advisory Group has met on three separate occasions (12 December 2023; 30 January and 6 February 2024) to consider the responses that were received alongside the other related material, information and factors that have formed part of the Review since the petitions were first presented to Full Council on 27 September 2022 (Minute CM 38/22 refers). At the meeting held on 12 December 2023, the Group also received representations from Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council;

1.4 Following detailed consideration, the Advisory Group has concluded that the following final recommendations should be made to Full Council:

Okehampton:

1. That the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council be amended in line with Appendix B; and
2. That the Council strongly encourages the Town and Parish Council to work more closely together for the benefit of their local communities.

Sydenham Damerel

That the Parish Council be abolished and replaced by a 'Parish Meeting' form of governance.

2. Background

2.1 As the 'Principal Authority', West Devon Borough Council has ultimate responsibility for considering this Review and undertaking the statutory consultative requirements which include:

- Consulting local government electors for the area under review;
- Consulting any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Borough Council to have an interest in the Review;
- Notifying and consulting Devon County Council; and

- Taking into account any representations received in connection with the Review;
- 2.2 At its meeting held on 27 June 2023, Full Council appointed the following Members to serve on the People & Community Hub Advisory Group (Minute CM 25/23 refers):
- Cllrs A Bridgewater (Hub lead and Group Chair); K Ball; A Cunningham; J Elliott; P Kimber; A Johnson; J Moody; P Squire; and Cllr C West.
- 2.3 Following the second round of public consultation, the three Advisory Group meetings focused on:
- 12 December 2023 – representatives from Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council attended to provide presentations to the Group and respond to Member questions;
- 30 January 2024 – the Group gave detailed consideration to the representations made and the responses to the consultation and provided an initial steer as to its final recommendations; and
- 6 February 2024 – based upon the previous meetings, the Group was presented with a draft version of this report for Full Council to ensure that it was supportive of its content prior to its publication;
- 2.4 The local Ward Members for Okehampton South, Okehampton North and Milton Ford and any other interested Members were invited to attend each of the three Group meetings during this Stage of the Review.
- 2.5 The full list of comments received for both Reviews during the two consultation periods are set out on the Council website and can be accessed via the following weblink:
<https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/community-governance-review>

Consultation Responses - Okehampton

- 2.6 For Okehampton, 4,600 households were written to and 193 comments were received during the second round of the public consultation exercise. In addition, a 119 signatory petition had been received on behalf of Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council that supported Option 2 (i.e. retention of the status quo). Further, an alternative proposal had also been submitted that had suggested an amalgamation of the two Councils. Of the 193 comments received, views were broadly broken down as:
- 143 in favour of Option 1 (i.e. to amend the boundary lines in accordance with Appendix B);
 - 35 comments were in favour of Option 2 the status quo; and
 - 15 submissions gave either a mixed or no definitive opinion.

2.7 Further, of the 193 comments received, a number had assumed (or suggested) a preference for a single Council to replace the existing Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council. A number of comments received from residents living in the Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council had also stated that they had wrongly assumed that they already lived within the boundaries of Okehampton Town Council.

Advisory Group Deliberations - Okehampton

2.8 Throughout its deliberations, the Advisory Group has cross referenced the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance on Community Governance Reviews and, in particular, reverted back to the emphasis that the Guidance placed upon '*community cohesion*'.

2.9 In its deliberations, the Advisory Group made particular reference to:

Low Turnout:

- Since over 4,600 households had been written to, Members noted that the response rate for the first round of public consultation was 2.7% and that the second round yielded a 6.8% rate which the Advisory Group considered disappointing. However, the Group was also of the view that this could be interpreted that the majority of residents had no strong view.

The Strain on Town Council Services

- The Advisory Group was sympathetic to the views expressed by the Town Council and by members of the public during both rounds of the public consultation exercise in respect of the additional strain that is being placed on services that are provided (and funded) by the Town Council as a result of the extensive additional development in the area.

The Local Economy

- Members also highlighted the close linkages between community cohesion and the vibrancy of the local economy. In so doing, the extent of recent economic development that had been carried out on land to the east of Okehampton along the A30 was highlighted. At present, extensive work was underway to establish a BID (Business Improvement District) in Okehampton and the importance of a thriving, cohesive community with an interesting and vibrant town was therefore noted. As a result, from an economic perspective, Members were of the view that either Option 1 or an amalgamation of the two Councils were preferable alternatives to simply retaining the status quo.

The Ongoing Viability of the Parish Council

- As part of the deliberations, careful consideration was given to the comments raised by the representatives of the Hamlets Parish Council in respect of the ongoing viability of the Parish Council should Option 1 be ultimately approved.

Whilst Members had sympathy with the points raised, this was partly offset by the fact that the parish precept was comparatively low and, given that any boundary changes would not come into effect until 2027, there was the ability for the Parish Council to implement incremental increases. On a similar point, Members were of the view that the Parish Council should offer to financially contribute to the services that were being provided by the Town Council.

The Longstanding Nature of this Issue

- A number of Members made the point that the matter of the boundary lines between the Hamlets and Town Councils had been a particularly longstanding issue which had never been addressed or tackled. Given the length of time and consideration that had been given by the Advisory Group in reaching this point, these Members felt that it was now appropriate to address the matter. In expressing these views, Members therefore did not consider it suitable to simply refrain from making a decision and retain the status quo.

Amalgamation of the Two Councils

- Whilst some Members felt that there was still merit in pursuing the option to amalgamate the two councils (with the one Council being warded along the existing town and hamlet boundary lines), the Group referred to its conclusions reached following the first round of public consultation whereby the combination of an urban town council and a rural parish council would not be conducive to community cohesion, and appropriate democratic representation. As a consequence, the Council had not included an amalgamation of the two councils as an option during the most recent round of public consultation.

Closer Working Relations Between the Two Councils

- Notwithstanding the recommendation that an amalgamation should not be pursued, the Advisory Group did wish to strongly encourage the two Councils to work far more closely together for the benefit of their local communities. In so doing, the Group highlighted that the local Borough Council Ward Members represented both councils and, if necessary, it would be appropriate (in their respective Community Leadership roles) for these Members to facilitate closer working relations between the two authorities.

Concluding Recommendations

- In conclusion and, on balance, the Advisory Group wishes to recommend to Full Council that:
 1. *the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council be amended in line with Appendix B; and*
 2. *the Council strongly encourages the Town and Parish Council to work more closely together for the benefit of their local communities.*

Delegated Authority and Council Sizes

- Whilst the report also seeks to grant delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the lead Hub Committee Member for Communities and the Leader of Council, to execute the Reorganisation Orders, the Advisory Group recognises that, if approved by Full Council, there will be implications on the sizes of the new Town and Parish Councils;
- Currently, the Town Council is served by 14 Town Councillors, with the Hamlets Parish Council being served by 8 Parish Councillors. Given the extent of the boundary changes, it is suggested that the Order is drafted on the basis that the Town Council size is ultimately increased to 15, with the Parish Council size reduced to 7 Parish Councillors.

Consultation Responses – Sydenham Damerel

2.10 14 comments were received during the second round of public consultation on the Sydenham Damerel proposals that were broadly broken down as:

- 12 in favour of the Parish Council being abolished and replaced by a 'Parish Meeting'; and
- 2 in opposition to the proposal.

Advisory Group Deliberations – Sydenham Damerel

2.11 In its deliberations, the Advisory Group made particular reference to:

- A response rate of 14 out of a total of 120 households (constituting just a 11.7% response rate) was particularly disappointing, but could also be interpreted that residents were not objecting to the proposals; and
- The views of the local Ward Member in support of the Parish Council being abolished and replaced by a 'Parish Meeting' form of governance.

- 2.12 The Advisory Group proceeded to conclude that the Parish Council should be abolished and replaced by a 'Parish Meeting' form of governance.
- 2.13 Such have been the difficulties experienced in local parishioners wishing to stand to serve on the parish council, the Advisory Group hopes that steps can be taken to implement a Parish Meeting form of governance as soon as is practically possible.

Next Steps

- 2.13 In the event of the final recommendations for Okehampton and Sydenham Damerel Community Governance Reviews being approved by Full Council, then agreement is sought for the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the lead Hub Committee Member for Communities and the Leader of Council, to execute the Reorganisation Orders in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

3. Options Available and Consideration of Risk

Okehampton

- 3.1 The Council has been presented with three options: to amend the Town/Parish boundaries in accordance with Appendix B; to retain the status quo; and to amalgamate the two Councils. For the reasons set out at Section 2.9 above, the Advisory Group is recommending to Full Council that the Town/Parish boundaries in line with Appendix B.

Sydenham Damerel

- 3.2 The Council could opt to retain a Parish Council for Sydenham Damerel. However, the Advisory Group recognises the challenges that have been faced by the parish in finding sufficient numbers of residents to stand to serve on the parish council. This, coupled with just two letters of representation supporting the retention of a parish council, has resulted in the Advisory Group recommending that a Parish Meeting form of governance be adopted.

4. Implications

Legal/Governance		<p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires the Council to 'consult the local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the review and to take the representations that are received into account by judging them against the statutory criteria (as below):</p> <p>'That Community governance within the area under review reflects the identities and interests of the</p>
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		community in that area and is effective and convenient.'
		The Council is required to complete the Community Governance Review within 12 months from the day on which it publishes the Terms of Reference. A Community Governance Review is concluded on the day on which the Council publishes the recommendations made by the Community Governance Review.
Financial		There are no additional financial implications directly related to this report
Risk		The risk implications are set out at Section 3 above.
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Council Theme – <i>Strengthening Communities</i>
Consultation & Engagement Strategy		The requirements to consult and engage at each stage are set out in the Terms of Reference and are in line with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		There are no equality and diversity implications directly related to this report.
Safeguarding		There are no safeguarding implications directly related to this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		There are no community safety or crime and disorder implications directly related to this report.
Climate Change & Biodiversity		There are no Climate Change & Biodiversity implications directly related to this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		There are no health, safety and wellbeing implications directly related to this report.
Other implications		N/A

Supporting Information

Appendices:

- A. Community Governance Review – Adopted Terms of Reference; and
- B. Map setting out proposed amendments to the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council and Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council.

Background Papers:

- The petitions received at the Council Meeting on 22 September 2022;
- Central Government Guidance on Community Governance Reviews;
- The report and minutes arising from the Full Council meeting held on 3 October 2023; and
- The representations received during Stage 4 of the Community Governance Review: <https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/community-governance-review>

West Devon Borough Council

Community Governance Review – Terms of Reference

At its meeting held on 22 September 2022, the Mayor of West Devon Borough Council was formally presented with two petitions (Minute CM 38/22 refers).

The two petitions (which have since been determined as being ‘valid’) call on the Borough Council to instigate a Community Governance Review on the following:

- (a) A proposal that seeks to abolish Sydenham Damerel Parish Council; and
- (b) A wish to review the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council.

The Borough Council will be guided by the relevant legislation and guidance, in particular the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England).

What is a Community Governance Review?

A Community Governance Review provides the opportunity for ‘principal councils’ (borough councils and unitary councils) to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. Such a Review can be helpful in circumstances such as where there have been changes in population, or in reaction to specific or local new issues.

In so doing, a Community Governance Review offers an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries, tied to firm ground features and remove the many anomalous parish boundaries that exist in England.

Why is the Borough Council undertaking the Review?

In light of the formal validation of the two petitions, the main purpose of this Review will be to consult on two standalone proposals. Namely to:

- (a) abolish the Sydenham Damerel Parish Council and establish the parish as a ‘Parish Meetings’ only parish; and
- (b) review the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council in addition to the surrounding Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council area boundaries.

The government has emphasised that recommendations made in a Review ought to bring about '*improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in a more effective and convenient delivery of local services.*'

As the principal authority, West Devon Borough Council is responsible for undertaking any such Review within its electoral area. The body responsible for overseeing this process is the Full Council, who will be responsible for producing draft and final recommendations. The Council will approve the final recommendations before a Community Governance Order is then made.

How will the Borough Council conduct consultations during this Review?

Before making any recommendations or publishing final proposals, the Borough Council will take full account of the views of local residents. The Borough Council will comply with the statutory consultative requirements by:-

- Consulting local government electors for the area under review;
- Consulting any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Borough Council to have an interest in the review;
- Notifying and consulting Devon County Council; and
- Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.

Information relating to the review will be available on the Council website (www.westdevon.gov.uk) and key documents will be available on request via democratic.services@swdevon.gov.uk and/or from the Borough Council offices at: Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, Tavistock PL19 OBZ.

The Borough Council will publish its recommendations as soon as practicable and will take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them. The Borough Council will notify each consultee and any other persons or bodies who have made written representations of the outcome of the review.

What will be the timetable for this Review?

It is a statutory requirement whereby a review must be concluded within a twelve month period from the day on which it commences. A review starts when the Borough Council publishes its Terms of Reference and concludes when the Borough Council publishes its final recommendations.

Outlined below is the proposed timetable for the review:-

Stage 1	Publication of the Terms of Reference for the Review	Thursday, 23 February 2023
Stage 2	Introductory Stage: Submissions and views sought and invited on existing arrangements. The Borough Council invites proposals from stakeholders on future arrangements in accordance with the Terms of Reference.	Thursday, 23 February – Wednesday, 14 June 2023
Stage 3	Consideration of Initial Submissions: Draft proposals to be considered by the Council's People & Community Hub Advisory Group before recommendations are made to the Council meeting to be held on 3 October 2023.	Wednesday, 14 June – Tuesday, 3 October 2023
Stage 4	Consultation on Published Draft Proposals: In publishing the draft proposals, the Borough Council will notify stakeholders and invite further comments and/or recommendations.	Thursday, 5 October – Friday, 1 December 2023
Stage 5	Final Recommendations Consideration of consultation responses and production of final recommendations to be presented to the Council's People & Community Hub Advisory Group before final recommendations are made to the Council meeting on 20 February 2024.	Monday, 4 December – Tuesday, 20 February 2024
Stage 6	Implementation Final recommendations are then published and the Council resolves (if appropriate) to make a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. For administrative and financial purposes, the Order should take effect on 1 April 2025. Electoral arrangements for an existing town and/or parish council will come into force at the first elections to the town and/or parish council following (any) Reorganisation Order, which will be May 2027.	Tuesday, 20 February 2024 1 April 2025 May 2027

The review will be formally completed when the Council adopts and publishes the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order and requests that the Electoral Commission approve any consequential changes.

How to contact us

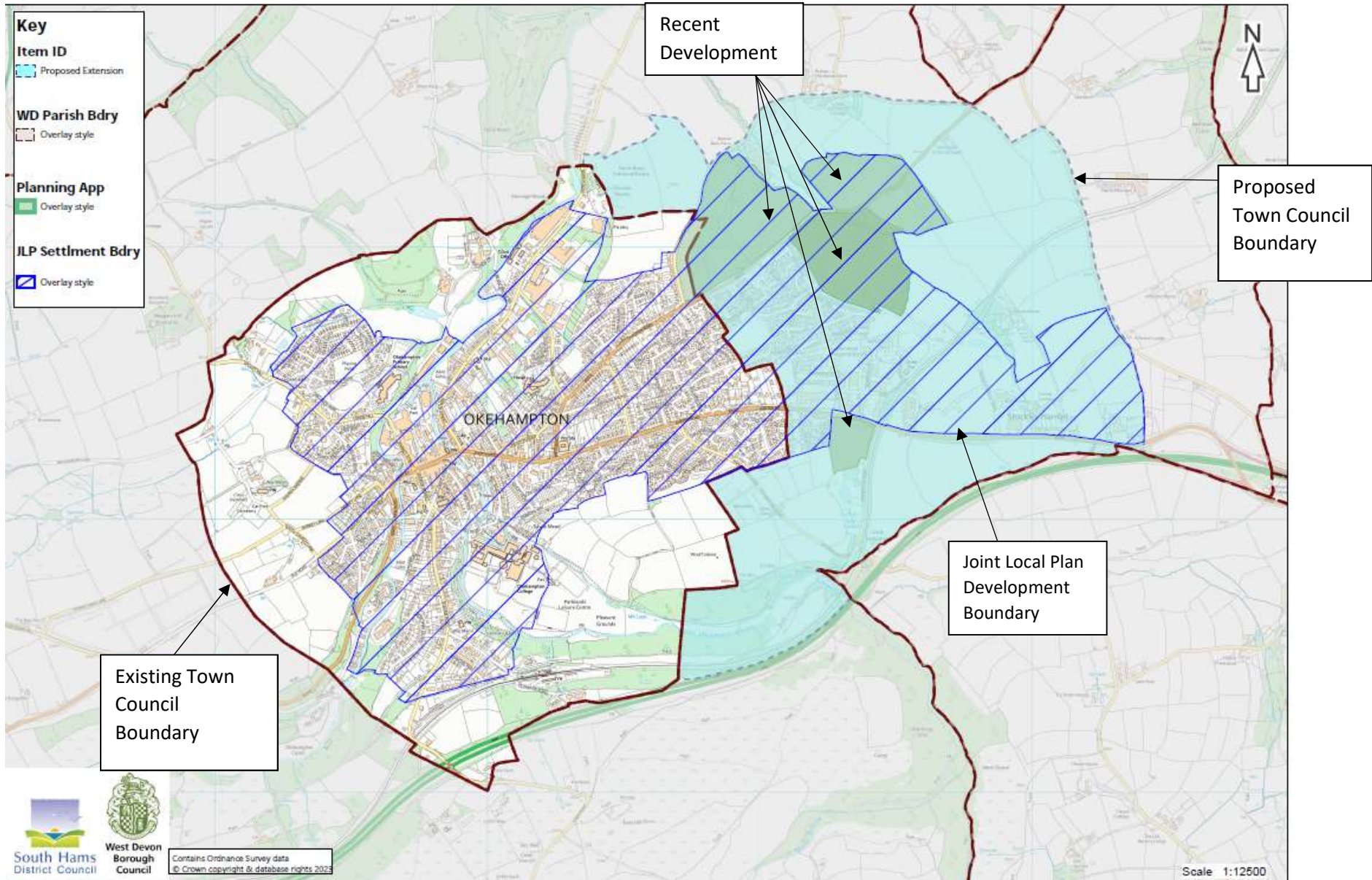
Should you wish to submit a written representation regarding this review, please address this to:

Community Governance Review
Democratic Services
West Devon Borough Council
Kilworthy Park
Tavistock
PL19 0BZ

Alternatively, your submission may be emailed to:
democratic.services@swdevon.gov.uk

Date of publication

Thursday, 23 February 2023.



Recent Development

Proposed Town Council Boundary

Joint Local Plan Development Boundary

Existing Town Council Boundary



Contains Ordnance Survey data
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Report to: **COUNCIL**

Date: **20 February 2024**

Title: **Council Tax Discounts and Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25**

Portfolio Area: **Cllr Mandy Ewings - Leader of The Council**

Wards Affected: **ALL**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Upon the expiry of this meeting.

Author: **Geni Hotchkiss** Role: **Head of Revenues and Benefits**

Contact: **geni.hotchkiss@swdevon.gov.uk**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is RECOMMENDED that the Council:

- 1. NOTES the contents of the report.**
- 2. APPROVES a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 as follows:**
 - Make no changes to the bands of the current banded scheme.**
 - Removes the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for self-employed Claimants.**
 - Disregards 100% of the of the 'Limited Capability for Work' element of Universal Credit.**
- 3. ADOPTS, with effect from 1 April 2024, the following Council Tax discounts:**
 - (a) The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties is 100% for a maximum period of 1 month.**
 - (b) The discount for unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties for 1 month to 1 year is zero.**
 - (c) The discount for properties which require major repair work to render them habitable is 50% for a maximum period of 12 months.**

- (d) The discount for unoccupied furnished properties (second homes) is zero.**
 - (e) An empty homes premium of an additional 100% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and unfurnished for at least one year, but less than five years.**
 - (f) An empty homes premium of an additional 200% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and unfurnished for at least five years, but less than ten years.**
 - (g) An empty homes premium of additional 300% is levied on properties that have remained unoccupied and unfurnished for at least ten years.**
- 4. ADOPTS, with effect from 1 April 2025, a Second Homes Premium of 100%.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 There is a requirement to have a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) to support residents who qualify for assistance in paying Council Tax. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) requires each billing authority in England to have a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax payable by persons, or classes of persons, whom the authority considers are in financial need ("a council tax reduction scheme").
- 1.2 The LCTRS must be approved by 11 March for the following year and the billing authority must consult with major preceptors and any other person who may have an interest in any proposed changes to the scheme.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 19 September 2023, Hub Committee gave its approval to consult on changes to the LCTRS for 2024/25, to ensure the Council continues to provide as much support as possible to residents during the Cost-of-Living crisis (Min 18/23).
- 1.4 This report provides Members with a summary of the consultation responses. Members are asked to consider the content of this report and to recommend to Council a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the financial year 2024/25.
- 1.5 The report also sets out the current council tax discounts and premiums and reaffirms the Council's intention to levy a 100% premium on Second Homes as allowed by the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

- 1.6 A version of this report was also considered by the Hub Committee at its meeting held on 30 January 2024 during which Hub Members recommended approval of each of the recommendations (Minute HC 45/23 refers).

2. Background

- 2.1 Since April 2013, the Council has been required to establish a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme to help working age residents on a low income pay their council tax. This scheme replaced the national scheme for Council Tax Benefit which was fully funded by central government.
- 2.2 The Council is also required to administer the prescribed Government Council Tax Reduction Scheme for pension age residents and is not able to make any changes to this scheme.
- 2.3 It is an annual requirement for Councils to review their working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme and decide whether to continue with the same scheme or revise it.
- 2.4 In 2019, the Council introduced a banded scheme which assessed the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction based on the net income of the claimant and their partner, if applicable. The income bands were amended for the 2023/24 scheme with some bands being uplifted by 20% to reflect additional cost of living pressures.
- 2.5 At its meeting of 19 September 2023, Hub Committee agreed to public consultation on two proposed changes to the CTRS for 2024/25. The two proposed changes are to remove the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for self-employed claimants and to disregard 100% of the Limited Capability for Work element of Universal Credit.

3. Outcomes/outputs

Proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25

- 3.1 The public consultation Let's Talk "Have your say on our Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 ran from 17 October to 28 November.
- 3.2 The proposals consulted on were as follows:
 - **Removal of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF)**

The Minimum Income Floor is where the scheme (following an exemption for the first 12 months) assumes a certain level of self-employed profit, which is linked to the national minimum wage, even if the claimant did not earn that amount.

- **Disregard 100% of the 'Limited Capability for Work' element of Universal Credit.**

Currently claimants receiving Employment and Support Allowance are treated as a 'passported' claim and receive 85% council tax reduction. When they transfer to Universal Credit, they are awarded a Limited Capability for Work element of £390.06 per month. Universal Credit is not a passported benefit and the Limited Capability for Work element is treated as income.

- 3.3 There were 297 visitors to the Consultation portal, however only 43 of these visitors took the opportunity to respond to the consultation questions.
- 3.4 The Council also wrote to all major preceptors seeking their views on the proposed changes to the scheme. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall have both confirmed they are happy with the proposals. Devon County Council have confirmed, on balance, they support the proposed changes, but would like us to consider providing support to care leavers through the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Summary of consultation responses

- 3.5 The public consultation received 43 responses, with 27 of respondents saying they live in West Devon This question was optional.
- 3.6 There were 43 responses to the proposal to remove the Minimum Income Floor, broken down as follows with all respondents answering the question.

Question:

Do you agree with the proposal to remove the Minimum Income Floor?

Response	Response number	Percentage
Yes	31	72%
No	12	28%
Did not answer	0	0%

- 3.7 The proposal to disregard 100% of the 'Limited Capability for Work' element of Universal Credit, received 43 responses with 1 respondent choosing not to answer this question. The responses can be summarised as follows:

Question:

Do you agree with the proposal to disregard 100% of the 'Limited Capability for Work' element of Universal Credit?

Response	Response number	Percentage
Yes	36	84%
No	6	14%
Did not answer	1	3%

3.8 Although the overall number of responses to the consultation was low, there was a majority in favour of the proposals, with 72% of respondents supporting the proposal to remove the minimum income floor for self-employed claimants.

3.9 The second proposal, which was to disregard 100% of the Limited Capability for Work element of Universal Credit, had a higher level of support with 84% of respondents in favour of this proposal.

3.10 Having taken into consideration the responses to the public consultation, the Council recognises that one of the best ways it can continue to support residents during the current cost of living crisis it to make the proposed changes to the CTRS.

3.11 The weekly income bands, effective from 1 April 2023, and which will remain unchanged from 1 April 2024, are detailed in the table below:

Band	Reduction	Single	Couple	Family 1	Family 1+
1	85%	£0.00 to £95.00	£0.00 to £138.00	£0.00 to £220.00	£0.00 to £355.00
2	80%	£95.01 to £132.00	£138.01 to £180.00	£220.01 to £282.00	£355.01 to £385.00
3	50%	£132.01 to £192.00	£180.01 to £240.00	£282.01 to £342.00	£385.01 to £435.00
4	25%	£192.01 to £246.00	£240.01 to £294.00	£342.01 to £396.00	£435.01 to £480.00

Council Tax Discounts and Premiums

3.12 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 abolished certain council tax discounts with effect from 1 April 2013 and replaced them with discounts which can be determined locally. The table below details the existing discounts the Council has in place and it recommended that these discounts remain the same for 2024/25.

Class	Description	2023/24 Discount	Proposed discount from 1 April 2024
A - Second Homes	Dwellings which are no one's sole or main residence and which are substantially furnished and subject to a 28-day planning restriction.	0% discount	0% discount
B - Second Homes	Dwellings which are no one's sole or main residence and are substantially furnished.	0% discount	0% discount
Class C	Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished.	100% discount for a period of 1 month.	100% discount for a period of 1 month.
Class D	Dwellings which are unoccupied and require major repair work to render them habitable.	50% discount for a maximum period of 12 months.	50% discount for a maximum period of 12 months.

Empty Homes Premium

3.13 Prior to 1 April 2013, billing authorities could charge up to a maximum 100% council tax on dwellings that had been empty for more than two years. From 1 April 2013, billing authorities were given new powers to charge a premium of up to 50% of the council tax payable. Further legislation was then introduced allowing a 100% empty homes premium to be levied from 1 April 2019.

3.14 There were then further incremental changes leading to the current position which is as follows:

Description	Premium
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Dwellings left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for two years or more.	100%
Dwellings left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 5 years or more.	200%
Dwellings left unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 10 years or more.	300%

- 3.15 The original legislation and subsequent amendments were introduced with the express intention of encouraging owners to bring empty properties back into use and the Council charges the maximum premium in all cases.
- 3.16 The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 gives the Council additional powers to apply the empty property premium of 100% after 12 months rather than the current two years.
- 3.17 If agreed, this would be effective from 1 April 2024. There are currently 87 dwellings which would become subject to the premium. The estimated additional yield from council tax would be £0.2m of which the Council's share would be approximately £22,000 (11%).

Second Homes Premium

- 3.18 The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 also amends the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to give billing authorities the discretion to charge additional council tax of up to 100% on dwellings which are occupied periodically, substantially furnished and where no one is resident for council tax purposes, i.e., second homes.
- 3.19 The Council declared a housing crisis in September 2021 and backed the declaration with a 12-point action plan, which included lobbying the Government to allow councils to charge a 100% premium, i.e., 200% council tax, on second or holiday homes, to ensure they contribute fairly to the services they receive.
- 3.20 Under Section 11C (3) of the 1992 Act, any decision to increase the council tax on second homes must be made at least one year prior to the beginning of the financial year to which it relates, hence it can only take effect from 1 April 2025 at the earliest.
- 3.21 There are currently 692 properties on our council tax records classified as a second home. It should be noted that the Government consulted on 'Proposals to exempt categories of dwellings from the council tax premiums' in August 2023. At the time of writing, the outcome of the public consultation has not

been published. Once regulations and/or guidance is issued confirming the exemptions, there may be a number of dwellings which are exempt from paying the premium.

- 3.22 If the recommendation to charge a council tax premium on second homes is adopted, from 1 April 2025, the estimated additional yield from council tax would be £1.6m of which the Council's share would be approximately £0.17m (11%).
- 3.23 The key impact of second homes is to remove a significant number of homes from the local housing market, with properties that would otherwise be available to provide permanent homes for local people being used as holiday homes by people whose primary residency is outside the borough. For this reason, the Council believes that the additional money raised by the second homes premium should be invested back into housing. West Devon Borough Council is working with other Councils across Devon to make the case that all additional council tax raised should be ringfenced to address housing challenges, including to acquire existing properties to provide temporary accommodation, to support people with complex needs and the provision of specialist accommodation with supported facilities for care leavers.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to charge the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age residents. In doing so we would continue to provide support for the wider cohort of residents through our income-banded scheme, however it would mean we wouldn't be providing additional support to residents who are trying to set up their own business or who have a disability or health condition which affects how much they can work.
- 4.2 The outcome of the public consultation undertaken in October and November 2023, is that both the major preceptors and the public are broadly supportive of the proposed changes.
- 4.3 The Council could choose not to charge a 100% premium on second homes. This option is not recommended for the reasons outlined in the report.
- 4.4 The Council could choose not to increase the council tax empty homes premium to 100% for dwellings empty for between 1 and 5 years (currently between two and five years), from 1 April 2024. This decision would not align with the Council's clear ambition to bring empty properties back into use to increase the supply and affordability of housing in the borough.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024/25 is agreed as set out in the consultation. The revised scheme will ensure the Council provides as much support as possible to low-income households.
- 5.2 The Council confirms the council tax discounts and premiums applicable from 1 April 2024 and the premium on second homes which will be charged from 1 April 2025.
- 5.3 The approach taken by the Council is to encourage council taxpayers to use a dwelling as their main residence or allow others to do the same. It also seeks to bring empty properties back into use to increase the supply and affordability of housing in the borough.
- 5.4 The implementation of revised and additional council tax premiums will provide additional income from council tax which will be used to provide services to residents.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit and instead required each billing authority to design a scheme for working age residents specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax.</p> <p>All billing authorities in England are required to have a scheme identifying the reductions payable by residents who are in financial need under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (updated in 2012). Schedule 1A paragraph 5 of the Act states that for each financial year, Councils must consider whether to revise their scheme or replace it with another scheme and that such decisions need to be made by 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to take effect. If the Council does not make/revise its scheme by 11 March 2024, a default scheme will be imposed on the Council which will be effective from 1 April 2024.</p> <p>The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 makes amendments to the 1992 Act, and these are explained in the body of the report.</p>
Financial implications to include reference		<p>The cost of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is met by West Devon Borough Council, and the major presenting authorities, in proportion to their share</p>

to value for money		<p>of the council tax. The CTR Scheme is reflected within the Tax Base calculation as a discount.</p> <p>Previous CTR schemes have always been modelled on a cost neutral basis, in that the cost of the scheme was the equivalent of the level of Government funding.</p> <p>Removing the Minimum Income Floor and disregarding the Limited Capability for Work element will increase the cost of the scheme by around £164,825. The scheme is projected to cost £3.981 million as opposed to the current cost of £3.186 million. WDBC's share of the increase in cost is around 11% of this i.e., £18,131.</p> <p>The Council Tax Collection Fund is in surplus by £3.16m as at 31.3.2023. A distribution of the surplus will be made to all major precepting authorities as part of the 2024/25 Budget setting process. This can be a way of financing the additional cost of the 2024/25 CTR scheme of £164,825, as although the scheme will cost more, preceptors will be receiving a larger distribution of a collection fund surplus than usual due to the level of the surplus on the fund.</p>
Risk		<p>To reduce the cost to the Council, changes would have to be made to the level of support made to working age claimants. Most local authorities have already incorporated a reduced level of support into their local schemes and they should be reviewed on an annual basis. There is a risk that the cost of maintaining the current local scheme will increase if the number of claimants rises due to the state of the local and national economy.</p>
Supporting Corporate Strategy		<p>Supporting the Council's response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis.</p>
Consultation & Engagement Strategy		<p>Public consultation has been carried out on the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme to inform the content of this report.</p>
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		<p>No direct carbon/biodiversity impact arising from the recommendations.</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		

Equality and Diversity		The local Council Tax Reduction Scheme only impacts a specific group of people, namely working age residents on a low-income. The proposals set out will provide additional support to those residents.
Safeguarding		None as a direct result of this report, however the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme may help keep vulnerable children and adults safe.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None as a direct result of this report, however some of the recommendations may help to reduce crimes such as domestic violence.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		Financial wellbeing is crucial to the wellbeing of our residents and the recommendations in this report are designed to support this.
Other implications		None.

Supporting Information

Appendices:

None.

Background Papers:

None.

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