

Date: 21 February 2012
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To:
Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Portfolio Holders
Other Members of the Council for Information
Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executives

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 1 March 2012

6.30pm

Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth

Members of the Council who do not sit on this Committee are welcome to attend as observers.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.

- There is a period of 15 minutes at the beginning of the meeting to allow members of the public to ask questions.
- In addition, the public may speak on items listed on the agenda. After a report has been introduced, the Chairman (Leader of the Council) will ask if any member of the public wishes to speak and/or ask questions.
- All individual contributions will be limited to a period of 3 minutes – where there is an interest group of objectors or supporters, a spokesperson should be appointed to speak on behalf of the group.
- The Chairman has the right and discretion to control questions to avoid disruption, repetition and to make best use of the meeting time.

A hearing loop system will be in operation in the Council Chamber.

Councillors and members of the public are reminded to switch off mobile phones during the meeting. If this is not practical due to particular circumstances, please advise the Chairman in advance of the meeting.

AGENDA

Page/s

1. **Public question time** – standard agenda item (15 minutes)
Members of the public are invited to put questions to the Committee through the Chairman. Councillors also have the opportunity to ask questions of the Leader and/or Portfolio Holders during this time slot whilst giving priority at this part of the agenda to members of the public
2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 January 2012 and 26 January 2012. 5 - 13

3. To receive any apologies for absence.
4. To receive any declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda.
5. To consider any items which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be dealt with as matters of urgency because of special circumstances.
(Note: Councillors please notify the Chief Executive in advance of the meeting if you wish to raise a matter under this item, who will then consult the Chairman).
6. To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded. There are **no** items that the officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.
7. Decisions made by the Cabinet called in by Members for scrutiny in accordance with the Overview Procedure Rules under Part 4.5 of the Constitution. There are **no** items identified.
8. **Cabinet Agenda**
Members are asked to notify in advance the Chairman, or the Democratic Services Officer, any Cabinet items they wish to debate.
Members to debate any issues of concern on the current Cabinet agenda in order for the Chairman to feed this back to the Cabinet at its meeting on the 7 March 2012. The website link to the Cabinet agenda will be e-mailed to Members on 27 February 2012. Please refer to Cabinet agenda
9. **Update on Planning Enforcement** 14 - 17

Members are asked to consider the interim report on resource level and case workload for the Planning Enforcement Service. The production of the report was one of the recommendations from the Ward Member interaction with Planning Task and Finish Forum.
10. **Consultation on the emerging Council Plan** 18 - 108

Members are asked to consider the new Council Plan and the supporting strategies on Housing and Communities; Economy and Tourism; and Environment to debate if the emerging plans will meet the expectations and needs of the District. Draft Council plan attached as separate document

The new Council Plan and the text for the supporting strategies are included in the agenda papers. Analysis of consultation on the plan to date can be found at:
http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/draft_council_plan_appc_feedback_analysis_010312.pdf ;
the feedback document for participation in the consultation can be read at http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/draft_council_plan_appd_feedback_010312.pdf

11. **Report from the Corporate Business Think Tank – Outside Bodies, Panels and Forums** 109 - 110
- Councillor Ray Bloxham, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Business, will outline the work of the Think Tank in reviewing the formally appointed Council representatives to the wide range of outside bodies, panels and forums.
12. **Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – Third Quarter 2011/12** 111 - 127
Denise Lyon, Deputy Chief Executive
- Members are asked to consider the performance information by Corporate Policy for the third quarter. Provided in the agenda papers are the overall priority charts and the specific objectives and performance indicators that show concern.
The full report on all objectives and performance indicators can be viewed online at http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/gtr3_pm_os_rpt_010312.pdf
13. **Forward Plan** 128
Members are asked to note the Forward Plan.
14. **Update from Portfolio Holder for Economy** Verbal report
Councillor Graham Godbeer, Portfolio Holder for Economy
- Councillor Godbeer will verbally update the Committee on his work as Portfolio Holder and his longer term aims for the role.
15. **Update from Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services** Verbal report
Councillor Ian Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
- Councillor Thomas will verbally update the Committee on his work as Portfolio Holder and his longer term aims for the role.

Members remember!

- ❑ You must declare the nature of any personal or prejudicial interests in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered.
- ❑ Where you have a personal interest because the business relates to or is likely to affect a body of which you are a member or manager as an EDDC nominee or appointee, then you need only disclose that interest when (and if) you speak on the item. The same rule applies if you have a personal interest in relation to a body exercising functions of a public nature.
- ❑ Make sure you say the reason for your interest as this has to be included in the minutes.
- ❑ If your interest is prejudicial you must leave the room unless
 - a) you have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Standards Committee or
 - b) where Para 12(2) of the member Code of Conduct applies. [Para 12(2) allows a Member with a prejudicial interest to stay for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business but only to the extent the public are allowed the same rights. If you do remain for these purposes, you must not exercise decision-making functions or seek to improperly influence the decision; you must leave the meeting room once you have made your representation, answered questions or given evidence.]

- ❑ The Code states that any member of the Cabinet or other decision-making committee or joint committee or sub-committee attending Overview and Scrutiny committees has a prejudicial interest in any business where that member was a member of the committee at the relevant time **and** present when the decision was made or other action was taken (whether or not implemented). Members with prejudicial interests should declare them and are allowed to remain in the meeting for the limited purposes set out in the Code para 12(2) – see last paragraph.
- ❑ You also need to declare when you are subject to the party whip before the matter is discussed.

Getting to the Meeting – for the benefit of visitors



The entrance to the Council Offices is located on Station Road, Sidmouth. **Parking** is limited during normal working hours but normally easily available for evening meetings.

The following **bus service** stops outside the Council Offices on Station Road: **From Exmouth, Budleigh, Otterton and Newton Poppleford – 157**

The following buses all terminate at the Triangle in Sidmouth. From the Triangle, walk up Station Road until you reach the Council Offices (approximately ½ mile).

From Exeter – 52A, 52B

From Honiton – 52B

From Seaton – 52A

From Ottery St Mary – 379, 387

Please check your local timetable for times.

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The Committee Suite has a separate entrance to the main building, located at the end of the visitor and Councillor car park. The rooms are at ground level and easily accessible; there is also a toilet for disabled users.

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of a Special
Overview and Scrutiny Committee held
at Knowle, Sidmouth on 18 January 2012

Present:

Councillors:

Stuart Hughes (Chairman)	Sheila Kerridge
John Humphreys (Vice Chairman)	David Key
Graham Brown	Graham Troman
Peter Burrows	Tim Wood
Derek Button	Eileen Wragg
David Chapman	Claire Wright
Vivien Duval Steer	Tom Wright
Roger Giles	

Officers:

Mark Williams – Chief Executive
Richard Cohen – Deputy Chief Executive
Denise Lyon – Deputy Chief Executive
Simon Davey – Head of Finance
Chris Powell
Simon Smale – Head of Environment
Andrew Ennis
John Golding – Head of Housing
Karen Jenkins
Andrew Hancock
Kate Little – Head of Economy
Debbie Meakin – Democratic Services Officer

Also Present

Councillors:

Ray Bloxham	Stephanie Jones
Geoff Chamberlain	Andrew Moulding
Maddy Chapman	Frances Newth
Iain Chubb	Helen Parr
David Cox	Ken Potter
Paul Diviani	Phillip Skinner
Christine Drew	Pauline Stott
Jill Elson	Ian Thomas
Martin Gammel	Chris Wale
Steve Gazzard	Mark Williamson
Peter Halse	

Apologies:

Committee Members:

Mike Allen
Peter Bowden
Mike Howe
John O'Leary
Brenda Taylor

Councillors:

Trevor Cope
Alan Dent
Graham Godbeer
Steve Hall
Steve Wragg

The meeting started at 11.30am and ended at 2.30pm.

*65 Public Question Time
There were no questions from the public.

66 Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2012/13

The Committee considered the Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2012/13. On reflection the Committee felt it was in a position to consider recommending Special Item Bids to the Cabinet for inclusion in the budget for 2012/13.

Comments made on the overall Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates included:

- Increasing the savings target set out in the estimated income in order to support some special items of merit to the Committee;
- Inclusion of Occupational Health fees for 2012/13 resulted in an increase for the estimate for corporate activities under the Corporate Services Portfolio.

Comments made on the Special Item Bids included:

- Linking with Town and Parish Councils to establish what Diamond Jubilee celebrations they may be undertaking, before committing to a scheme or project for the District;
- Security concerns for the WWII memorial, but general support for contributing towards it;
- Value of additional ICT post to help realise efficiencies identified;
- Seaton TIC had not been included in the Special Item Bid for running cost contribution because it had not requested assistance. In light of the existing TIC building still being vacant and in place, Councillor Peter Burrows would feed back to Seaton Town Council the debate on TIC contributions. Any request by Seaton Town Council to use that premises or for a rent contribution would be considered by the relevant Portfolio Holder;
- Councillor Roger Giles as Recycling Champion outlined his concern to the Committee of the cost, both actual and environmentally, in not undertaking cardboard recycling;
- The Portfolio Holder for Environment outlined a possible alternative solution to the replacement of Roman Way Bridge after inspecting it with the Streetscene Manager. He suggested to the Committee that repair work could be undertaken at around £5k; closure and removal of the bridge would still cost the authority around £2.5k;
- A need had been identified to establish renewal strategies for Axminster, Honiton and Sidmouth; the Committee were keen to support work on those strategies prior to any economic upturn;
- £10k had already been identified for the De-Facto Parish Clerk – the remaining special item bid was to cover the remaining £10k required.

- RECOMMENDED**
1. that the Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates be recommended to Council for adoption
 2. that the Savings Target of £125,000 identified in the estimated income for 2012/13 be increased to £175,000;
 3. that the Special Items Bids detailed in table A below be included in the budget for 2012/13;

66 Draft Revenue and Capital Estimates 2012/13 (continued)

- RECOMMENDED**
4. that a contribution to the Exeter and Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board at £12,500 for 2013/14 and 2014/15 budgets be recommended;
 5. that future special bid items relating to maintenance should be included in the draft revenue estimates during preparation as part of the maintenance budget;
 6. that an alternative solution to extending the Seaton Cemetery Memorial Wall is investigated and costed, with a view to reducing the special item bid of £12,000;

RESOLVED that the Committee's support of the Cabinet recommendation (11 January 2012) to use the Transformation Reserve to progress the electronic documentation management initiative be noted.

Table A: Special Items Bids

		Recommend add to Draft Budget
Corporate Services Portfolio		
Civic Fund	Queen's Diamond Jubilee	£5,000
Financial Assistance	Contribution towards WWII Battle of Britain Memorial, Exeter Airfield	£2,000
Local Apprenticeships	Two Apprentices	£6,000
ICT	Additional Post	£28,790
	Information Security Systems Monitoring for Servers	£10,000
Human Resources	Investors in People Reaccreditation	£5,500
Economy Portfolio		
Tourist Information Centre Support	Contributions to running costs for Axminster, Ottery St Mary and Budleigh Salterton TIC rent	£20,610
Economic Development	Exeter and Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board contribution	£15,000
Environment Portfolio		
Arts Development	Museums Officer Contribution	£1,500
Beaches and Foreshores	Seafront Railings, Sidmouth – painting	£5,000
	Jacob's Ladder, Sidmouth - painting	£11,000
Cemeteries	Seaton Cemetery – memorial wall extension	£12,000
Coast Protection	Inspection and Repairs	£32,000
Parks and Gardens	Roman Way Bridge – Repair (rather than replace)	£5,000
Countryside Team	Two permanent posts from current fixed term posts	£19,200

Table A: Special Items Bids

Strategic Development and Partnership Portfolio		
Regeneration	Town Centre renewal and resilience strategies	£30,000
Development	Cranbrook De-Facto Parish Clerk	£10,000
	Neighbourhood Plan referendum	£10,000
		£228,600

Chairman Date

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of a Special
Overview and Scrutiny Committee held
at Knowle, Sidmouth on 26 January 2012

Present: **Councillors:**
 Stuart Hughes (Chairman) Sheila Kerridge
 John Humphreys (Vice Chairman) David Key
 Graham Brown Brenda Taylor
 David Chapman Graham Troman
 Deborah Custance-Baker Tim Wood
 Vivien Duval Steer Eileen Wragg
 Roger Giles Tom Wright
 John O'Leary

Officers:
Mark Williams – Chief Executive
John Golding – Head of Housing
Denise Lyon – Deputy Chief Executive
Debbie Meakin – Democratic Services Officer

Also Present **Councillors:**
 Ray Bloxham Peter Halse
 Iain Chubb Stephanie Jones
 Trevor Cope Frances Newth
 Paul Diviani Ken Potter
 Christine Drew Pauline Stott
 Jill Elson Phil Twiss
 Steve Gazzard
 Graham Godbeer

Apologies: **Committee Members:** **Councillors:**
 Peter Bowden Alan Dent
 Peter Burrows Steve Hall
 Mike Howe Andrew Moulding
 Claire Wright

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.40pm.

*67 Public Question Time
There were no questions from the public.

*68 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 January 2011 were signed and confirmed as a true record.

69 Post Office Local Pilot Scheme

The Chairman welcomed representatives from Post Office Limited (POL) – Simon Burman, the External Stakeholder Manager, and Matthew Walls. He also welcomed Richard Brown from Consumer Focus; and Councillor Ken Potter the Rural Member Champion.

Simon Burman outlined to the Committee the plans to modernise the Post Office network, highlighting the new branch models in the national pilot. He reminded the Committee of the reasoning behind the push to modernise the branch network, and the government commitment to retain the 11,800 branches for the three-year period of funding.

The branch models are designed to meet local needs, looking to improve the customer experience. Such examples of improvements included extending opening hours and self-service. The Post Office also had the objective of increasing Government transactions in a “front office” role to help boost use of branches. Over the next three years from the summer of 2012, Post Office Ltd intends to roll out 2000 Post Office “Local” branches and 4000 Post Office “Main” branches.

Post Office “Main” was described as a larger branch that would offer the full range of services, including self-service and in some branches, biometric facilities. He gave an example of how renewing a driver’s licence would work in the new branch.

Post Office “Local” was described as a branch located within a commercial store that would benefit from the commercial store’s longer opening hours. It would cover around 95% of Post Office services.

Richard Brown told the Committee about the role of Consumer Focus in monitoring the quality and location of the Post Office network. He urged Members to take the opportunity during the pilot phase to talk to their constituents about their experiences with using the Post Office branches and obtain feedback on the success of the pilot branches.

Members raised a number of issues relating to both existing branches and the new branch models, including:

- Large queues in branches leading to frustration or a tendency to avoid using the branch – this was recognised by POL and the new branch models would help towards a significant reduction in queuing time because of extended opening hours and self-service options;
- Availability of services in the “Local” model and in some existing branches being limited, whereby Members wished to see a consistency of service available including car tax and passport services – POL appreciated that there was a desire for those services to be available in all branches, but the DVLA and Home Office dictated how many branches should have the facilities to deal with those services, with the cost of providing the service being a major factor;

69 Post Office Local Pilot Scheme (continued)

- Significant reduction in sub-postmaster salary, if changing to a “Local” model. Whilst there was an element of commission in transactions, this was not satisfactory to expect the same level of excellent service and knowledge at a reduced wage for working longer hours – POL reminded the Committee that the change to the “Local” model was voluntary and included considerable investment in the premises; plus more revenue could be gained from the retail aspect of the premises;
- Customer privacy would be compromised in the “Local” model because the commercial premises uses the same counter for both post office services and retail – POL recognised this concern and the pilot model had been adapted in some cases to provide for two counters to help keep queues to a minimum and therefore less of an issue for privacy. Layout also helped to improve privacy for customers – open plan style enabled customers to be heard clearly with staff and therefore did not need to raise their voice and risk being overheard;
- Could longer hours also apply to the “Main” branch model as well as the “Local” – POL confirmed that longer opening hours for “Main” branches would be in place, and that some existing “Crown” branches (larger branches not converted to the “Main” model) also aim to offer extended hours;
- How would POL ensure that the public were aware of what services were included in a “Local” model when the services offered were around 95% of the total service range? Customers could waste time queuing for a service that was not provided – Richard Brown of Consumer Focus agreed this had been a concern raised before and there needed to be clear indication of what services were available before the customer stepped inside the branch;
- Funding for improving the network only covered part of the network – still leaving 5,500 branches, many rural, that would remain subsidised by government funding. The Post Office had to become a profitable business;
- “Crown” branches continue to make losses – POL had an objective to have their “Crown” branches at least break even and a separate programme had just begun in order to reach that objective;
- Open plan layouts for the models could be an increased security risk in being targeted for robbery – POL could not divulge the security measures used, but assured the Committee that they were excellent. Clearly not all branches suited an open plan layout.

Questions arose regarding the role of Royal Mail as a separate business, with concern that rural postal deliveries would suffer as a result. Many issues raised on Royal Mail and their assets could not be answered by POL. Councillor Ken Potter reminded the Committee that Government has guaranteed a universal delivery service.

POL confirmed that the funding was currently for branch investment, and therefore there was no funding available at present to invest in infrastructure for areas without high speed broadband.

69 Post Office Local Pilot Scheme (continued)

RECOMMENDED

1. that the Council, through the Rural Member Champion and Democratic Services, liaise with the 24 other authorities involved in the trial of the new service;
2. that a Working Party be set up covering Ward Members with an interest in Musbury, Rivermead Avenue, Colyton, Rockbeare and Millwey Rise Post Offices, to discuss feedback from residents using the new Post Office Local service and to formulate a response to the pilot scheme that completes in Summer 2012.

RESOLVED

that Post Office Ltd be requested to consider:

1. Application for a banking licence for the Post Office to be a state-backed Post Office Bank;
2. All Post Office customers are enabled to access current banking transactions at a Post Office, regardless of which bank they use.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their presentation and responses to questions asked.

*70 Update from Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities

Councillor Jill Elson updated the Committee on her work as Portfolio Holder. She outlined the Members within her “people’s ministry” and spoke passionately about the importance of the Housing service working closely with her to help communities.

She reminded the Committee of some of the achievements, including:

- First new build programme in thirty years – 17 homes built to a high standard that reduces the tenant’s energy costs;
- Decent Homes standard;
- Maintaining affordable rents and improved rent collection, now at 99%;
- £5m per annum into the local economy;
- High levels of tenant satisfaction.

With a change to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the ability to use the rental income stream was eagerly anticipated, with the financial freedom to run the housing service as a housing business. Asset and property management, along with debt and treasury management, were new key elements to the housing service.

Councillor Elson reminded the Committee of the continuing pressure to provide homes and outlined her concern of how the welfare reforms could impact on their current and potential tenants.

*70 Update from Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities (continued)

In answer to a question regarding maintaining such a good rent collection rate in the current economic climate, she outlined the process of intervention by the service when rent payments begin to fall behind. With the change to the HRA, the surplus would be set to £2m as a safeguard for the first year of the account reform. She confirmed that insulation improvements to the housing stock are undertaken if required when a change of tenant occurs – the housing stock condition survey was complete and gave a clear picture of priorities of the stock. In response to a question about necessary skills and staffing levels to run the housing service as a housing business, she assured the Committee that she was confident that staff are ready to undertake the challenge.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Portfolio Holder for her passion and commitment to the role. This was echoed by John Golding, Head of Housing, who outlined to the Committee how supportive the Portfolio Holder is of him, and his team.

*71 Forward Plan

Members noted the forward plan, including additional items to add in since the agenda had been published. Work continued in scoping the two outstanding Task and Finish Forums. The CIL TaFF, due to legislation still outstanding on some detail, would begin in April 2012; the High Street/Town Centre Health Check still required further work in collating research already undertaken and is planned to begin in March 2012.

Chairman Date

Agenda Item 9

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 March 2012

EF



Planning Enforcement Resource and Workload Update

Summary

This report has been prepared in response to recommendation 7 of the final report of the Task and Finish Forum: Improving Ward Member interaction with Planning. The report demonstrates that the perceived concerns regarding the planning enforcement service were a result of issues with staff resources that have now been resolved through the recruitment of a new enforcement officer and the return from sick leave of one of the established enforcement officers. The integration of the planning enforcement service into the respective area planning teams has also enhanced the planning enforcement service in terms of the resources dedicated to it and the quality of the service through the initial input into cases of the planning officers who deal with the area concerned. As a result the number of cases on hand is reducing and a number of long standing cases are being resolved.

Recommendation

That Members' acknowledge that the Planning Enforcement Service is now providing an efficient and high quality service to its customers.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

The concerns raised by the TAFF have been addressed through the reorganisation of the Planning Enforcement Service as detailed in the report.

b) Alternative Options

N/A

c) Risk Considerations

That any concerns that Members have regarding the Planning Enforcement Service may not be addressed if not highlighted in response to this report.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The recommendations do not have any policy or budgetary implications. The reorganisation of the Planning Enforcement Service has already been carried out in accordance with established policies and within current budgets.

e) Date for Review of Decision

N/A

1 Main Body of the Report

Introduction

This report has been prepared in response to recommendation 7 of the report of the Task and Finish Forum into Improving Member interaction with the planning service. The recommendation requires a report to be prepared on "...the situation regarding Enforcement resource levels and case workload...." The report highlighted concerns regarding delays in dealing with enforcement cases but acknowledged that there had been staff shortages and therefore this element of the service was not looked at. Concern was also expressed that the service was not pro-active in monitoring developments as they were constructed and only responded to complaints regarding whether works were being carried out in accordance with the approved plans. This report seeks to address these concerns.

Resources

At the start of 2011 the Planning Enforcement Team comprised a Senior Planning Officer (Enforcement), two Enforcement Officers, and an Admin support officer. Unfortunately during the first 6 months of the year the Senior Planning Officer had left for a new job elsewhere, one of the Enforcement Officers went off on sick leave and the admin support officer retired. This left just one Enforcement Officer to deal with cases across the whole of the district which was clearly not feasible even though some other Members of staff were used to help out. The service inevitably suffered as a result although all high priority cases were still investigated quickly and as such it was the low priority cases where the case had been assessed and identified as not causing significant immediate harm that were delayed. The remaining officer did an excellent job in keeping on top of the in-coming workload while this situation was resolved.

The staff shortages led to a rethink of how the enforcement service is provided and the decision was taken to dismantle the Enforcement Team and integrate the enforcement officers into the planning teams thereby giving the team responsibility for enforcement in their area with each team having a dedicated Enforcement Officer. This negated the need for the Senior Planning Officer (Enforcement) and the dedicated enforcement admin support post to be replaced enabling a third Enforcement Officer to be recruited. The third Enforcement Officer started work in summer 2011 and the remaining Enforcement Officer who had been on long term sick leave returned to work at the end of the summer.

The Planning Enforcement service is now operated for the first time by 3 full time Enforcement Officers who investigate alleged breaches of the planning legislation with the support of their respective planning team of planning and admin officers. The service therefore has the highest number of dedicated enforcement officers it has ever had.

Workloads and Performance

Clearly during the period detailed above the number of cases the service had on hand increased as did the time periods for dealing with cases. Since last summer the number of cases has however gradually reduced from about 450 cases on hand to 361 at the end of January. This figure is consistently reducing as the number of cases closed in each fortnight period exceeds the number received. Clearly there are a number of historic cases in the system which have been open for over a year and these are being targeted. This has meant that 17 such cases were closed or resolved in January alone.

In terms of the time period taken to resolve cases clearly the overall statistics are significantly skewed at the moment by the historic cases. However if these are excluded from the statistics then the most common experience of a customer (the complainant) in January was that their case (where no breach is identified or is too minor to pursue) would have been dealt with from start to finish in 7 days including a site visit. Clearly in cases where there is a breach of the legislation to be resolved this will take longer. Although there is no equivalent data from the period when Members were raising concerns it is believed that this figure would be a substantial improvement over the performance during the latter half of 2010 and early 2011.

The Future

It is hoped that as the number of cases on hand reduces further there will soon come a time when there will be capacity to start to pro-actively monitor a small number of new major developments as they are constructed and to check compliance with the conditions imposed on these developments. There have always been links with the Building Regulations service with regard to the monitoring of developments however the two services are considering different aspects of the development and so while the comments of the TAFF with regard to better working with Building Regulations are noted there is a limit to the extent to which the two services can help each other. We will however continue to look at ways of improving links between the two services wherever possible.

There remain a number of historic cases within the system that can only be resolved through formal enforcement action and prosecution proceedings. The Enforcement Officers are working this into their work programmes. However such proceedings take time due to the legal process that has to be gone through and so there remain some high profile cases that will still take a number of months to resolve at this stage. This is dependent on capacity in the legal team and as members may beware there is presently a problem with staff numbers. This will inevitably impact on the end to end times for enforcement notice preparation and other legal courses of action. Nevertheless the changes to the enforcement service detailed earlier in this report mean that officers now have the capacity to progress these cases as quickly as possible whereas this had not previously been possible.

The enforcement service has always copied correspondence to the relevant Ward Members to keep them advised of progress with cases within their ward and will continue to do so while the implementation of the other recommendations of the TAFF will enable better interaction with Members on enforcement issues.

Legal Implications

Current demand for legal services is rising in several areas of council work [for example an increase in the numbers of enforcement and valuation staff]. Two vacant legal posts [out of a team of 4] will shortly go out to advert and locum cover for the planning enforcement work should shortly be in place. The Corporate Legal and Democratic Services Manager will monitor priorities across the council and take action as required to manage the situation as well as possible including further use of locum staff and outsourcing. As members will be aware from various exercises including Rationalisation, the legal team is small when compared with other similar authorities.

Financial Implications

There no financial implications contained within the report

Consultation on Reports to the Cabinet

N/A

Background Papers

- Task and Finish Forum: Improving Ward Member interaction with Planning – Final Report – Report to Cabinet 30th November 2011

Ed Freeman
Development Manager

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
1March 2011

Agenda Item 10

Overview and Scrutiny

1 March 2012

DL



Proposed Council Plan 2012 – 2016 and supporting frontline strategies

Summary

In December 2011 and January 2012, the Council consulted the public, its partners and its own officers and members on its major plans and priorities for the future of the District. This report brings the results of the consultation feedback on the Council Plan and its four main underpinning strategies (Economy, Environment, Homes and Communities and Finance). The Head of Economy will be reporting separately later in the year on the results of the consultation on the Local Plan which determines housing development, employment land sites and Council support for jobs, skills and businesses in the District.

Recommendation

Members discuss the Council Plan and underpinning strategies and decide whether to recommend them to Council.

a) **Reasons for Recommendation**

The Council wishes to have clearly laid out plans and priorities for the future.

b) **Alternative Options**

Cabinet has previously agreed the priorities and funding available for the public services provided by East Devon District Council. Some of the detail has been refined in light of the consultation feedback and there is one suggested change to the values. Members can decide whether they wish to adopt these in the final version.

c) **Risk Considerations**

We want the Council's strategies to be relevant, affordable and to deliver what communities have told us is important. To this end, we have engaged in widespread consultation with:

- the public
- various committees and Councillor Bloxham's Think Tank to engage as many members as possible
- a meeting with representatives from the voluntary sector and Town and Parish councils to explain our priorities and listen to their opinions and thoughts
- staff sessions to invite comment and interest

d) **Policy and Budgetary Considerations**

In line with the budget.

Positive Impact Overall

Affordable Homes.
Thriving Economy.
Safe Environment.
Clean Environment.
Green Environment.
Recycling.
Young People.
Excellent Customer Service.
Inspirational Council.
Meeting our crime and disorder duties.
Meeting our Diversity and Equality duties.
Providing more service at less cost.
Create Cashable Savings

e) Date for Review of Decision

Once adopted, the Council Plan and main strategies will be reviewed annually.

1 Main Body of the Report

1.1 At its October meeting, the Cabinet agreed the Council's purpose, its priorities and its values, together with a structure, design and layout for the Council Plan.

1.2 The Corporate Business Think Tank discussed and recommended a consultation process for the Plan and its three underpinning Strategies. The result of this was a coordinated consultation process involving:

- partner authorities and organisations across Devon
- discussion sessions with our own staff
- a wider consultation exercise with the public using a summary and question format for the Council Plan and the three underpinning strategies.

1.3 Consultation ended on 13 January 2012 and the results summary is available on the website. This response is a snapshot rather than a representative sample (154 people responded and 70% of those were over 60), so it is important to consider the responses as an indication, rather than give too much weight to them.

1.4 Following close of consultation on 13 January 2012, Cllr Bloxham met with officers responsible for the strategies and agreed some amendments, the main ones being:

- a) a reflection in the Council Plan of the Council's intention to widen its economic focus beyond the West End, Seaton and Exmouth.
- b) a clearer explanation of our intention around affordable housing and links with the Local Plan.
- c) a change in one of the values from 'approachable' to 'accountable'.

1.5 Appendix A: the proposed Council Plan, Appendix B: the text of the proposed underpinning strategies. Appendix C: the consultation results analysis and Appendix D, the feedback document we will be sending to people who participated in the consultation exercise is available online.

Legal Implications

The Council Plan forms part of the policy framework which requires full Council approval before implementation and the recommendations reflect this.

Financial Implications

The Council Plan has been prepared in conjunction with the Council's Financial Strategy. If there any cost implications involved in delivering the Plan not already approved in existing budgets, these will be presented to members for consideration through the budget process.

Consultation on Reports to the Cabinet

SMT has had the opportunity to debate this report.

The Plan and Strategies themselves have also been subject to widespread consultation which is detailed in this and the previous report on the subject. In addition, each Strategy is in the process of having an equality analysis completed.

Background Papers

None

Denise Lyon and Richard Cohen - Deputy Chief Executives
Heads of Service :
John Golding, Kate Little, Simon Davey and Simon Smale

Overview & Scrutiny
1 March 2012

ECONOMY STRATEGY

CONTENTS

Introduction

1.0 Background to the Local Economy

- 1.1 The Businesses of East Devon
- 1.2 Employment Type
- 1.3 Economic Structure
- 1.4 Unemployment
- 1.5 Resident and Workplace earnings

2.0 Challenges – What the Future Holds

- 2.1 Economic Growth Projections

3.0 Policy Context

- 3.1 Central Government Policy
- 3.2 The East Devon Draft Local Plan

4.0 Creating Economic objectives

5.0 Strategic Aims

- 5.1 The Five Objectives

Introduction

Introduction

Councillor Graham Godbeer, Cabinet Member for Economy

Creating jobs, especially well paid jobs, is critical to the well being of our communities. Without reliable sources of income, accessing and maintaining a suitable home is impossible. Our aim is to ensure that everybody who wants and needs a job is able to find one.

Private enterprise and the processes of wealth creation underpin much of what attracts people to East Devon. The District is home to more than 5,700 businesses and a workforce of some 53,000 people. Our market and coastal towns sustain an impressive range of local employment and enjoy a strong visitor heritage. Farming, forestry and small businesses generally do much to sustain the fabric of East Devon's rural communities and the quality of our countryside.

East Devon is a good place to live and work but we face some very serious challenges if we are to retain a higher proportion of our young people and tackle the imbalance between local housing costs and earnings. The developments now underway in the District close to Exeter and the M5 will undoubtedly aid this process but the dialogue that produced this strategy must continue. Tangible progress towards the realisation of our vision demands the energy and commitment of every stakeholder: businesses, voluntary groups, Councils and community.

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

1.1 The Businesses of East Devon

East Devon has some 5,700 businesses, including public sector employers that are VAT (have a turnover exceeding £68,000 – 2009/10 figures) and/or PAYE registered. It has very few big businesses (0.3% of the total), but has a significant number of micro businesses (having less than 10 employees). These account for 88% of all businesses in East Devon. By comparison, the adjoining local authority of Exeter City has three times more businesses supporting more than 200 employees (0.9%) and just 15% of micro businesses.

1.2 Employment Type

The Business Register and Employment Survey 2009 (the latest available data) indicates that there were 45,100 jobs in East Devon, with 41,000 of these being employee jobs. However as these figures fail to include non

VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses and undercounts agricultural jobs the actual is likely to be higher. Part time workers, that is those working less than 30 hours a week, account for 36% of all employees, which is higher than in Devon as a whole (34%), the South West (33%) and nationally (30%). High levels of part time working are often an indicator of weak demand, and in East Devon this may also reflect the emphasis on tourism and other seasonal and shift type employment, as well as an indication of an older workforce, including those working beyond normal retirement age.

Home working: The most recent data (Annual Population Survey 2008) shows that 23% of working residents in the District classify themselves as home workers, against a regional norm of 16% and a national one of 13%.

1.3 Economic Structure

Broad Employment Structure, 2009

	East Devon		Exeter	Devon	SW	GB
	No.	%	%	%	%	%
Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)	100	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	2.7%	1.7%
Mining, quarrying & utilities (B,D and E)	400	0.8%	2.7%	1.5%	1.2%	1.2%
Manufacturing (C)	2,600	5.9%	3.6%	8.1%	9.3%	8.7%
Construction (F)	3,400	7.6%	10.3	8.1%	5.6%	5.3%
Motor trades (Part G)	1,000	2.3%	2.4%	2.4%	2.0%	1.8%
Wholesale (Part G)	1,900	4.3%	3.5%	4.5%	4.0%	4.0%
Retail (Part G)	6,600	14.7	9.8%	12.9	11.6	10.5
Transport & storage (inc postal) (H)	3,400	7.5%	3.1%	4.8%	4.5%	4.6%
Accommodation & food services (I)	5,600	12.3	5.2%	9.6%	8.2%	6.7%
Information & communication (J)	700	1.5%	3.7%	2.6%	2.8%	3.7%
Financial & insurance (K)	1,200	2.6%	2.8%	1.8%	3.3%	3.8%
Property (L)	600	1.2%	2.0%	1.6%	1.4%	1.7%
Professional, scientific & technical (M)	2,400	5.3%	9.3%	6.2%	6.2%	7.4%
Business administration & support services (N)	1,400	3.1%	6.9%	4.9%	6.2%	7.5%
Public administration & defence (O)	2,200	4.8%	10.1	5.6%	5.0%	5.3%
Education (P)	3,400	7.6%	7.7%	8.2%	8.8%	9.0%
Health (Q)	5,700	12.6	13.7	12.5	12.7	12.5
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services (R,S,T)	2,600	5.8%	3.4%	4.6%	4.5%	4.6%
Total	45,100	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

All figures have been rounded to the nearest 100 (after suppression rules have been applied).

* These figures exclude farm agriculture (SIC subclass 01000). Source: Business Register and Employment Survey

This table shows the broad make up of the East Devon and comparator economies and the District does not differ substantially from those of the wider area. It does however have a higher proportion of Retail and Accommodation and Food services, reflecting its dependence on tourism – which accounted for 13% of all employee jobs in 2008, more than 50% higher than the national average. This sector is more likely than most to include low value service activities, whilst the higher value employment types such as Business Services, Information and Communication and other scientific services, are under represented here.

Knowledge Based Industries: The Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) sectors tend to provide high and fast growing productivity and assist the industries they serve to increase their productivity rates through technical efficiencies. They are therefore seen as key drivers of economic growth (although not necessarily more jobs).

In East Devon the KBE only accounts for some 9% of employee jobs, less than half the figure nationally and in adjoining Exeter.

Agricultural Employment: It should be noted that the table fails to show a full indication of the extent of farm workers in East Devon. The latest data from DEFRA is the June 2007 Agricultural Survey which revealed 3,177 workers on 1,316 holdings.

Of these workers, 1,028 were classified as full time farmers, directors or spouses. A further 1,310 were part time and the residual 550 were counted as casual labour.

Business Space Employment: This category refers to office, industrial and warehouse jobs and in East Devon this sector accounts for 35% of jobs, about 9% less than the national figure.

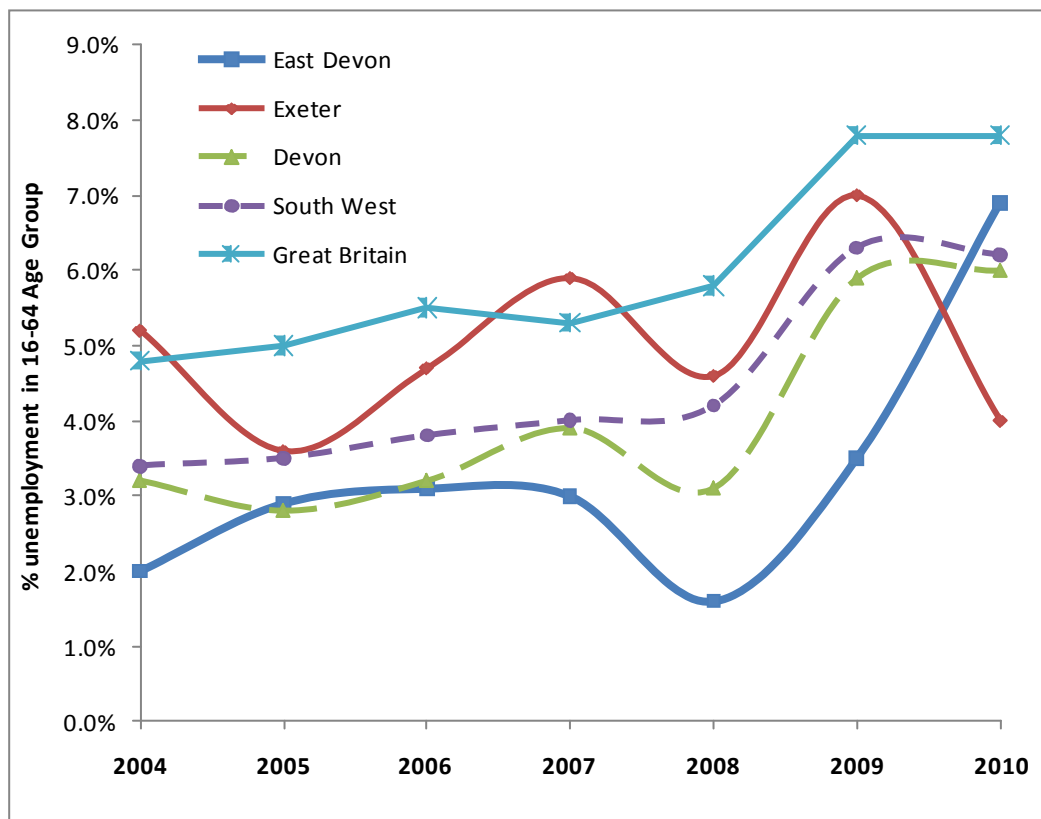
Tourism: As recognised above this is a strong sector in the District and makes up 13% of all jobs compared to 11% in Devon as a whole and 9% nationally

1.4 Unemployment

According to 2010 figures nearly 7% of East Devon’s economically active residents were unemployed. This is a similar position to the County and Regional average and marginally better than the national average of 8%.

However as shown in the table below, unemployment in the District has been growing faster than in the comparator areas since 2004 and is particularly noticeable since late 2007/early 2008, which may reflect the loss of public sector jobs in adjoining Exeter.

Change in Unemployment Over Time



Source: Annual Population Survey

1.5 Resident and Workplace Earnings

Residents in East Devon earn an average of £441 per week, which is the same as Exeter's residents, but is approximately 11% less than the national average. Workplace earnings per week in the District are £379, indicating that many East Devon residents are highly likely to be working outside the District.

2.0 CHALLENGES – WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

2.1 Economic Growth Projections

Whilst employment growth has fluctuated over the past ten years, the overall net growth was 18% between 1998 and 2008. The Regional growth figure for the same period was 10% and the national figure was 15%. East Devon's strong performance may have been influenced by Exeter's recently booming service economy, which grew by 35% over the same period.

That economy is now on a very different trajectory, with the national economy having suffered the biggest downturn in more than 60 years. Between 2009-2011 there was an absence of growth in jobs in East Devon. Future employment is however projected to grow by 30% (or 13,700 jobs) between 2011-2031. This compares favourably with an estimated growth in Devon as a whole of 25% and 26% for the South West.

Most of the District's projected employment growth is likely to be in the Business, Health and Social Services, Hotels and Catering and Distribution (Retail mostly accounts for this sector). Financial services are anticipated to be the best performing sector, whilst some minor losses of employment are forecast in the Manufacturing and Construction sectors

3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Central Government Policy

The Coalition Government are promoting growth through the spending and delivery actions of local government, based upon a national growth strategy (The Plan for Growth, March 2011) which seeks to achieve the following:

- fiscal stability
- stimulating demand
- quantitative easing
- credit easing
- export trade
- business investment, and
- a move away from borrowing and consumption

The Government has moved away from delivering economic funding regionally through Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and has instead encouraged in their place, the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) which are business led and which will bid for, and allocate money to, specific projects aimed at stimulating and supporting economic growth.

Another strand of the Government's local growth plan is the devolution of decision making to Local Authorities, principally the District Councils though:

- Making provision for the retention of local business rates (80/20% split between Districts and Counties respectively),
- The ability to borrow against future business rate income, known as Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)
- The creation of apprenticeship hubs as part of the investment in skills and training and,
- Transferring assets from the RDAs to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The Government however is retaining the oversight of:

- Skills targeted to business needs
- Access to finance – with Local Authorities, LEPs and the business community working together creating packages for funding options
- Local procurement – strategic objectives, local supply chains, and no short term easy fixes
- Centralise trade and foreign investment activity (dealt with by the government's Department for Business Innovation and Skills)

Added to the adopted approach, the Government has made provision for a number of funding packages, such as the Regional Growth Fund, Growing Places, Enterprise Zones and Real Estate Investment Trusts.

3.2 The East Devon Draft Local Plan

Key objectives for the East Devon Draft Local Plan include seeking to improve job opportunities and business performance. It is recognised that large scale inward investment into the District, providing skilled jobs, is most likely to occur in the Western part of East Devon and for this reason the Plan has identified strategic development sites close to the M5 motorway that will appeal to this sector. Elsewhere in East Devon site provision is to be geared around securing development to promote business growth of smaller scale existing and new businesses – hopefully drawing benefit from the investment in highly skilled businesses likely to locate close to Exeter.

The East Devon Economic policies are designed to ensure

- a) The delivery of a wide range and type of employment land for potential investors. Care will be taken to avoid over provision where this might inhibit successful market delivery and local wealth and job creation.
- b) The growth potential of existing local small and medium sized businesses is supported by encouraging the market delivery of suitable and accessible accommodation not only in the District's coastal and market towns, but also in association with rural housing development.
- c) That local agriculture and land based enterprise is enabled to respond successfully to changing market and environmental conditions and to sustain its pivotal role in the maintenance of the District's outstanding natural landscapes.
- d) That the District's visitor economy adapts successfully to the changing requirements of holiday makers, leisure, business and other visitors. The renewal and improvement of the District's stock of visitor accommodation will be encouraged as will investment in the maintenance and enhancement of local visitor attractions. Every effort will be made to maintain East Devon's position as a high quality, year round visitor destination particularly for green tourism.
- e) That residents and employers have access to skills training and development facilities that reflect their needs and the changing requirements of local businesses.
- f) Young people have opportunities to secure good jobs, training and education.

The promotion of employment opportunities in East Devon will seek to retain young graduates through development of knowledge based businesses. Currently only 5% of East Devon's economic structure is represented by those employed in knowledge based sectors in comparison to 18% in Exeter and nationally. To secure a better paid more diverse local economy, East Devon needs to secure and promote job opportunities in higher skilled, knowledge based industries.

The District Council recognises the need to provide a better match between education, skills training and the needs of existing and future employers. To facilitate the improvement of the local skill base there is a need to work with local colleges and secondary schools to identify and plan for the skills need of local and incoming businesses.

Consultation Local Plan – Draft Strategy 25

Promoting Opportunities for Young People

Support will be provided for initiatives that promote enhanced opportunities for access to further education, housing suitable for first time buyers and training/apprenticeships posts for young people. Large scale development proposals should incorporate measures to promote these outcomes/initiatives.

To help new businesses there is a need to provide start-up business space. This will improve business survival rates by providing suitable accommodation and will help to integrate support and advice and make practical use of the Business Information Point (BIP) and other business providers.

Working with local stakeholders to understand and plan for the needs of small and medium sized businesses will aid the facilitation of business growth in the District. It will encourage businesses, through the East Devon Business Forum, local Chambers of Commerce and associations of small businesses to have their voice heard in the development of planning policy and to provide practical help to their members.

The Plan intends to help to secure local job provision by providing a new job for each new home provided. The provision of sufficient employment land close to where people live will be done on a plan, monitor, manage basis.

Consultation Local Plan – Draft Strategy 26

Future Job and Employment Land Provision:

In order to secure local job provision we will promote mixed use developments and provision of employment uses close to where people live. All major housing developments will need to be accompanied by employment provision to provide around:

1. One job for each new home built.
2. Around 1 hectare of employment land for each 250 homes proposed.

In the villages we will allocate mixed use development sites and encourage the provision of a range of employment types. On residential schemes where 10 or more dwellings are proposed (or could be accommodated) in our villages and smaller towns we will require direct provision of, or a financial contribution specifically towards, small employment workspace as part of the overall development - these could take the form of small units on part of the development site. This will not apply where schemes are predominantly for affordable housing.

On smaller developments, provision for home working should be incorporated into individual dwellings.

Promoting the Commercial Prosperity and Vibrancy of our Town Centres: The main East Devon towns are commercially vibrant centres offering employment, community activity, transport links and shops. The town centres serve not just their immediate residents, but also support the surrounding rural hinterland and in some cases they form a major destination in their own right, notably Honiton for its antiques. The new market town of Cranbrook will also develop into this service centre role.

Significant loss of retail and business activity from town centres, to other uses, could threaten the vitality and viability of towns. Accommodating new commercial and retail uses in towns, especially for uses that attract large numbers of people, should be encouraged. Failure to promote the retail and business opportunities in towns may result in the loss of shoppers, visitors and business in general, to competing centres beyond East Devon. A better understanding of the dynamics of town centres will assist these areas in becoming viable and active places to shop and visit. By undertaking a 'health check' of town centres a record of unit vacancies can be identified and management solutions developed.

Tourism: Tourism is a key sector in the East Devon economy. The coastal towns of East Devon form one of the focal points for tourism but the draw to visitors extends beyond these resorts into the stunning coastline between them, the wonderful countryside and the picture postcard villages that East Devon has to offer. The Local Plan will support tourism throughout the District with the onus on encouraging high quality attractions, facilities and tourist accommodation. Tourism development will be encouraged, particularly where it enhances and capitalises on the geology, wildlife, coastline, countryside, historic environment and other assets that are unique to the District. This aim is also reflected in our Environment Strategy where 'green tourism' is highlighted as an important aspect of the Council's work.

Tourism and the visitor economy is an important contributor to vitality and vibrancy of the District's coastal and market towns and of our rural communities. It is estimated that during 2008, staying visitors (2,857,000 visitor nights) spent some £132 million during their time in East Devon with day visitors (2,486,000 day visits) spending a further £110 million. This expenditure is key driver of local economic activity and sustains more than 7,000 jobs. Planning policy in the period to 2026 will seek to maintain and enhance the District's visitor appeal as a year round destination by:

- a) Supporting East Devon's hospitality businesses as they respond to the challenges of a changing visitor market.
- b) Reinforcing the District's image as a destination of high environmental quality with a strong focus on customer care.

Consultation Local Plan – Draft Strategy 28 Promotion of Tourism in East Devon

The Council will support and facilitate high quality tourism in East Devon that promotes a year- round industry that is responsive to changing visitor demands. Tourism growth should be sustainable and should not damage the natural assets of the District but aim to attract new tourism related businesses that can complement the high quality environment of East Devon.

4.0 CREATING ECONOMIC AIMS

Following a public consultation exercise and a session with the East Devon Business Forum, a set of five targeted objectives has been drawn up which seek to improve upon the current economic position East Devon finds itself in today with:

- rising unemployment levels, particularly amongst the young,
- a need to improve the local skill base and ,
- a reliance on low paid and seasonal jobs.

Where there has been investment and other forms of resource dedicated to the New Growth Point area in the past, it is now appropriate that we seek ways of percolating the benefits across the rest of the District so that supporting businesses and the re-use of skills acquired, can provide maximum return for the economy of the area. Providing quality jobs for local people, close to where they live, not only helps their carbon footprint, it also upgrades the cycle of earn and spend, from which everybody benefits.

This District relies mainly of the entrepreneurship on local graduates and others – starting from home based businesses, to launching out into, either supported accommodation such as the East Devon Business Centre or, small workshop type units. The Council can assist by using its commercial land and buildings assets to help these start up businesses to become established and secure.

The Council has focussed its regeneration work on Exmouth and Seaton over the past few years, but intends now to widen the scope of it's work, to work with inland towns on their future ambitions. It will also seek to improve the economy of the rural areas, including that of the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The landscape of the District is one of its greatest assets and the value of green tourism to the economy should not be under-estimated. Many of the residents of this area rely for their livelihoods on visitor spending, in town centres, in accommodation, in restaurants and cafes and at visitor attractions. Realigning

the offer to the modern day needs of potential visitors and disseminating useful information using electronic communications are key to improving the offer.

Finally, all businesses need access – access to high quality communication links, access to good transport links, access to skills and training and, access to sustainable energy provision. The Council has a role in facilitating and encouraging improvements in all areas.

Aim 1:

Increase the number and variety of job opportunities within and throughout East Devon by building on the benefits emerging from the development taking place in the West End of the District

Our intention is to improve the competitiveness of the District and, in turn, the economic wellbeing of the residents. Our focus is on work which supports the skills levels of our residents, especially young people, so that both they, and local businesses, thrive. We also have a responsibility for making best use of Council owned commercial property and planning for appropriate employment sites around the District.

What have we been doing?

- We created a partnership with Exeter, Devon & Teignbridge Councils called the Growth Point Partnership which facilitates new development in the Exeter sub region by helping to resolve barriers to growth.
- The new Local Plan went out to consultation at the end of 2011 after months of hard work and discussion with all the Town and Parish Councils as well as individuals. We want to find out what the public thinks about the vision of creating new jobs and homes for all in the District over the next 15 years.

Best Practice Example: New Growth Point Partnership

The New Growth Point Partnership of Councils, supported by central government funding, has helped to get Cranbrook off the ground, despite the downturn in the economy. Funds include:

- Regional Infrastructure funding and New Growth Point grant towards the Clyst Honiton Bypass, the Multi-Purpose building and first primary school in Cranbrook
- £16m from the Homes and Communities Agency, principally for 300 affordable homes
- DETR funding for highway improvements to Junction 29,

In addition Skypark and the Combined Heat and Power Plant to serve it and Cranbrook, as well as the Intermodal Freight Terminal and Science Park, are under way. The result is a very sustainable suite of developments – homes and jobs of all kinds in close proximity, well served by public transport (both bus and rail) and incorporating a network of cycle routes throughout.

“We believe that by working co-operatively with our partners we have achieved so much more than we could have done on our own. We are delivering a new community (rather than a new town and industrial estates) in this area, where people will have access to community workers, public buildings, jobs and a country park.” **Cllr Andrew Moulding, Strategic Development and Regeneration Portfolio holder**

What else will we be doing?

1. Continue to work with our New Growth Point partners to transfer the connections and skills acquired in working in the West End to other parts of the District:
 - Access funding opportunities
 - Create multi disciplinary project teams to fast track development opportunities
 - Support Multi utility competitive exercises to reduce development costs
 - Invest in sustainability and renewable energy research
 - Support early delivery of support infrastructure

2. Actively seek high tech/skill/knowledge based businesses to provide opportunities for local graduates and others by:
 - Support the development of the Exeter Science Park and Sky Park
 - Joint marketing campaigns
 - Participate in the maintenance and delivery of the Exeter and Heart of Devon Property Register by providing information for potential incoming businesses

3. Make provision for support businesses/services across the District through land availability and best use of Council's own property portfolio:
 - Create a database of local economic indicators
 - Allocate sufficient employment land close to where people live, on a plan, monitor, manage basis through the Local Plan
 - Undertake a review of Council commercial property to secure optimum benefit for the economy

Best Practice Example: Exeter Science Park

East Devon District Council has worked in partnership with the former RDA, Devon County, and Exeter City Councils for many years to secure ownership of, and outline planning permission for, a new Science Park at Redhayes, just east of Junction 29 on the M5. A Science Park Board has been set up to market the concept and the first building to go on the site, the Science Park Centre (a serviced hub for high tech. and knowledge based industries in their incubation stage – drawing on the Exeter University Innovation Centre concept) is actively being pursued.

“We are immensely proud of the progress we and our partners have made to date towards delivering high quality, well paid jobs, building on the creative and innovative skills of local graduates and others. We are hopeful that the benefits of all this work will percolate eastwards across the whole of East Devon, thereby helping to improve skills and wages for local people.” **Cllr Graham Godbeer, Economy Portfolio Holder**

Aim 2:

Provide business support, innovation ideas, networking opportunities and training for small and medium size businesses. We also provide or facilitate suitable premises for all stages of their development.

Local Authorities have a role to play in providing start up businesses with serviced office space and support during their early years. Our wish is to increase the number of business start ups and business survival rates and we do this in a variety of ways. The East Devon Business Centre is one of the main ways – a supported office space which includes a business adviser on hand too – but we also work with partner and link organisations to maximise the benefits we can bring. The more that local communities and town and parish councils can do to drive and manage their futures, the more likely it is that these communities will bring about successful futures for their residents and businesses. Our work is aimed at helping the Towns do this so that there is local ownership and a will to make things happen.

What do we do now?

- Run the East Devon Business Centre to help new and small businesses grow in a supported environment. It is currently fully occupied.
- Help businesses find their way through the planning process at the pre-application stage
- Long term funding to and relationship with the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships which cover a large area of our District.
- Grant to Seaton Chamber in 2011/12 to help fund a Business Support Officer
- Fund the skills partnership through the Heart of Devon Skills Board to help recruit apprentices and local contractors/tradespeople
- Invest in Seaton and Exmouth to help improve the public realm and visitor facilities of both towns.

What else will we be doing?

1. Make available sufficient Business Development Unit (BDU) space to meet demand:
 - Support the Rolle college company to make provision in Exmouth
 - Work in partnership with the Town Councils to provide BDUs in Seaton and Axminster
2. Improve access (and signposting) to integrate support and advice for new and existing businesses:
 - Support the Business Information Point (BIP) in its work to advise businesses on financial and practical matters and its training programme

- Integrate economic and planning advice in the pre-application process of Development Management
3. Work with local stakeholders to understand and plan for the needs of both rural and urban businesses:
- Encourage businesses, through the East Devon Business Forum, local Chambers of Commerce and associations of small businesses, to have their voice heard in the development of planning policy and to provide practical help to their members
 - Support the work of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnerships in the delivery of their Management Plans, particular the land management and economic elements
 - Lobby the Local Enterprise Partnership to recognise the needs of small/medium businesses in their plans and work in partnership to deliver appropriate support
 - Help Parish Councils to provide small work spaces for new businesses in the villages
 - Find new uses for un-used buildings
4. Facilitate the improvement of the local skill base:
- Work with Bicton College and secondary schools to identify and plan for the skill needs of local and incoming businesses
 - Promote the Skills Portal to put developers and businesses in touch
 - Explore ways of promoting job opportunities for the recently retired
 - Support the Exeter and Heart of Devon Workforce Development Plan
5. Support town centres as viable and active places to visit and shop:
- Undertake a 'health check' of town centres
 - Work in partnership with the Chambers of Commerce to identify evidenced problems and deliver improvements

Best Practice Example: The East Devon Business Forum

The remit of this group of local entrepreneurs and representatives of Chambers of Trade, supported by the District Council, is to give a voice to, and provide support for, local businesses.

It's most recent project is to contribute to a Local Enterprise Partnership bid to the government's Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs new Rural Growth Network Fund. If successful the part of the project focused in East Devon will provide for essential infrastructure and premises needed by businesses to start up and grow. It will also include targeted education to enhance family business skills and mentoring, reduce the carbon footprint and running costs of businesses and will support rural enterprises led by women in the East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONBs.

"We believe that our part of the project, based as it is on the protected landscapes of East Devon and our neighbouring Authorities and aimed at encouraging entrepreneurs to prosper without damaging the landscape, is a unique concept and we are hopeful of a successful outcome". Graham Brown (National Farmers Union representative) Chairman of the East Devon Business Forum.

Aim 3:

Prioritise locations and sectors of greatest opportunity or need for specific projects

As a Council, we can act as a catalyst for inward investment and help communities to improve their offer to businesses and visitors. We can have most impact when we prioritise our work in partnerships to make town centres vibrant places that people want to work in and visit. Often this means we will work in specific locations for a period of time to help development and regeneration happen. Running alongside this area of our work is supporting the agricultural economy in the District and we have various aims where this work is concerned, for example, helping to reduce the carbon footprint of our food, increasing renewable energy sources and keeping local food supply chains as short as possible.

What do we do now?

- In November 2011 we completed the masterplanning process for a suite of important regeneration projects for Exmouth. This included an extensive consultation exercise to give the plans a firm footing with the local community.
- Work effectively with businesses, for example Sainsburys store in Ottery St Mary and Sainsburys logistics base at the Gateway Site in the West End developments.
- Secure funds for a new visitor centre for Seaton followed by a marketing exercise
- Contribute to a Devon and Somerset wide Rural Growth network bid for funding to support local skills and entrepreneurs in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

What else will we be doing?

1. Continue to deliver the Regeneration schemes in Exmouth and Seaton:
 - Make best use of the Council's land holdings
 - Support the work of Town Managers and Business Improvement District schemes (BIDS)
 - Working in partnership with other willing land-owners to deliver commercial development in the towns
2. Work alongside other Town Councils and Market and Coastal Town groups to identify and help deliver improved economic and community infrastructure

3. Support the agricultural economy of East Devon:

- Support added value businesses on, or supplied by, family farms and estates
- Create planning policy designed to balance the competing needs of food production and the growing of energy fuel, and agri-renewable energy use of land
- Support the justified building needs of agricultural businesses where it will not damage designated landscapes or create an evidenced nuisance for local residents
- Support local Farmer's Markets and the Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership's 'Making it Local' funding campaign

Best practice:

The 'Making it Local' campaign

A £2.4m funding initiative was secured by East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONB Partnerships from the Rural Development Programme for England. The funding has supported a wide range of projects across East Devon, capitalising on our outstanding landscapes, local skills and developing prosperity and economic benefit to the area. Visit www.makingitlocal.org to see the projects which range from enhancements to village halls and a photovoltaic scheme in a primary school through to a new pavilion for Sidmouth Rugby Club. Without the continuing commitment of our councillors and officers working with our partners, these sorts of projects would never have got off the ground.

Aim 4:

Use the natural assets of the District to strengthen and widen the District's visitor economy throughout the year without damaging the outstanding beauty of the East Devon coast and countryside.

The Council recognises the importance of the outstanding natural assets and wants to enhance them in a way that supports the local economy, but doesn't damage the area at the same time. We would like to create an information base to attract new visitors to the District from all over the world. If we can help new and existing tourism businesses to provide high quality facilities and accommodation, then we will do this too so that we are tackling the issues in the round.

Photo of beach huts and bird hides?

What do we do now?

- Manage the beaches, beach huts, deck chairs and cafe leases of the coastal towns as part of the tourism offer.
- Work with the Environment Service to create, maintain and enhance the coastal paths, footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the World Heritage coastline.

What else will we be doing?

1. Create an effective Tourism Destination Management solution for East Devon:
 - Pursue a comprehensive and professional marketing campaign to attract visitors to the area
 - Create a dedicated visitor destination website
 - Work with the Chambers of Commerce to produce town based information
2. Promote the green tourism agenda:
 - Increase the opportunities to use wild and semi managed environments for learning, leisure and livelihoods
 - Support and manage footpaths, cycleways and bridlepaths to maximise their use by visitors

- Participate in the development and delivery of the World Heritage Coast programmes

Aim 5:

Help secure the necessary infrastructure to create and support sustainable agricultural, business and visitor economies in East Devon.

Our aim here is to make a difference to how competitive we are as a District by lobbying for better connectivity and improvements in road, rail and air routes, cycle routes and broadband speed. We want to make working in the District a viable and sustainable option for existing and incoming businesses.

What do we do now?

- We delivered the Eon Renewable Energy Centre in the West End
- Worked hard to develop a proper road infrastructure in the West End to minimise the impact on surrounding villages
- Worked with partners to protect the value of the Great Western Railway line to East Devon and make sure services to Waterloo in London are improved.

What else will we be doing?

1. Explore the advantages of pursuing a Green Industry agenda for the District and it's potential to secure a sustainable future for the local community
2. Enable businesses to more effectively communicate, operate and compete:
 - Lobby to bring Superfast Broadband to all parts of the District
 - Work with Parish Councils to provide ICT access to those without home access
3. Improve rail, cycle, road and air transport links within and into and out of the District:
 - Lobby Government and transport authorities for improvements such as the A303
 - Invest in influential transport partnerships
 - Collect Community Infrastructure Levy funding for appropriate projects
4. Support the development of small and medium scale renewable energy provision built around the needs of businesses and their energy consumption

Best practice example

The EON Combined Heat and Power Plant will supply heating and hot water to both Cranbrook and Skypark, plus export electricity to the grid. Initially powered by gas, the plant will change over to biomass fuel once the necessary amount of new buildings and homes are built to make this fuel use efficient. This is the largest scale use of this technology in the country. New residents of Cranbrook will not have boilers in their house or a direct gas supply. In sustainability terms it means that the houses will exceed Code Level 4.

Environment Strategy

Contents:

Page(s)

Foreword by Councillor Iain Chubb

Introduction

Central Government Policy

Aim 1

Promote the economic value of the environment and opportunities
For growth in jobs and prosperity that it presents

Aim 2

Protect and enhance the diverse inland, coastal and marine habitats
And the wildlife they support – making them more resilient to climate
change etc.

Aim 3

Minimise the amount of waste created in East Devon and recycle
more household waste

Aim 4

Continue to maintain our open and green spaces to a high standard
And ensure that they promote healthier and more active lifestyles

Aim 5

Ensure a clean, green and safe environment

Aim 6

To promote a better understanding of our cultural heritage
and to continue to support cultural activities

Foreword by Councillor Iain Chubb
Portfolio Holder for Environment

East Devon is a great place to live and visit.

We are very fortunate to enjoy such a varied and high quality environment.

Our magnificent world heritage site, the Jurassic coast, our countryside, nature reserves, parks, woodlands, sport pitches and play areas, provide opportunities for high quality living, work and recreation.

It is easy to take these areas for granted and give little thought to how they are provided and maintained. A wide range of organisations and many private landowners contribute directly to the district's publically accessible areas.

Our health, quality of life and economic prosperity are dependant on a high quality environment and our Environment Strategy is aimed at making sure that the environment is protected and where possible improved, and its value to the economy and the benefits it has to offer are properly recognised.

Introduction

Our local environment is part of our life support system. It provides essential services, from the air we breathe and water we drink, to the soils on which we grow our food and the physical and mental health benefits we get from using open spaces. Our health, quality of life and economic prosperity depend on keeping our environment in good condition. As the Government sums it up “a vibrant natural environment is not a luxury for the good times – it is a necessity for economic recovery and sustainable growth for the long term”.

In essence, a healthy natural environment is a cost effective tool that can help:

- support local economic and regeneration,
- improve educational outcomes,
- improve public health
- reduce crime and anti-social behaviour,
- help communities adapt to climate change,
- improve quality of life, across an entire area

Challenges to the environment locally are many and varied and include:

1. Development pressure notably for buildings and traffic infrastructure.
2. Limited landfill capacity for the disposal of waste
3. Pollution of water; land and air and noise are growing problems as are litter and fly tipping

On a global scale climate change is an issue of public concern. Although this is a global problem it will have an impact on our local environment with increased flood risk and change in habitat and loss of biodiversity.

The aims within this Strategy set out how the Council will continue to conserve and improve the local environment and meet the local challenges that it faces. A number of actions outlined within these aims and those within the Housing and Economic Strategies will help the Council, other organisations and individuals to reduce our local impact on climate change.

Central Government Policy

National policies and strategies relating to the environment are many and varied.

In October 2010, over 190 countries signed an historic global agreement in Nagoya, Japan, to take urgent and effective action to halt the alarming global declines in biodiversity. This agreement recognised just how important it is to look after the natural world.

In response to the Nagoya agreement, The Natural Environment White Paper *(i)* was published in 2011; the first white paper on the natural environment in over 20 years. It outlined the Government's vision for the natural environment, shifting the emphasis from piecemeal conservation action towards a more integrated landscape-scale approach.

- Protecting and improving the natural environment
- Halting the decline in habitats and species
- Degradation of landscapes and erosion of 'natural capital'
- Growing of the 'green economy'
- Reconnecting people and nature
- International and European environmental leadership

A new biodiversity strategy for England *(ii)* builds on this White Paper and gives a comprehensive picture of how we are implementing our international and EU commitments. It sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade, on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea. It builds on the successful work that has gone before, but also seeks to deliver a real step change.

Planning, or Development Management, has a major part to play in safeguarding the environment. The importance of the natural environment has been a key feature in the formation of the Local Development Framework which outlines the Council's approach to future development in the area. The final version of the framework document is currently being considered.

A national strategy for air quality produced in 2007 *(iii)* set out a way forward for working and planning on air quality issues. It sets out air quality standards and objectives to be achieved, and identifies new national policy measures which could give further health benefits. Local authorities have a legal duty to manage air quality in line with the national strategy. This means carrying out regular reviews and assessments and preparing a set of actions if the objectives are not met.

The harmful effects of noise in the environment are causing increasing concern. Although there is no overall national policy statement on the management of noise, an EU Action Programme in 2010 *(iv)* set out the objectives for the noise climate in Europe and aims to achieve a reduction in the number of people regularly affected by long term high noise. Legislation gives local authorities powers to deal with noise problems at a local level.

Much of the other important work the Council does to make sure the environment is safe, clean and green is backed up by legalisation. The Council has duties and powers to carry out enforcement in relation to, amongst other things, food safety, health and safety, contaminated land, pollution, pest control, fly-tipping and litter.

The disposal of waste is of growing international importance. The European Waste Framework Directive provides the overarching legal framework for collection, transport and recovery of waste. It requires member states to recover waste by means of recycling or to use waste as a source of energy. There are various 'directives' which have been issued under this general framework, a key one of which sets targets for the reduction of waste going to landfill. The recent Government Review of Waste (v) contains the actions and commitments which together set a clear direction towards a zero waste economy.

- (i) *The Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice; Securing the Value of Nature'*
- (ii) *Biodiversity 2020; A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems*
- (iii) *Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 2007*
- (iv) *EU Action Programme Environment 2010; Our future our Choice*
- (v) *Government Review of Waste Policy in England 2011.*

Aim 1

Promote the economic value of the environment and opportunities for growth in jobs and prosperity that it presents.

Our natural environment is our greatest asset and it is imperative that its future is not put at risk by any decisions we make today. We want to make sure that it is at the heart of all our decision making.

While there will inevitably be tensions between the need to conserve our landscape, wildlife and their habitats and the pressures for new development we believe that the environment can be the key driver in our future economic prosperity.

A high quality environment can underpin tourism, support small rural businesses and provide attractive places where businesses and communities can thrive.

Tourism is a key economic driver for the area but, if left unfettered, can have a negative impact on the environment. Green Tourism is sustainable tourism – which takes into account the needs of the environment, local residents businesses and visitors. We see the promotion of our outstanding natural assets through ‘green tourism’ has an important part to play in our local economy.

What are we doing now?

Our key natural tourist attractions are:

The countryside generally

The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site covers all of our coastline from Exmouth through to the border with Dorset.

The South West Coastal path which runs along the East Devon coast is a major draw for walkers.

The two Areas of Outstanding Beauty which make up over 60% of our district.

The Axe Estuary Wetlands project is set to become a major regional wildlife tourism attraction for birdwatchers and visitors to the district, complementing the Exmouth Local Nature Reserve, one of the biggest in Devon.

BEST PRACTICE:

EDDC is supporting the development of a 220 acre regionally important Wetlands scheme on the Axe Estuary, which will become a major wildlife tourism destination for visitors to the area. This has been achieved through a unique partnership arrangement with Government Agencies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England and also the local groups such as the Axe Vale & District Conservation Society. This partnership arrangement has provided over £250,000 of investment towards the development of the Wetlands. The creation of the Axe Wetlands has been used by Natural England as a national case study for the “Natural Economy”. Research undertaken in 2009 by Plymouth University has indicated that it will bring in an additional 60,000 new visitors to the area generating up to an additional £750,000 into the local economy.

What else will we be doing?

We will:

- Support the development of 'Green Tourism' and the 'Green Tourism' business scheme.
- Make sure the economic value of the environment is fully taken into account in all our decision making.
- Develop Local Plan policies that reflect the value and importance of the natural environment to the economic wellbeing of the district.
- Adopt the national guidelines for compensation for damage to wildlife and habitats caused by development (biodiversity offsetting measures).
- Develop an information base on the numbers and types of visitors who come to the area because of its natural environment, which we can use for comparison year on year.
- Continue to support the development of the regionally important Axe Estuary Wetlands as a major nature based tourism destination.
- Provide support for the development of the 'Natural Seaton' concept that provides an overarching brand for the natural assets of Seaton and its locality.
- Promote the Jurassic Coast, South West Coast Path and the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as premier destinations for sustainable tourism through continued support to their partnerships.
- Actively promote the Stop Line Way cycleway as a major tourism destination linking to the Axe Wetlands promotional activities.
- Support the work of the Heart of Devon Area Tourism Partnership for nature based activities and walking based campaigns.

Aim 2

Protect and enhance the diverse inland, coastal and marine habitats and the wildlife they support – making them more resilient to climate change .

The richness and variety of our plants and animals and the habitats in which they live, known as ‘biodiversity’, is a feature of our district. We can conserve and improve the biodiversity by carefully managing and maintaining our high quality landscape and countryside as well as other spaces such as gardens, allotments, parks, roadside verges and playing fields.

There is a range of species and habitats that deserve special attention because, either they are threatened, or they are characteristic of the area. Protection of these important species and habitats is achieved through a variety of measures, such as setting up nature reserves, using planning controls or through the action of individual landowners.

What are we doing now?

Important species and habitats have been identified in the East Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). This helps to inform decisions and actions of the Council and others that might affect nature conservation.

We have set up 12 designated Local Nature Reserves which we manage ourselves and we also work in partnership with local communities such as the Holyford Woodland Trust.

We support the Exe Estuary Partnership to oversee the management of the Exe Estuary as our internationally important site for wildlife.

BEST PRACTICE:

The Countryside Service runs an annual programme of over 60 public events attracting over 2,500 people every year to learn about our outstanding natural environment. The Team has also set up in 2011 an East Devon Wildlife Conservation Volunteering Network which provides weekly opportunities for the public to become volunteers on our Nature Reserves. Also for 2012/13 the Team is launching a new Junior Ranger After Schools Club on the Axe Wetlands which will run for 12 weeks over the spring and summer each year to help inspire budding junior naturalists to develop further their knowledge and skills.

What else will we be doing?

We will:

Develop Local Plan policies that reflect the need to conserve and enhance our internationally, nationally and locally important wildlife and landscapes.

Develop by March 2013 a Strategy that provides a framework for conserving and managing the district's local Nature Reserves.

Undertake a review of the Nature Reserves Management Plans for Axe Estuary sites, Holyford Woods, the Maer and Exmouth Nature Reserves in line with Natural England's guidance .

Develop a programme of volunteering on the Nature Reserves which will contribute to the overall management of the sites. As part of this we will adopt a Volunteer Handbook in 2012/13 which will provide the framework for all the volunteering activities.

Carry out an annual assessment of the condition and health of our Nature Reserves and then prepare management plans for each reserve to target habitat & species decline or loss.

Work in partnership with the Forestry Commission on Trinity Hill Nature Reserve to restore and create additional lowland heathland by 2013/14

Review and refresh the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and set new targets for action on species and habitat priorities by 2013/14.

Create an additional inter-tidal habitat on the Axe Wetlands and lowland heath on Trinity Hill as agreed in the Natural England higher level stewardship target by 2020.

Develop more wildlife friendly management practices for the Council's parks and gardens.

Develop by 2013 an Environmental Education Action Plan document that identifies key audiences, introduces curriculum based activities and raises awareness of the natural environment. We will also arrange for "drop in sessions" for Head teachers and Head of Departments, for all schools in the District.

Deliver 60 school visits as part of an agreement with Natural England for education on Wetlands and Trinity Hill reserves.

Deliver a new programme of Forest Schools initiative and John Muir Award scheme to encourage family participation as part of a wider annual educational programme and public events.

Engage Exeter University on Axe Wetlands as part of their undergraduate & post graduate natural sciences & geography courses. We will arrange for students to use the Axe Wetlands from 2013/14 and agree with Exeter University a programme of research projects which will help with recording and understanding ecological issues on site.

Aim 3

Minimise the amount of waste created in East Devon and recycle more household waste

The amount of waste collected by local Councils has risen enormously since the 1950s

Households have become more affluent and been able to purchase more goods. In East Devon this waste has traditionally been buried in landfill sites. This represented not only a tremendous waste of natural resources but has also added to the amount of climate changing gases being released into the atmosphere.

It is not an environmentally friendly or sustainable solution to bury all of this waste and it is predicted that the UK will run out of landfill sites in 7 years. For these reasons we must recycle more. The Government recognises this and wants all local Councils to increase the amount of waste which is recycled and reduce the amount to be disposed of.

What we currently do

We currently collect from over 64,000 households, over 500 tonnes of waste every week of which we recycle over 50%.

Waste which cannot be recycled is taken to landfill sites and shortly will go to a waste to energy plant.

We collect glass which goes back into bottles and jars, paper which makes new newsprint, cans which are used in the steel industry or for making new cans, plastic bottles which make things like fleeces and compost bins, textiles which in many cases are reused in other countries, and garden waste which goes into compost. With the exception of textiles which go to help other countries, all of the things we recycle are used within the EU.

BEST PRACTICE:

To overcome the problems normally associated with fortnightly landfill waste collections we introduced weekly collections of food waste in separate containers.

We collect in excess of 110 tonnes of food waste a week which is taken to plants where methane gas is produced to drive generators to then produce electricity.

We will:

Increase recycling rates so that we are in the top 10% of English Councils by 2015.

Reduce the amount of waste that we send to landfill to 40% of the total waste produced by 2015 (if the Waste To Energy plant comes in 2013 no waste from us will be going to landfill).

Review how many households are recycling at the moment and look at ways to encourage and help them to increase still further the amount of waste they recycle, and also to get others to take part.

Give residents more information about recycling and reduction through roadshows and social media network sites.

Continue to offer talks to Parish Councils and voluntary groups about ways in which householders can manage their waste better and how we are improving the service.

Carry out education programmes in schools and young people's activity groups, such as Brownies and Scouts, so that we are informing the next generation of householders of the benefits of recycling and also encouraging them to help with recycling at home now.

Establish whether it is feasible to increase the range of recyclables we collect from households to include mixed plastics and cardboard following the completion of a trial in Beer.

Look at best practice in Waste and Recycling across the country in preparation for a new contract in 2016. There are many innovative and exciting ideas which we can learn from when we set up our next contract for collecting waste, including an analysis of whether a devon-wide collection is viable.

Look at the possibility of providing on-street recycling facilities in coastal areas. Not only will this increase the opportunities for residents and visitors to recycle waste but will also help get the recycling message across.

Aim 4

Continue to maintain our open and green spaces to a high standard and – make sure that they promote healthier and more active lifestyles

Over the years we have invested a huge amount into providing high quality parks and gardens which are a big draw to residents and visitors alike. We also look after numerous sports pitches and other grassed and open areas including play spaces, which in total, amount to over one and a half million square metres of publicly accessible green space.

As well as green space, we clean and maintain 14sq kms of other public open space, from town centres to residential streets, keeping everything looking clean, safe and green.

These public open spaces play an important role in creating places where people can meet, exercise and play sports, enjoy the arts or simply relax. They create a focus for the community and contribute to residents' quality of life.

The health benefits of using recreational spaces are also important arising from the opportunity to take part in healthy outdoor exercise and from the way that they allow escape to a less stressful, more relaxing environment.

Connaught Gardens in Sidmouth and Manor Gardens in Exmouth are our flagship formal parks and support a variety of community events and concerts as well as attracting visitors in their own right.

We want to make sure that everyone has access to a variety of open spaces, where children can play and which are safe and clean.

What we are currently doing

We currently maintain and plant 4 formal parks, 2 of which are regular Green Flag holders and many smaller gardens across the district, as well as looking after 1.5 million sq metres of grass, 90,000 metres of hedges, 40,000 metres of shrub and around 50,000 trees.

Our green spaces regularly win awards such as the coveted Green Flag as well as doing well in national Britain in Bloom competitions.

We compost all of the leaves collected from these areas and use the resulting leaf mulch in our parks and gardens. Most of the green waste generated from our sites is also composted; over 260 tonnes a year. Some of this compost is used in our parks and gardens.

We review our working practices to ensure we are working in a safe and efficient manner for the public and our staff. This includes reviewing cutting frequencies and lengths at all of our sites, leaving grass longer where possible to promote biodiversity and reduce running costs. The Byes in Sidmouth is a good example of this. Several sections are now cut as wildflower meadows, but we also retain areas which are cut more frequently so that families can picnic and kick a ball around.

We provide over 70 children's and young people's play sites, including 4 skate parks. We have recently worked with Sidmouth Town Council and Axminster Millwey Residents association to deliver new play sites which were designed through consultation with local people.

In response to Locals wishes we have delivered an outdoor gym at Seafeld Gardens, Seaton and Land of Canaan, Ottery St Mary; both designed in consultation with local residents.

We work with local volunteer groups in Honiton, Exmouth and Sidmouth to improve parks and green space in line with the wishes of local people. One example is the Glenn in Honiton where we have cleared much of the overgrown Rhododendron to help restore the park to its former Victorian glory.

We are working with experts such as The Sports Turf Research Institute to improve the quality of our sports pitches and undertaking drainage works at our Sidford recreation site.

Best Practice:

We have worked with partners to deliver a regenerated public realm in The Strand, Exmouth and at Harbour Rd, Seaton. These areas are intended to be new hub areas where local business and recreation activities can be centred. We are currently working with local groups and Town Councils to deliver events and markets in these spaces.

We will:

Promote the use of our open spaces including countryside, beaches, parks and gardens as a means of enabling people to live healthy and active lives.

Review the use of all open spaces to assess their value to the Community and whether they may be better used for such things as:

- Allotments
- Active play areas
- Wildlife habitats

Extend our work with local community groups, such as 'Friends of the Byes', aiming to have a community or 'friends of' group set up in each Town. Where appropriate we will investigate handing the running of the site to the community group.

Develop our play areas and install more exciting 'play space' schemes such as the Bouldering Wall at Allhallows, Honiton, or the new play area at Millwey, Axminster.

Aim to provide 'outdoor gyms' in all of our Towns.

Improve the use of our beaches, through consultation with local Town/Parish councils to deliver 'Beach Development Plans' to promote the Jurassic Coast and healthy lifestyles. We will apply for Beach Awards, where possible, to endorse this work.

Develop a programme of markets and community events for Seaton's Harbour Road and Exmouth's Strand public realm spaces together with the Town Councils.

Continue to respond to customer demand quickly and keep our open spaces clean, safe and green and work with local Town/Parish Councils, partners and residents groups to make sure our cleansing and maintenance services meet local needs.

We will continue to support partnership arrangements with Town & Parish Councils such as the Beer street cleaner and investigate where other such partnership arrangements may benefit local people.

Investigate the use of electric vehicles across our fleet to help reduce carbon emissions.

Renovate the skate park in Phear Park in Exmouth and plan to double its size in consultation with the users.

Develop a programme of health walks on Nature Reserves that are agreed by the NHS to ensure they provide positive health benefits.

Promote everyday active travel with walking and cycling routes through 'green corridors'.

Introduce public events to develop health benefits from the Stop Line Way cycleway once constructed in 2012/13.

Support the Forest School initiative; starting with investigating the possibility of a Forest School in Phear Park, Exmouth.

Aim 5

Ensure a clean, green and safe environment

Whether we live in a village or town the safety cleanliness of our streets and public open spaces is of utmost importance. The quality of the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, litter, graffiti, abandoned cars, noise, contaminated land, dog fouling, anti social behaviour all have an impact on our health and sense of well being. A clean, green and safe environment also helps businesses and attracts investment.

The Council spends a lot of money to ensure that the environment is clean and safe and thinks this should remain a priority in the future.

What we currently do

We:

Clean 14 square kilometres of roads and footpaths

Empty 1300 litter and dog waste bins.

Monitor, and where necessary, act to improve air quality. (An 'air quality action area' has recently been declared in Honiton because of problems with traffic congestion causing excessive pollution).

Deal with around 1000 noise problems each year.

Are responsible for ensuring food safety in 1600 food businesses and health and safety in 3000 other businesses.

Deal with rats, mice and other pests.

Pick up around 200 stray dogs each year.

Make sure that any land which has been contaminated in the past is made good.

Remove abandoned cars, fly tips and graffiti.

Work with the Police, Fire Service, Youth Service and other partners in Local Action Groups across the district to reduce crime and anti social behaviour.

BEST PRACTICE:

The Environment Service organises 'Neighbourhood Assessment' days where local residents are asked what problems there are in their local environment. Issues they have raised have included dog fouling, speeding traffic and pot holes. These issues are passed on to the responsible authorities and we send residents a newsletter to tell them what has been done.

What else will we be doing?

We will:

Set up a beach forum and work with other partners to make sure bathing water at our beaches meets new national standards, and also to promote the quality of our beaches.

Prepare an action plan to improve the air quality in Honiton.

Publicise the food hygiene ratings of food catering businesses in East Devon so that people have more information about the levels of hygiene at those businesses.

Investigate new ways of working with partners and other agencies to enforce littering and dog fouling powers.

Ensure businesses comply with requirements on the gases they emit to minimise pollution of the atmosphere.

Look at different ways of dealing with noise and other nuisance problems.

Review our pest control and dog warden services which are carried out by a private contractor at the moment to see if there is a more effective way of working.

We will be investing in equipment to scrub and clean the new high quality open spaces such as The Strand in Exmouth.

Aim 6

To promote a better understanding of our cultural heritage and continue to support cultural activities

The term 'culture' means different things to different people but may be said to be about the things that define us and the way we choose to live our lives. Culture includes the things that we decide to do or rules we are given, things that interest, stimulate, challenge, shape or divert us.

Culture is central to people's lives, helps celebrate local traditions and contributes to a modern healthy lifestyle. It stimulates creativity which, not only benefits the greater sense of wellbeing, but has a positive effect on economic growth.

What we do at the moment

We:

Run the Thelma Hulbert Art Gallery in Honiton – this stages innovative and stimulating exhibitions from various artists around the county and attracts over 6000 visitors each year. It also acts as the hub for arts development across the District.

Produce an arts directory – detailing all the arts activities/groups active across the district.

Run the Manor Pavilion Theatre in Sidmouth which puts on a wide range of theatrical, musical, dance and other events.

Provide support to local museums across the District.

Encourage and support large community events such as the Sidmouth Folk Festival, Exmouth Festival and Ottery St Mary Tar Barrels, as well as village fairs and markets.

What we will do in the future

We will:

Carry out a thorough review of our arts' development and cultural offerings across the district to see how they may be improved or better run, and to understand better our role in the future.

Develop a strategy for promoting our arts and cultural offers to as wide an audience as possible, and also attract more visitors.

Explore new and innovative ideas for income generation for the Thelma Hulbert Gallery that helps ensure its long term future.

Make the 'environment' generally a core part of our culture.

Develop a stronger environmental arts-based approach into the Countryside Service's public events and awareness raising programme to help broaden the appeal of the Council's Local Nature Reserves.

Support the outreach work of the SW Museum Development Officer to help deliver an agreed programme of events and projects with the 7 East Devon Museums, Jurassic Coast Team and local East Devon community arts network for a 3 year Heritage Lottery Fund supported scheme until 2014/15.

Resources available.

Simon Smale
Head of Environment

January 2012



Financial Strategy (2012 onwards)

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Introduction and Financial Summary

This Strategy considers the General Fund position and the Capital Programme, the third area of the Council's finances the Housing Revenue Account is reviewed in a separate report and financial plan.

Introduction

One of the most significant impacts on the Council's finances has come from the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 (CSR 10) where the Government has cut local authorities funding as part of their programme of tackling the national debt problem.

This Council has had a £1.068m reduction in formula grant for 2011/12, with a further reduction announced for 2012/13 of £0.731m; over the two years this equates to a 26% reduction in funding. Further reductions are expected in the remaining two years of the spending review (2013/14 and 2014/15).

Other factors have had a negative effect on the Council's finances including low interest rates, the effect on funding in the removal of the responsibility on the free bus travel scheme and increased running cost of services. Together these factors required the Council to make tough decisions in order to find £2.4m savings to set a balanced budget for 2011/12.

Going forward the Council will continue to find it difficult to afford its spending plans against further government spending cuts, the added pressure of increases in costs due to inflation, continued low investment income, an increasing call on services and the Council wishing to keep to moderate increases in Council Tax and other fees and charges.

Through its financial planning the Council has completed the difficult task of balancing its current year budget and has also considered future year challenges with the inclusion of initiatives to reduce costs going forward. It has monies available in reserves to bring about changes as necessary in order to drive down costs or increase receipts to help meet the continued pressure of balancing its budgets.

In looking to the future, consideration needs to be given to areas where the Government is introducing, or has introduced, changes which will affect the financial position of the Council:

- The Local Government Finance Review is underway with the first stage relating to the issue of a recent consultation paper, to be followed by 8 technical papers, on the retention of business rates. This proposes significant change to the formula grant methodology and the relationship with business rates. The scheme being consulted on will, it appears, result in winners or losers based on business growth in the area. The implications are difficult to assess without the full details which are still to be released and knowing what the final scheme will be. With the business developments planned in the East Devon area, it would be reasonable to

assume the Council could benefit from the new proposals in the medium term.

- With the introduction of the Welfare Reform Bill the Government plans that local authorities will no longer, from April 2013, be responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit payments. Benefits payments will in future form part of the Universal Credit proposals amalgamating a number of welfare payments into one system administered directly by the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).

This brings with it uncertainties for customers, council staff and financial uncertainty in understanding clearly the role the Council will play in the future and during the long transitional arrangements that are proposed past 2013. The current administration of the scheme in theory is cost neutral when taking direct grant and formula grant together, although as always with formula grant, individual service grant is not identifiable. There is a risk in the calculations to be used by Government to reduce funding to reflect the stopping of this responsibility that the Council could be disadvantaged.

- The introduction of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) scheme addresses an anomaly in the current formula grant calculation whereby additional housing growth is counted as additional income to the authority in its council tax base and deducted from grant payable as assumed income raised locally. The introduction in April 2011 of the NHB rewards housing growth with a 6 year payment of an average council tax per additional property. With the housing development planned in the East Devon area, the Council should see additional monies under this proposal but a significant risk to the financial position of this scheme is that funding comes from top slicing the formula grant to those categories of councils that benefit from the scheme. There is a risk that payments received under the scheme are not greater for a council than the reduction in formula grant.
- As part of the Welfare Reform and linked with the Local Government Finance review, the Government has issued a consultation paper on Localising Support for Council Tax. The proposals are that the Council will become responsible for assisting those on low incomes to help meet their council tax liability, not only in terms of administration a scheme but actually setting the scheme details locally.

Financial risks associated with this relate to how the Council will be financially reimbursed for the payments made under the scheme and the cost of administration. Under the current system of Council Tax Benefit payments made are reimbursed to the Council based on actual cost, proposals suggest this will change to an annual allocation not tied to actual costs thereby giving significant risk to local authorities on potential costs incurred. The Governments financial target of introducing this change is to reduce overall expenditure by 10%, thereby putting local authorities into a difficult position of having to reduce benefits/discounts to those on low incomes compared with the current scheme or fund costs locally.

- Legislation is imminent on changes to how local authorities charge for planning applications to a basis of cost recovery. This should be beneficial to the Council as the service is currently subsidised (£1.2m). Realistically it would be sensible to assume the new regime will not be in place until April 2012, although it may be possible to implement at an earlier stage, this will be dependent on how quickly the legislation is passed after the summer recess.

Financial Summary

This Financial Strategy has been developed to provide a financial framework within which the Council can deliver services to its customers and meet objectives set out in its Corporate Strategy.

The financial forecast position is explored in detail in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which forms part of this Strategy. The MTFP model predicts estimated shortfalls on the General Fund budget (revenue - day to day costs);

General Fund	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m
Budget Shortfall	0.587	0.252	0.496	0.386	0.218
<i>Figures assume the shortfall in each year is found so the deficit is not carried forward.</i>					

The MTFP forecast for the Capital Programme predicts estimated shortfalls of;

Capital Programme	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m
Budget Shortfall	0.821	0.628	0.349	0.452	0.363
<i>Figures assume the shortfall in each year is found so the deficit is not carried forward.</i>					
<i>Costs are based on schemes already committed to and the ongoing of core schemes, no new one off schemes that might come forwarded have not been allowed for.</i>					

The Strategy outlines a range of potential actions the Council should consider in order to manage its finances whilst delivering its strategic objectives; and to ensure that is able to produce balanced budgets over the medium term.

1. Purpose and background of the Financial Strategy.

- 1.1 The purpose of the Financial Strategy is to define how the Council will structure and manage its finances over the next 5 years, in order to deliver services to customers and support the objectives detailed within its Corporate Strategy.
- 1.2 The Financial Strategy links with other key strategies and documents of the Council including Service Plans, its Asset Management Plan and Asset Maintenance Plan, Treasury Management and input from the Council's Senior Management Team (SMT).
- 1.3 The Strategy requires the preparation of an annual Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and is an essential part of the budget setting process. The MTFP provides a financial model and forecast of the cost of providing services over a rolling 5 year period, together with an estimate of the financial resources that are likely to be available to the Council. The process is designed to provide an early warning of any potential deficit in the required level of resources.

As well as considering General Fund revenue services, the Plan also reviews the affordability of the Council's capital investment programme, matching its forecast potential available funding against planned capital spending over a five year horizon.

This Strategy does not consider the requirements and pressures upon the Council's Housing Revenue Account for which a separate business plan is prepared.

- 1.4 The development of a five year financial model is based upon a number of assumptions and perceived risks which clearly become more difficult to predict as the period covered lengthens. However, as a broad principle the model has been developed on the basis of "reasonable and prudent" forecasts and assumptions in accordance with sound accounting practice.
- 1.5 Underpinning the Strategy, the following fundamental principles have been adopted by the Council:
 - Annually a balanced revenue budget will be set with expenditure to be limited by the amount of available resources.
 - The General Fund balance will be maintained at the adopted level.
 - Resources will be redirected from low to high priority services to meet objectives set out in the Corporate Strategy.
 - Council tax increases will be kept within annually announced Government guidelines

In considering the capital budget, the Council will continue to follow the methodology of scheme scoring and prioritisation. The Council will also seek to maximise the use of its assets.

2. The Medium Term Financial Plan – Framework.

- 2.1 The base for the MTFP is the 2011/12 approved budget and the current cost of ongoing services, adjusted to take account of a range of unavoidable costs such as pay increases, inflationary pressures, the implementation of any approved changes to the budget and any costs arising from new legislation and associated regulations or changes in customer demand. The MTFP takes account of any forecast variations in the level of both investment and fee income.

The Plan also considers and makes reasonable assumptions about the likely incomes from council tax and central government funding.

- 2.2 The MTFP is designed to model scenarios and to aggregate the sum of all potential financial inputs, to determine whether the Council will have sufficient resources to achieve its objectives, or indeed whether action is required to bridge a funding gap.
- 2.3 In formulating these calculations a number of assumptions have been made and a range of external influences considered. Appendix A identifies the various risks and pressures and provides commentary on their potential impact.
- 2.4 A similar exercise has been undertaken in respect of future capital expenditure, detailing the anticipated level of resources required, together with potential funding sources available to the Council to support its planned programme of works and where there are revenue implications these have been acknowledged within the Plan.

3. Summary of the MTFP Model.

Revenue

- 3.1 The summary page of the MTFP Model is attached in Appendix B.
- 3.2 The position on General Fund services is detailed below in Table 1 and shows the current year 2011/12 for comparison and forms the basis from which future assessments have been made.
- 3.3 The MTFP shows a projected deficit for 2012/13 of £0.587m which then increases annually reaching £1.939m in 2016/17 as a cumulative deficit to find. Clearly this is an unsustainable pattern and not one that the Council will allow, the Strategy addresses this issue in Section 4 of the report

Table 1: MTFP Model – Summary of General Fund Position

	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000
Service Requirement	13,505	13,696	13,557	13,995	14,415	14,884
Amendments to base budget	-	(145)	51	-	70	(70)
Pay & Inflation and other inescapables	-	3	331	335	397	410
Cranbrook & new development	-	3	56	85	2	-
Debt Charges	191	-	-	-	-	-
Net Budget Requirement	13,696	13,557	13,995	14,415	14,884	15,224
Government Grant	(5,963)	(5,232)	(5,179)	(4,921)	(4,921)	(4,921)
Council Tax	(6,950)	(7,124)	(7,303)	(7,485)	(7,672)	(7,864)
Council Tax Freeze Grant	(174)	(174)	(174)	(174)		
External Interest	(535)	(440)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
Collection Fund Surplus	(8)	-	-	-	-	-
Agreed use of General Fund and other reserves	(66)	-	-	-	(70)	-
Total Resources Available	(13,696)	(12,970)	(13,156)	(13,080)	(13,163)	(13,285)
Budget (Surplus) /Shortfall	-	587	839	1,335	1,721	1,939

3.4 The Table above shows the cumulative shortfall assuming no action is taken to address each year's shortfall. Table 2 below shows the shortfall each year in isolation, assuming the previous year's shortfall was found.

Table 2: MTFP Model – Summary of General Fund Position, shortfall each year

General Fund	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m
Budget Shortfall	0.587	0.252	0.496	0.386	0.218
<i>Figures assume the shortfall in each year is found so deficit is not carried forward.</i>					

3.5 The model identifies the pressures and influences on the Council’s revenue budgets and highlights a shortfall between the Council’s spending requirements and the amount of finance available. Actions will need to be taken to meet these shortfalls and the need to keep finding savings year on year is not to be underestimated, the level of savings required are significantly less than the Council faced in setting the 2011/12 budget.

Areas **not** included within these figures to note are:

- A significant cut of £0.170m was made to the maintenance budgets in 2011/12; only 50% of this has been included back in the MTFP for 2012/13 with a further 25% back in for 2013/14. It has been assumed that maintenance cannot be held back indefinitely.
- Annually, members debate one-off budgets (special items) during the budget process for items that it is felt should be included, no allowance has been given for these items.
- £0.183m was budgeted in 2011/12 to provide resources to assist with asset management work, the continuation of this budget has not been allowed in the MTFP going forward as it was approved on a one-off basis.
- Costs associated with work on the possible office relocation have not been factored into the Plan as it has been agreed that this will be met from the Transformation Reserve.

3.6 Recommendations are put forward in Section 4 in order to tackle this shortfall identified. A clear message from the Plan is there are no resources available for growth unless capacity is found through a combination of; reprioritising spending, the achievement of savings or increased income.

3.7 As covered in the introduction the Government is introducing, or has introduced, changes which will effect the financial position of the Council:

- The Local Government Finance Review - The Retention of Business Rates. The implications are difficult to assess with full details yet to be released or final scheme agreed, at this stage no allowance has been made within the MTFP and it is assumed that this Council could be better off under this scheme; a further report will be presented to Cabinet on the Governments consultation proposals.

- With the introduction of the Welfare Reform Bill the Government plans that local authorities will no longer, from April 2013, be responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit payments. The risk is the implications of how funding will be calculated to be ceased and the costs associated with transitional arrangements including possible staff redundancies. As the current scheme is in theory cost neutral to the Council at this stage in the MTFP it is assumed there will be no financial loss to the Council. This will be kept under review and as more details are released members will be updated.
- The introduction of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) scheme has given additional monies (£0.311m) to the Council for 2011/12 which members' have yet to decide on its allocation and is the subject of a member Panel. As there are uncertainties on the effect to the Council's formula grant related to payments under this scheme, no additional monies have been taken into the Plan. It is assumed that members will ensure that the first call of any money received under this scheme will be to reimburse any loss the Council sees in its core funding through formula grant. NHB is considered in Section 4 of this report in terms of the members' panel consideration of its use and whether it could be used to assist in the funding of the Capital Programme going forward.
- As part of the Welfare Reform and linked with the Local Government Finance review the Government has issued a consultation paper on Localising Support for Council Tax. The financial risks associated with this relate to how the Council will be financially reimbursed for the payments made under the scheme and the cost of administration. At this stage until further details are known no allowance has been made in the MTFP, it is assumed that the Council will implement a scheme that is within the funds made available by Government. It is estimated the Council will make Council Tax Benefits payments of £8.3m in 2011/12; a 10% reduction would therefore be £0.830m! A further report will be presented to Cabinet on the Governments consultation proposals.
- The final area to be considered is the change in how local authorities charge for planning applications to a basis of cost recovery. As stated this should be beneficial to the Council as the service is currently subsidised in the order of £1.2m. The scheme is likely to be in place for April 2012 and although legislation is not in place it would seem reasonable to consider this additional income. At present any additional income is **not** included in the MTFP, but it is considered in Section 4 of this report in terms of actions to balance the Council's budget going forward.

Initial calculations of what could be charged for in addition to what is charged at present is calculated in the order of £0.9m, however strong warnings come with this and it is based on initial calculations and assumptions over what can be charged in our cost model. We have followed the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) model on these calculations and the model is currently with CIPFA for checking. In addition to this checking, member approval for the scheme

will be required and again it must be stressed although the signs are that this legislation will be passed, it is not in place as yet.

Capital

3.8 The Council maintains a programme of capital expenditure designed to improve a wide range of community facilities and local infrastructure. However, the forward funding projections as shown in Table 3 below clearly indicates that there is a disparity between the Council's capital spending aspirations, and the amount of finance available to it to finance such works. In producing these figures previous recommendations accepted, in principle, have now been implemented to help fund the programme going forward, these being:

- Capital works associated with the Housing Revenue Account are shown from 2012/13 as self funded; these costs have been included in the HRA business model. Any capital receipts generated from the HRA have been excluded and assumed to be used to finance HRA expenditure. The effect of this, for example in 2012/13, is net reduction in costs of £0.308m.
- External Interest achieved above a base level (determined at £0.5m) will be used to assist in funding the Capital Programme instead of it being used to fund revenue services; this has been reflected in the revenue MTFP.

As levels of interest are expected to be low in 2012/13 this will have no effect as interest is not expected to achieve £0.5m, but it is expected in 2013/14 that £0.169m will available (2014/15 = £0.448m, 2015/16 = £0.470m, 2016/17 = £0.479m).

Table 3: MTFP Model – Capital Expenditure and Funding Position

	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000
Total Capital Expenditure	2,275	1,488	1,488	1,613	1,533
HRA contribution	(635)	(635)	(635)	(635)	(635)
Capital Receipts	(69)	(56)	(56)	(56)	(56)
External Interest	-	(169)	(448)	(470)	(479)
Capital Reserve	(750)	-	-	-	-
Budget (Surplus)/ Deficit	821	628	349	452	363
Cumulative Shortfall	-	1,449	1,798	2,250	2,613

3.9 The programme of expenditure includes schemes already approved by Council and rolling items such as; the provision of statutory disabled facility grants, the public toilet renovation programme, equipment replacement for street scene services, ICT replacement/upgrades and housing improvement schemes (fully funded by HRA contribution). Appendix C gives a break-down of this figures.

The capital receipt projections are based on assumptions of no significant asset disposals. It is acknowledged that through Cabinet the Asset Management Forum is considering a list of asset disposals which is seen as a priority in meeting these predicted budget shortfalls.

The £0.750m income figure in 2012/13 is the remaining balance on the Capital Reserve.

Even at this minimum level of capital programme expenditure there is an annual shortfall, which needs to be addressed.

Key issues to consider for this Strategy in terms of capital are:

- Only rolling items, or annual core expenditure, have been included in the MTFP. No amount is included for coast protection or flood prevention schemes, any schemes that do come forward it is assumed will attract Government funding if of high enough priority. The expenditure does not include one off schemes that would normally come forward and previously has been met from the Capital Reserve; this will no longer be available from 2013/14 onwards.
- Any scheme inclusion in the Programme over and above this core annual expenditure needs to be considered carefully for inclusion in future programmes on a case by case basis to determine if they meet corporate objectives and if they can be self funded evidenced in a business case or delivered in conjunction with other agencies/partners.

For schemes that can not be funded in this way, and if members decide they are a necessity to include in the future programme then additional capital receipts are needed or borrowing will be required at an additional cost to the Revenue MTFP (£1m borrowing over 10 years will cost £110,240 a year interest and principal repayment).

- Significant asset maintenance schemes in the medium term (5 year period) it is assumed will be met from the Asset Maintenance & Management Reserve (estimated balance as at the end of 2011/12 is £1.337m). Costs beyond this point will have to fall back to the Capital Programme when this Reserve is depleted.

4. The Way Forward

- 4.1 The MTFP highlights a situation for both the General Fund and Capital Programme whereby action is required to balance the budget going forward.
- 4.2 It is suggested that members consider the following targets and actions that should be undertaken to address the shortfall on the General Fund position:

MTFP Model – Summary of General Fund position, shortfall each year with saving targets or actions required to set future balanced budgets

General Fund	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m
Annual Budget Shortfall	0.587	0.252	0.496	0.386	0.217
Procurement, Efficiency & Shared Service Saving Target	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.125)	(0.125)
Better use of technology Savings	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Asset Management savings including relocation of offices	To be determined	To be determined	To be determined	To be determined	To be determined
* Income from Planning – Assume additional income phased (£900k total – 50%, 75%, and 100%)	(0.450)	(0.225)	(0.225)	-	-
	Balanced Budget	Balanced Budget	Balanced Budget	Balanced Budget	Balanced Budget
Variables	There are factors in this Strategy that if the assumptions are incorrect could effect this balanced position ranging from service bids not identified or members decisions are different to that assumed such as agreeing a local council tax benefit scheme that does not make a 10% saving, do not agree with the planning income proposals etc.				

* There is risk that legislation will not implemented thereby leaving the MTFP short by this income.

In addition, work will be ongoing on the redesign of services around the customer (systems thinking), it would however be inappropriate to set a saving target for this area of work.

- 4.2 Steps have been taken to reduce the shortfall in the Capital Budget through actions already reflected in the figures. There is still a shortfall of £0.8m in 2012/13 and sums to be found in following years in order to meet the basic level of expenditure. This needs to be met from capital receipts which is currently being considered by the Asset Management Forum or the 2012/13 budget onwards will require the Council to borrow; this will add £0.110m to the revenue budget each year.

Members could also consider using sums for the NHB allocation to support the capital programme going forward.

5. Process for Delivering the Financial Strategy

- 5.1 This Strategy should inform and aid the development of the Council's Corporate Strategy by setting the financial parameters within which future policy development can be formed. In turn the Corporate Strategy will shape and develop the Council's future revenue and capital budgets by determining where and how the Council's resources are allocated.

6. Measuring Delivery

- 6.1 Financial and non-financial performance will be routinely monitored and reported on in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Framework.
- 6.2 The Strategy and the MTFP model will be updated annually for presentation to Cabinet, but in addition the MTFP model will be regularly reviewed and updated for consideration by the Strategic Management Team and will assist in steering the Council's detailed budget preparation for future years.

APPENDIX A

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS WITHIN THE MTFP MODEL.

- **Comprehensive Spending Review**

The Governments Spending Review sets out the framework for Government grant support to local government. The most recent Spending Review (CSR 10) covers the period 2011/12 to 2014/15 with an indication of grant levels over this period.

The Government has produced provisional figures for 2012/13 (reduction of 12%, £0.731m), and this will be the likely final settlement figure unless there is a change in the responsibilities of services provided by the Council. This provisional figure has been assumed within the Plan, but from 2013/14 it has been assumed in line with the CSR that a 1% reduction will apply and a further 5% in 2014/15. It has then been assumed no reduction or increase going forward from that point. Bearing in mind how hard shire districts have been effected by cuts to date the general reductions applied in the MTFP of 1% and then 5% will need keeping under review; if for example instead of a 1% cut in 2013/14 the government reduced the Council's settlement by say another 12% this would represent a decrease in grant of £627,877, an additional £575,554 than assumed.

- **Inflation**

The provision for employee pay has been increased by 0% for 2012/13 and then 2% onwards. Other employee pay is calculated at 2% and National Insurance at 3%. General inflation has been assumed at 2.0%, as has the increased cost for Leisure provision (after agreed reductions in grant), fuel at 8%, and the annual increased cost of utilities at 8%. Fees and charges have been increased at 2.0% in line with general inflation estimates.

- **Risk assessment and sensitivity analysis**

Although the financial model is based upon what are believed to be a series of prudent assumptions, there is inevitably a risk that some or all factors applied could be inaccurate. The table below summarises the impact of any such inaccuracies that would have a detrimental effect upon the financial plan:

Financial impact of changes in assumptions 2012/13.

Factor	Predicted Cost Base (Revenue) £000	Worse by 0.5% £'000	Worse by 1.0% £'000
Pay, N.I & Pension	12,306	61	123
Other Employee Costs	415	2	4
General Inflation –costs with fees & charges netted off (assumes income increased at same level as general expenditure)	1,898	9	19
Utility costs & Fuel	917	5	9

- **Investment Returns**

The approach adopted, of budgeting for investment income at the bottom end of the portfolio manager's prediction, remains prudent. Interest Rate predictions have been made at: 1.25% for 2012/13, 2.0% for 2013/14, then followed by 2.75% for the remaining of the Plan. If rates in 2012/13 were to be less by 0.5%, this would equate to reduced income of £0.140m

- **Council Tax Income**

Income from council tax has been included in the model assuming a 2.5% increase. The table below highlights the impact of increasing or reducing the council tax requirement in 2012/13.

Financial impact of changes in council tax levels.

Level of council Tax increase	Predicted council tax income £000	Gain/Loss of income from MTFP in 2012/12 £'000
Council tax yield at 2.5% increase	(7,124)	Nil
Yield at 4.0%	(7,229)	Gain 105
Yield at 3.0%	(7,159)	Gain 35
Yield at 2.0%	(7,090)	Loss 34
Yield at 1.0%	(7,020)	Loss 104
Yield at 0.0%	(6,951)	Loss 173

- **Cranbrook & other development**

The expected build rate for Cranbrook has been considered along with service cost implications. The majority of costs for the new town have been covered in

Planning 106 agreements or are not this Council's liability, other areas such as recycling and refuse collection and street cleansing have been included in the plan when expected demand requires a stepped increase in cost, for example an additional refuse truck and recycling van is required with additional team. Other planned development in the area has been considered alongside these figures.

Contents

Introduction	
Portfolio Holder short statement	
Purpose of the Plan	
Housing in East Devon	
Key Facts and Figures	
The Challenges Ahead	
Policy Context	
National Policy	
Strategic Aims	
Aim 1: Provide a range of affordable housing to meet housing needs	
What else will we be doing?	
Aim 2: Prevent homelessness wherever possible, and otherwise ensure that accommodation is provided for those who do become homeless	
What else will we be doing?	
Partnership Working to Reduce Homelessness	
Aim 3: Maintain and manage the council owned housing stock to a high standard, actively involving tenants in all aspects of the service	
What else will we be doing?	
Aim 4: Bring sub-standard housing (of all tenures) up to current standards	
What else will we be doing?	
Aim 5: Improve the use and safety of housing	
What else will we be doing?	
Aim 6: Enable elderly persons, disabled people, and people with special needs to live as independently as possible and remain in their own homes if they so wish	
What else will we be doing?	
Aim 7: Improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing and eliminate fuel poverty	
What else will we be doing?	
Aim 8: Widen the choice of housing, especially for those in priority need	
What else will we be doing?	
Aim 9: Support the improvement and regeneration of local communities by encouraging social inclusion, involving children and young people in housing issues, and enabling residents to actively participate in their communities	
What else will we be doing?	
Tackling Social Isolation Among Older Residents	

Aim 10: Have consistently satisfied customers

What else will we be doing?

Resources Available

Next Steps ???

Glossary

CBL	Choice Based Lettings
DCC	Devon County Council
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
DHC	Devon Home Choice
DHS	Decent Homes Standard
EDDC	East Devon District Council
HB	Housing Benefit
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
HRB	Housing Review Board
LA	Local Authority
LIP	Local Investment Plan
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
MSO	Mobile Support Officer
NA	National average
RP	Registered Provider
SAP	Standard Assessment Procedure for energy efficiency
SP	Supporting People
SRG	Service Review Group
STAR	Survey of Tenants and Residents
STATUS	Standardised tenant satisfaction survey
TSA	Tenant Services Authority
TSP	Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Introduction

By Councillor Jill Elson, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Homes and Communities

Our residents have the right to be able to access good homes, at a price they can afford and in a location that meets their needs. We seek to provide a decent home for all. As Cabinet Member with responsibility for sustainable homes and communities. I am very aware of the problems some people face in finding such accommodation. Our Housing Service works hard to try to ensure that there is an adequate supply of suitable housing of all tenures throughout the district. We have excellent links with other agencies and by working in partnership with them aim to continually improve the living conditions for all our residents. This includes working to build cohesion amongst our most deprived communities through community development initiatives. The current financial climate and changes to legislation will make the coming few years very challenging for housing providers, but we believe that by working constructively together, in consultation with local communities, we can achieve our aim of a good quality affordable home for all and vibrant, cohesive communities. I am pleased to introduce this Homes and Communities Plan which sets out our aims for the coming three years.

Purpose of the Plan

Our overriding purpose is to ensure a decent home for all that is affordable and adequate in size and suitably located. We support the National Housing Strategy in aiming to provide the 'right home in the right place'¹. This overarching aim has not changed from our Housing Strategy 2008-11² and still drives our service delivery. The new plan builds on this older document and sets out our key priorities and plans for housing, of all tenures, across the district for the coming three years.

Our housing activity is broad ranging, including homelessness prevention, providing, managing and maintaining our council stock, regulating and improving other social rented, private rented (including Homes in Multiple Occupation) and owner occupied housing, and the development of more affordable homes. We are pro-active in bringing 'empty homes' into use. However providing homes is not enough in itself. It is also important that the communities in which people live are balanced and sustainable. Getting this right contributes towards a good quality of life for our residents. The plan sets out how we plan to deliver effective housing and community services in all these areas, whilst taking into account recent changes to legislation and the current financial difficulties being faced by many individuals and organisations.

Housing conditions have a huge impact on the overall wellbeing of residents. As a Local Authority (LA) we have some key principles that we wish to pursue. We

¹ Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England, 2011, HM Government

² EDDC Housing Strategy 2008-2011 available to view on www.eastdevon.gov.uk

cannot achieve our ambitions in isolation. So in drawing up the plan we have consulted widely with partner agencies including other housing providers, health and social care providers, local charities and advice agencies. We will look to these agencies to work with us to deliver the aims and aspirations of this plan. We have consulted our tenants. We aim to create balanced communities within East Devon.

This plan is necessarily a summary of our housing position and is underpinned by a number of other strategy and research documents and links are provided to these throughout.

Housing in East Devon

The main housing issues and challenges have remained broadly the same for many years, and many relate to housing supply and demand. They are:

- A need for more affordable housing (demand far exceeds supply)
- The high cost of owner occupation and renting in the private sector affecting the ability to secure suitable housing
- Low wages in the district as compared to the national average
- Poor housing conditions in the private sector
- Fuel poverty and affordable warmth
- The lack of suitable housing for young people.

East Devon District Council (EDDC) has retained its housing stock and at the beginning of 2012 has around 4,300 homes and 750 garages, and is the landlord for over 150 leasehold flats. The management and maintenance of council homes is a priority for the Council and necessarily influences this plan in a significant way. A stock options exercise carried out in 2006 confirmed that the majority of tenants wished to remain with EDDC. Overall our stock is well maintained and the majority of our tenants are satisfied with us as a landlord.

In recent years we have had some notable achievements, such as building new council homes for the first time in twenty years, reducing and preventing homelessness, introducing a number of community development initiatives and gaining accreditation from the Telecare Services Authority for our Home Safeguard Community Alarm Service. More details of these and other achievements are given throughout the plan.

An understanding of issues facing other tenure types is also crucial to this plan. A good overview of this is presented in the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010³ and key points are given in the Key Facts and Figures section.

³ Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010 December 2010 by Capital Project Consultancy (CPC) for EDDC

Key Facts and Figures

The population within East Devon is estimated to be 136,600; the number of households is estimated to be 61,300. East Devon's population is projected to rise to 156,700 by 2026; correspondingly, the number of households is predicted to rise to 73,600 by 2026⁴.

Compared to the national average (NA):

- Significantly lower numbers of social rented properties are available (EDDC 10%, NA 18%)⁵
- A significantly higher proportion of households are over 65 years of age (EDDC 44%, NA 25%)
- A significantly higher proportion of households are receiving benefits (EDDC 22%, NA 17%)
- Average income levels are lower (for 2010, EDDC £18,595, England £21,398)⁶
- Average house prices are higher (for 2010, EDDC £266,470, NA £240,033)
- More households in the private rented sector suffer from fuel poverty (EDDC 18.8%, NA 15.6%)⁷
- More properties in the private rented sector are in a non decent condition (EDDC 40.8%, NA 33.2%)

The Challenges Ahead

We are experiencing a period of radical change in housing policy which will affect the provision and regulation of housing. This includes the changes in the Localism Act, the government's reforms to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the initiatives to be introduced through the National Housing Strategy⁸, the proposed benefit changes to bring in a universal credit and other welfare reforms, and likely changes to factors affecting private sector housing. Alongside this we will be seeking to reduce the number of people on the housing register.

Key issues affecting housing are expected to become effective during the lifetime of this plan. These issues are discussed where applicable but the plan is a dynamic document and will be adapted and developed as different elements of the new legislation become effective.

⁴ Office of National Statistics 2008 based sub-national population projections & Communities and Local Government Household Projections Model (2008-based) as quoted in East Devon Housing and Employment Study, 2011, Roger Tym & Partners

⁵ Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010 December 2010 by CPC for EDDC

⁶ National Housing Federation South West: Home Truths 2010

⁷ Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010 December 2010 by CPC for EDDC

⁸ Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England, 2011, HM Government

The Localism Act 2011⁹ aims to shift power from government to individuals, councils and communities, bringing in major changes to housing policies and giving communities more control over housing. Alongside this, the planning system is being revised and Regional Spatial Strategies, and Local Area Agreements, have been abolished.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will become the housing regulator from April 2012, taking over from the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). Regulation will have a key role to play in the delivery of the affordable rent model by ensuring effective use of existing stock and changes to rent control and tenancy flexibility.

The move towards charging rent at the new 'affordable rent' level for some social rented properties, and the proposed changes to housing benefit payments will mean that council properties will become even more sought after as households in housing need find it more difficult to afford either housing association or private sector properties. We may also see the available supply of council housing at social rent diminish due to the proposed changes of the Right to Buy discounts. If these go ahead any new housing built to replace that sold under the Right to Buy will be let at the higher affordable rents.

For some time there has been pressure to reform the HRA and subsidy system, and it has been recognised that major repairs and management allowances are well below the amounts necessary to operate an effective HRA Business Plan. The government is finalising a self financing framework with housing authorities taking on a share of the national housing debt. These proposals will give us the freedom to run the housing service without annual government decisions over subsidy. We have been working with consultants on modelling different scenarios to assess the long term implications for us and to refresh our HRA Business Plan. We anticipate that these changes will lead to improvements in the amount of funding available year on year. It is anticipated that the 'settlement figure' (the amount of debt that EDDC will have to take on) will be in the region of £84.8 million.

As part of our preparations towards self financing we are currently working on a proposal to establish a business unit, 'East Devon Homes', for landlord services. The proposal is not intended as a move of housing away from the Council, like a stock transfer of Arms Length Management Organisation, more of a signal that self financing is a milestone for housing landlord services and an opportunity to mark the freedoms and flexibilities being presented with a rebranding of housing services and a new injection of energy and enthusiasm for service excellence. We hope to see this formalised during 2012.

We see the private sector as a major housing resource and our role is to assist owner occupiers and landlords maintain, improve and adapt their homes. We have a specific focus towards assisting older and vulnerable households. We intervene with

⁹ <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism.html>

our regulatory powers where standards pose a risk to health and in respect of empty homes that could provide a home for someone.

It is now, more than ever, important that we work in partnership with other organisations to allow us to continue to make service improvements in these more challenging times. It will be particularly necessary that we engage with our local communities, listen to their priorities, and work to deliver what they require.

Policy Context

National Policy

This plan sits within a range of national and local policies and strategies and takes account of current and expected legislation.

Published in November 2011, the National Housing Strategy¹⁰ aims to provide home ownership opportunities and create jobs through initiatives to 'unblock' the housing market. The strategy also provides proposals to transform the social housing sector that will see changes to how houses are allocated, but also encourage social mobility.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Corporate Plan 2011-15¹¹ sets out how it will focus on what local communities and councils want for their areas and how it will help them deliver this.

The Localism Act aims to shift power from government to individuals, councils and communities. Some of the key factors from the Localism Act that will influence housing will be:

- Maintaining tenants' homes and services through the reform of housing finance and making best use of the freedoms from the subsidy system.
- The need for councils to publish a tenancy strategy for their area.
- Registered Providers of housing (RPs) will be able to introduce flexible tenancies, so new tenants will no longer be guaranteed a lifetime tenancy. RPs will also be able to charge new tenants an 'affordable rent' (up to 80% of local market rent). These changes will not apply to existing tenants.
- LAs will no longer have to maintain an 'open waiting list' that allows anyone, regardless of housing need, to register.
- LAs will be able to discharge their main homelessness duty into the private rented sector.
- The capital funding available from the HCA is being reduced and providers will be expected to use income from affordable rent to help pay for new homes.

¹⁰ Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England, 2011, HM Government

¹¹ HCA Corporate Plan 2011-15 www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/sites/default/files/aboutus/hca-corporate-plan-2011-25july11.pdf

- Changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and Housing Benefit (HB) will impact on some people's ability to find affordable housing.

Local Policy

We are now working on producing a new Local Plan for the district which will build on and supersede work that has gone into the past Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The Local Plan sets out planning policy for developments in East Devon and further details can be viewed at:

http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/new_local_plan_publication_draft_dec_2011_lowres.pdf . It will have a significant influence on housing delivery, both affordable and open market, across the district.

Along with Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council, we are working on the Exe Authorities Local Investment Plan¹² (LIP). The LIP identifies several thematic priorities including housing, and new affordable housing; employment and job growth; quality places and communities; carbon and climate resilience. It outlines a development programme taken from the current emerging development and regeneration plans for the area.

The Localism Act proposes a new duty on LAs to produce a Local Tenancy Strategy. The strategy must be consistent with local homelessness strategies and allocation schemes and must take account of the tenancy and rent standards. The strategy will set out broad objectives on the grant and reissue of tenancies. We will be drawing up our Local Tenancy Strategy in line with the Devon-wide Tenancy Strategy Framework currently being produced.

Strategic Aims

Although we are about to enter a period of radical change for housing we believe that, with modest adjustment, our ten existing strategic aims are still key to delivering a first class housing service. They are to:

- Provide a range of affordable housing to meet housing needs
- Prevent homelessness wherever possible, and make sure that accommodation is found for those who do become homeless
- Maintain and manage the council owned housing stock to a high standard, actively involving tenants in all aspects of the service
- Bring sub-standard housing (of all tenures) up to current standards
- Improve the use and safety of housing
- Enable elderly people, disabled people, and people with special needs to live as independently as possible and remain in their own homes if they so wish
- Improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing and eliminate fuel poverty

¹² www.exeter.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=15320&p=0

- Widen the choice of housing, especially for those in priority need
- Support the improvement and regeneration of local communities by encouraging social inclusion, involving children and young people in housing issues, and enabling residents to actively participate in their communities
- Have consistently satisfied customers

Aim 1: Provide a range of affordable housing to meet housing needs

There is a recognised need to provide more affordable housing in the district. The housing should be available at a cost low enough for people to afford, taking into account local incomes and house prices, and should remain at an affordable price for future eligible households.

Much of the feedback from the consultation on this plan concerned the desire to see affordable housing going to local, East Devon, residents. Wherever possible we take measures to ensure local housing does go to local people (although current government legislation means that there are certain specific groups that we have to help to find suitable housing). For example most affordable housing provided by way of a requirement through a Section 106 agreement (a legally binding planning obligation) will have a restriction that means preference must be given to someone with a local connection to the area.

Within the Devon Home Choice system two percent of all our allocations must be made to people from outside the area. It also means that East Devon residents can apply for housing in other areas of the country and there may be particular reasons for someone wishing to move areas, for example someone fleeing from domestic violence. As long as this percentage is met each month then the other 98% of properties can be restricted to applicants with a connection to East Devon.

To be able to plan to meet East Devon's affordable housing need we will be guided by the LIP. The developing Local Plan for East Devon will set policy enabling affordable housing provision specifically in East Devon. Although the three year predicted affordable housing projections for East Devon looks favourable we face a challenging future as government funding becomes scarcer.

Some of the ways in which we are seeking to meet East Devon's affordable housing need include:

- The first phase of Cranbrook, the planned new town near Rockbeare, has commenced and will provide over 1,160 affordable homes
- Provision of a guide for anyone considering developing in East Devon¹³
- Provision of a guide to delivering rural affordable housing¹⁴ that will encourage consideration for affordable housing during the development of Parish Plans
- Building homes on suitable council owned land
- Using our policy allowing cross-subsidy on rural sites
- Using our existing council stock to its full potential and encouraging RPs to do the same.

What else will we be doing?

- Working with partners to deliver at least 100 new affordable homes a year

¹³ Building Homes in East Devon -

www.eastdevon.gov.uk/building_homes_in_east_devon__final_draft_.pdf

¹⁴ A Guide for Parish Councils - www.devonrcc.org.uk/documents/category/22/rural-housing

- Producing at least one rural affordable scheme a year
- Changing local planning policy through development of the new Local Plan to enable a wider range of sites to qualify to provide higher levels of affordable housing
- Looking for opportunities to apply for grant funding, either independently or with a consortium, and also for other sources of funding to allow us to continue to build new council properties in the future
- Considering where Community Land Trusts can deliver affordable housing

Providing More Affordable Housing

EDDC built 17 new council homes between 2010 and 2011. These homes were funded by the HCA's Local Authority New Build programme and EDDC. Local builders and architects were employed to design and complete the build, supplying local employment opportunities during the course of providing new homes for those in local housing need. The homes were built to Sustainable Homes Code Level 3 so that they are ecologically sound and economical to run.

Suggested photograph – Waggs Plot – stored on I drive

Aim 2: Prevent homelessness wherever possible, and make sure that accommodation is found for those who do become homeless

Homelessness continues to be a significant problem in the area and tackling and preventing homelessness continues to be a high priority. The threat of homelessness in East Devon is amplified by the lack of social rented sector housing and other forms of affordable housing and the huge demand for affordable housing in the area. Other factors that contribute to the problem include:

- The gulf between low wage levels and high house prices and rent levels in the private sector
- The economic climate, with more households being worse off financially in general, and an increased number of households with 'affordability' issues
- The impact of welfare reforms, such as the reduction in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) resulting in less Housing Benefit (HB) being available to households
- The 'knock-on' effect of severe cuts to the Supporting People (SP) budget for people with special/support needs, resulting in problems such as a reduction in supported accommodation available in the area
- The relatively high amount of second homes in the area

By working in partnership with other agencies and providing a more effective housing advice service, and by assisting in providing better housing solutions we have successfully reduced homelessness in recent years. As a result the use of temporary accommodation has fallen significantly. There are several areas where we are helping households by preventing their homelessness, alongside other agencies. Examples include:

- Funding a Young Persons Worker at Young Devon to help find accommodation for young people threatened with homelessness
- Funding workers from the Smartmove project at Community Housing Aid to help people find accommodation in the private rented sector, and get ongoing support
- Funding workers from the Westcountry Housing Floating Support Service to help people cope with and keep their homes
- Funding a worker from Homemaker South West who provides financial advice to people who are in need
- Funding an Outreach Worker from the Street Homeless Outreach Team who will be providing an outreach service for people sleeping rough in the area
- The Rent Deposit Guarantee/Bond Scheme, which helps people find accommodation in the private sector by providing a 'guarantee' to the potential landlord for the deposit
- Close working with the Domestic Violence Team to help people suffering from domestic violence and abuse
- Participation in the Devon Sanctuary Scheme, which helps victims of domestic abuse to remain safely in their homes, whenever possible

- Close working with other teams in the Council such as Estate Management, Rentals and Housing Benefits to find solutions for people who may be faced with homelessness
- An advice service to home owners who are having difficulty in maintaining their mortgage repayments and may be under the threat of repossession.

What else will we be doing?

- Continue to maintain and develop our housing options service to make sure those threatened with homelessness are helped to find alternative accommodation, and use our resources and expertise to prevent homelessness wherever possible
- Maintain good relationships with other agencies to provide a combined effort to prevent homelessness whenever possible through successful joint working
- Develop strategies and working practices to provide successful outcomes for people who are rough sleeping
- Maintain low levels of households in emergency and temporary accommodation as a result of successful homelessness prevention
- Work alongside our benefits team and other agencies to help people who have been adversely affected by welfare reforms
- Expand homelessness prevention and have less than 40 units of temporary accommodation
- Continue to implement the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2008-2013¹⁵.

Partnership Working to Reduce Homelessness

Fred* is 17 years old and approached the East Devon Youth Housing worker as he had been asked to leave home by his mum and step dad. Fred explained that mum had an issue with alcohol and would drink on a daily basis. His mum is argumentative and aggressive when drunk and has asked him to leave several times before. Fred said he felt unhappy at home and that his college attendance had been affected.

We contacted his mum and she refused to have Fred at home. The Youth Housing worker contacted Young Devon supported lodgings and managed to secure an emergency 28 day placement. Fred said that "I came in here homeless and in a mess. Within a week they had found me somewhere to stay". This emergency placement has now turned into a permanent placement. Fred says he feels "a lot happier, safe and comfortable and I am able to stand on my own two feet. My head is a lot more clear! Thanks for everything!"

*name has been changed

¹⁵ Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008-2011, East Devon District Council

Aim 3: Maintain and manage the council owned housing stock to a high standard, actively involving tenants in all aspects of the service

East Devon's landlord service works hard to maintain tenants' homes to a high standard. To do this effectively we recognise the importance of actively involving tenants in the service. Therefore, we have a well developed culture of tenant participation, with many tenants involved in a number of different groups. We work hard to help our tenants and communities gain the confidence and skills to enable them to shape and influence where they live and the services provided. All members of staff providing a landlord service try to involve tenants in their work and we have a number of Service Review Groups (SRGs) made up of both staff and tenants. The landlord functions of the Housing Service are overseen by the Housing Review Board (HRB) which has five tenant members and we have recently set up an independent Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP).

Some of the ways in which we maintain and manage our housing stock, in conjunction with tenants, include:

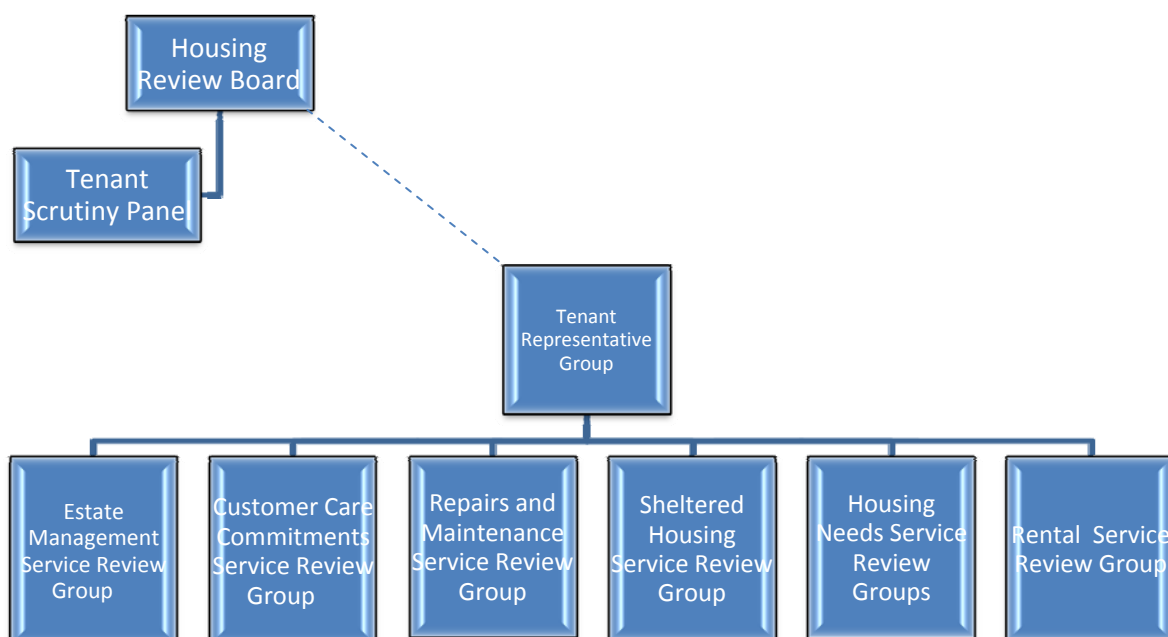
- Recognising and prioritising asset management
- Service Review Groups (SRGs) made up of both staff and tenants to monitor progress against local standards and other service targets
- Implementing rolling modernisation programmes for tenant's homes, guided by the stock condition survey and the HRA Business Plan, which includes door replacement and kitchen and heating system upgrades
- Programme of enhanced estate inspections during which a team of staff visit the area, speak to tenants about their home and the environment and walk about the area to identify particular problems and resolve them

What else will we be doing?

- Fully embed tenant participation in the landlord services team with all officers taking responsibility for tenant participation
- Tenant participation and community development workers to continue working in the community linking with estate management and support services
- Support the Tenant Scrutiny process, Tenant Representative Group and Service Review Groups.
- Upgrade play areas where equipment is worn and outdated
- Improve the environment on selected estates
- Continue the programme of in-depth estate inspections
- Deliver continuing improvements in communal cleaning
- Achieve all responsive repairs within target timescales, at tenants convenience
- Provide a right first time, fix and stay fixed repairs service
- Improve car parking facilities in tenanted housing areas

- Improving the standard of empty properties and involving new tenants before they move in.

Figure 1: Diagram of Governance



New Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) set up

Setting up our TSP in April 2011 has been an exciting development for us. The Panel has just completed its first project: researching the facilities and use of our community centres. The Panel has been able to make a number of cost saving and service improvement recommendations to the Housing Review Board. It will be involved in more projects in due course and we look forward to seeing the service develop as a result of these.

[Photograph of Tenant Scrutiny Panel](#)

Aim 4: Bring sub-standard housing (of all tenures) up to current standards

We have recently completed stock condition surveys for both EDDC owned¹⁶ and privately owned homes¹⁷, which means that we have clear knowledge about the current state of housing stock across the district. The surveys have indicated that:

- Providing replacement kitchens and bathrooms for council properties should be our highest priority.
- 740 council properties do not meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS).
- 73 council properties have a SAP (standard assessment procedure for energy efficiency) of less than 35 and so require urgent work to provide warm homes for these tenants.
- 28% of private homes do not meet the DHS, with 28% of homes having at least one serious hazard. Private rented homes are more likely to be non decent than owner occupier. The cost of making private sector homes (both owner occupier and private sector) decent has been estimated at just over £89 million.
- There are 15 RPs with housing in East Devon, with a total of 1,105¹⁸ properties, 27.2% of these properties are 'non decent'

To bring housing stock of all tenures up to current standards EDDC are:

- Spending £6.5 million on kitchens and bathrooms in council properties over the next five years
- Spending £600,000 on catch up repairs for council properties
- Developing links with private sector landlords through newsletters and landlord forums to be able to encourage high quality accommodation
- Updating our Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy which sets out our approach to improving housing conditions in the private sector
- Continuing to encourage RP partners to achieve the Decent Homes Standard

What else will we be doing?

- Review the recommendations from the 2010 Private Sector Housing Condition Survey and produce an action plan to implement those relevant to the maintenance and improvement of private sector housing owned or rented by elderly or vulnerable people
- Carry out the recommendations from the stock condition survey of our council housing, through our 30 year Business Plan, concentrating on improvements to kitchens and central heating systems
- Re-tender the Partnering Agreement of responsive repairs to tenants' homes and works to empty properties
- Set up a Landlords' accreditation scheme

¹⁶ Stock Condition Survey – East Devon District Council 2010, Michael Dyson Associates Ltd

¹⁷ Private Sector Housing Condition Survey December 2010, CPC

¹⁸ Tenant Service Authority

Improving conditions in our council housing

We are particularly keen to address issues of fuel poverty and energy efficiency within our housing stock. We have recently been trialling new hybrid electrical heaters, and upgrading loft insulation wherever possible (and in all cases where there are problems with cold indoor winter temperatures), as well as insulating internal surfaces of the house where cold and mould form most often. We are also installing low usage, water efficient taps and appliances whenever possible.

Aim 5: Improve the use and safety of housing

With many pressures on both private sector and Council housing it is imperative that we make the best use of the stock that is available. This might mean addressing safety issues within houses to ensure that families can stay in their homes. It also means ensuring the right people are allocated to the right council property for them. Once our tenants are housed appropriately, we must make best use of the revenue that their rent generates in order to be able to maintain their homes to a high standard.

Some of the ways in which we are improving the use and safety of housing in East Devon include:

- Working with a contractor to ensure that all Council stock has an up to date gas safety certificate
- Decommissioning some sheltered housing schemes to make sure we have the appropriate amount of good standard sheltered housing stock to meet need
- Bringing long term empty homes back into use, using various informal and formal methods
- Introduction of an improved downsizing scheme offering up to £3,000 to encourage under-occupying council tenants to move to a smaller home
- Implementing a new asbestos policy that identifies and deals with asbestos in council homes.

What else will we be doing?

- Implement the Empty Homes Strategy and revise the Action Plan
- Manage and utilise all housing assets to best effect and consider disposal where assets are not meeting their purpose
- Continue the sheltered housing decommissioning programme
- Undertake fire risk assessments in the communal areas of blocks of council flats and implement any improvements required to comply with good practice advice
- Maintain high levels of rental and other income
- Procure services and programmes efficiently achieving value for money for service users
- Explore opportunities for introducing fair and proportionate service charges
- Promote new and innovative schemes to help owners of empty homes bring them back into use
- Work with Council Tax and Parish and Town Council's to identify empty homes and bring them back into use.

Bringing empty homes back into use

We are hopeful that we will shortly be regaining one long term derelict empty property, following the implementation of the Enforced Sale procedure in 2010. This is the result of much hard work by our private sector housing officers and we hope for a successful outcome when the County Court makes its final decision. The procedure allows us to sell long term empty homes by auction, taking from the sale price the costs incurred and providing any excess to the owner. If this case is successful we will look to carry out similar work with other derelict long term empty properties in the future.

Aim 6: Enable elderly people, disabled people, and people with special needs to live as independently as possible and remain in their own homes if they so wish

We are committed to supporting and enabling people to stay in their homes, if they so wish, by direct provision and working with other agencies. In many cases, homes are suitable but residents need care or support. EDDC not only provides support to council tenants in sheltered accommodation but also works with external partners to assist the elderly and people with disabilities who are not council tenants. Ways in which we are offering assistance include:

- Provision of the accredited Home Safeguard Community Alarm Service for EDDC tenants and over 3,600 private home owners
- Undertaking adaptations and improvements using the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme for private home owners
- Working with other partners who help people to continue to live independently, for example local occupational therapists
- Providing a garden maintenance scheme for council tenants who are disabled or receive a qualifying benefit for a small annual charge
- Working with other agencies to provide adaptations to council tenants' homes
- Preparing an individual client based support plan with each resident to identify the correct level of support based on their individual needs, and undertaking quality control checks on these
- Educating our tenants in digital technology, for example through 'Get Digital'.

What else will we be doing?

- Producing an Older People Housing Strategy which will cover issues such as extra care, downsizing, grants, early preventative actions and energy advice for council tenants
- Work with Devon County Council (DCC) to develop an extra care housing programme in East Devon. This will promote the health and well being of older people who wish to live independently and to provide an alternative to residential care
- Provide, where cost effective and appropriate, an effective and efficient adaptations service, jointly with DCC and other councils, for all people with disabilities
- Review in the light of future provision, the Home Improvement Agency contract to make sure we maintain a service for eligible residents
- Target the limited amounts of funding assistance available (through Disabled Facilities Grants and other financial assistance) to address issues of health, safety and disrepair, and help the elderly, disabled and householders on low incomes to remain in their own homes
- Move to a fully mobile related support service and cluster office arrangement for our tenants in sheltered accommodation

- Work closely with DCC Supporting People Team to look at ways of maintaining Supporting People Income and decommissioning sheltered housing that is not 'fit for purpose'
- Expand the use of Home Safeguard including lone worker monitoring and telecare opportunities to increase the Home Safeguard income
- Provide state of the art technology to help elderly and vulnerable tenants and residents remain in their own home through the provision of telecare (assisted electronic devices such as fall detectors, epilepsy sensors)
- Maximise the use of Wessex Low Cost Loan products to improve owner occupied properties occupied by elderly and vulnerable people
- Explore the provision of EDDC support services to individuals in their own homes within the wider community and not just for those in EDDC sheltered housing.

Improving the lives of our elderly tenants

74 year old Mrs Smith* had a very isolated life in private rented accommodation before she moved to one of our sheltered properties. She suffered from arthritis and had bouts of depression. When she moved to the property her Mobile Support Officer (MSO) completed a support plan and identified that she was isolated, struggling to manage and entitled to further benefits. The MSO encouraged her to join activities at the EDDC community centre where she's made new friends. She now has full benefit entitlement and uses the money to pay for a weekly help. She says: *'My life has been completely transformed, I feel so safe knowing that I have a pendant alarm which I can press if there is a problem as well as knowing I will see a MSO once a week if I do have any other problems. For the first time for many years I have made new friends here, 12 months ago I never could have dreamed my life would have improved so much.'*

*name has been changed

Aim 7: Improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing and eliminate fuel poverty

We are committed to the principles of sustainability in all our activities. We aim to meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents in ways that make effective use of natural resources, enhance the environment, promote social cohesion and inclusion and strengthen economic prosperity. By 2020, government has a target to decrease carbon emissions by 18% on 2008 levels; carbon emissions from homes will need to be cut by 29% on 2008 levels to contribute to this target¹⁹. East Devon must ensure that we are contributing to this target, however, the rising cost of fuel is also a driver for improving the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing in the district. Fuel poverty occurs when a household has to spend more than 10% of its income on heating and hot water. Overall, fuel poverty in East Devon is 12.3% (down from 13.2% in 2009), with the rate in the private rented sector being 18.8%²⁰.

Some of the ways in which we are improving the sustainability and energy efficiency of housing include:

- Working in partnership with all other Devon authorities to refresh the Affordable Warmth Strategy in 2010²¹
- Carry out Energy Performance surveys on all council properties which are sold or re-let
- Improved the energy efficiency of private stock in partnership with other agencies, including 'Warmfront' and Cosy Devon. To date Cosy Devon has provided energy efficiency measures to over 800 households in East Devon
- Introduced a scheme to assist private landlords with improving energy efficiency and heating measures in private rented properties. To date we have provided 60 small grants to private landlords to install heating systems, and insulation measures.

What else will we be doing?

- Continue to improve the Standard Assessment Procedure for energy efficiency of our council properties
- Research ways to fund further improvements to the energy efficiency and insulation of our council properties
- Progress a wide range of energy saving measures in partnership with other Local Housing Authorities in Devon to raise the energy efficiency of the private sector housing stock and reduce fuel poverty
- Work closely with Energy Action Devon to consider the best way of implementing the government's new 'Green Deal' initiatives and work in partnership with other Devon Authorities to implement the Green Deal across East Devon within the private rented and owner occupied stock

¹⁹ Low Carbon Transition Plan, 2009, HM Government

²⁰ Private Sector Housing Condition Survey December 2010, CPC

²¹ Affordable Warmth Strategy

- Continue to operate and promote the CosyDevon scheme to improve the thermal efficiency of homes in the district, targeting rural areas in particular
- Maximise the use of Private Landlord Energy Action scheme funding to improve heating and insulation in privately rented properties

Providing warmer homes

During the past three years over 800 properties in East Devon have received subsidised insulation measures through the Cosy Devon scheme. Customers who have benefitted from the scheme say that they can really feel the difference in how warm their houses are, and look forward to having lower energy bills in the winter months.

Aim 8: Widen the choice of housing, especially for those in priority need

Housing need can be described as 'households who are lacking their own housing or who are living in housing which is judged to be inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their own housing needs in the market without some financial assistance²²'. There are over 1000 households living in overcrowded conditions in East Devon²³ and in order to meet this, and other known housing need, we should be providing about 236 new affordable homes a year for the next five years²⁴. The high level of housing need is reflected by the large numbers on our housing register; the housing register is split into bands according to the level of assessed housing need, in December 2011 there were 1051 people registered with high to medium housing need. The number of households that require housing benefit support to live in the private sector (3250 households as of February 2011) is further evidence of the housing need in East Devon.

In order to widen the choice of housing, especially for those in priority need, we:

- House approximately 300 households a year through Devon Home Choice (DHC) – the choice based lettings (CBL) scheme for Devon
- Manage a mutual exchange register that helps tenants (both council and those housed with RPs) to swap their homes; 50 mutual exchanges took place during 2010/11
- Subscribe to Homeswapper for tenants who want to swap their homes across the country
- Have taken the decision not to charge the proposed new affordable rent on existing properties when they are re-let
- Help households to access housing in the private sector through our rent deposit guarantee scheme; the Private Sector Leasing Scheme (working with Exeter Empty Homes Partnership); and funding workers from Smartmove, Young Devon and Homemaker South West.

What else will we be doing?

- Only charge the affordable rent level for new build properties, where we will have to borrow funds to build and where these funds need to be repaid over a number of years
- Monitor the effect of conversion from social rented to affordable rents within RP stock
- Monitor the effect that the introduction of fixed term tenancies will have on local housing markets

²² Strategic Housing Market Assessments Practice Guidance Version 2, 2007, Communities & Local Government

²³ Exeter & Torbay Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2007, ORS

²⁴ Exeter & Torbay Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007: East Devon Update, 2011, ORS

- Address the impact that the proposed forthcoming changes to HB is likely to have for those renting in the private sector
- Continue to develop the Devon Home Choice regional Choice Base Letting scheme and make sure that we match the right people with the right home
- Continue to reduce the average time a council property is empty so that the time between a tenant leaving a property and a new tenant moving in is shortened.

Aim 9: Support the improvement and regeneration of local communities by encouraging social inclusion, involving children and young people in housing issues, and enabling residents to actively participate in their communities

An active inclusive community provides people with the social interaction and security they need to live fulfilled lives. The well-being that a sense of community brings is likely to have an impact on the way that people regard their surroundings; those that gain what they need from their surroundings are more likely to look after their surroundings. In order to be able to work more effectively within our local communities to foster such well-being we have recently reorganised the housing department to bring together our estate management team with our tenant participation and community development workers, as these areas all have common links to improve community cohesion.

Other ways in which we are seeking to encourage social inclusion in our communities are by and through:

- Introducing a number of initiatives to tackle social isolation among our tenants in sheltered accommodation, including 'Silver Surfer' events, 'Get Digital', 'Active' workshops and a 'Mobile phone surgery'
- Encouraging close links between our sheltered housing residents and local schools to support inter-generational activities linked to the 'Get Digital' project (teaching our elderly and vulnerable residents the benefits of modern technology)
- Working with community initiatives set up by other local organisations such as 'We love Littleham' and 'We love Withycombe' in Exmouth, and the Heathpark project in Honiton
- Working closely with many local agencies such as the Children's Centres and local police
- Meeting our duties in relation to safeguarding children
- Joining the Community Safety Partnership Steering Group which is committed to making East Devon a safe place to live, work and visit
- Developing a Racial Equality Policy for rented housing and the Tenant Representative Group has its own Equal Opportunities Statement
- Supporting gypsies, travellers and residents of mobile homes
- Working with agencies such as Devon Link-up, a locally based organisation which provides social, educational, advocacy and befriending services to the learning disabled community
- Implementing the corporate Equality and Diversity Policy. All housing staff receive training on equality and diversity and we have adopted a set of Equality and Diversity Commitments for the Housing Service
- Running the SWITCH project which is aimed at involving young people in positive activities, so taking them off the local streets and away from potential

antisocial behaviour. The project also encourages them to learn skills that will equip them for work

What else will we be doing?

- Working to address the East and Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership Plan's five priority areas
- Developing targeted community projects and facilities for young people to develop their skills
- Writing and implementing a Community Development Strategy
- Helping to develop a sense of community at Cranbrook
- Developing the SWITCH project for training and employment opportunities for younger people
- Increasing the involvement of young people in the Housing Service
- Supporting tenants in holding an annual tenant conference
- Continuing to embed the principles of the Digital Inclusion Agenda within the housing support services through projects such as the 'Silver Surfer' and 'Get Digital' events
- Arranging an East Devon Community Festival for tenants and their families
- Using our housing community centres for community development activities.

Tackling Social Isolation among Older Residents

We have introduced the Get Digital programme to support tenants to be digitally educated and help them retain their independence to stay at home for longer. It has helped residents who find it hard to get to the shops or who live in rural areas.

Here is how one of our residents has been helped: 'Get Digital has completely transformed my life; I am now able to communicate with my family through text to keep in touch. They used to get so fed up with me not being able to hear them! For the first time ever I am also in touch with family living abroad through Skype. I can't believe I actually get to see them on screen and how easy this is to do. Most importantly for me, attending Get Digital gives me something to do each week and a reason to get out the house. I have met many other residents and made friends with people that have very similar problems to me. I cannot thank the Get Digital Team enough for everything.'

Possible photograph – Get digital (on I drive) or photo Amy sent from Silver Surfers

Young people make award winning films about life in East Devon

Last year young people involved with the SWITCH project worked with First Light, a film production company based in East Devon, to make several films about how they see life in the area. One of these 'I could live yours', about three young people from the Littleham Estate in Exmouth, has been nominated for best documentary at the First Light awards 2012.. The films were showcased at the Phoenix Art Centre, Exeter in January 2012.

SWITCH has helped youth clubs and one off events for young people throughout East Devon and last summer took young people to the River Dart Country Park to find out how they would like to improve where they live.

One young resident involved with SWITCH has said 'This has been fun and a good experience – it's kept me out of trouble and given me something to look forward to.'

Due to its success the SWITCH project is now being taken to Axminster and will go to Honiton and Seaton in the next 12 to 18 months.

Possible photograph – same one as used in Partnership News Summer 2011 P11 – River Dart Country Park

Aim 10: Have consistently satisfied customers

We are continually aiming to improve customer satisfaction, which can be used as a measure of how effectively and efficiently we are working. Some of the ways in which we are working to improve customer satisfaction include:

- Since 2009, we have been using the 'Systems Thinking' approach to improve our services to customers. This is the process of understanding how things influence one another within a whole system of work and changing the system to do what matters to customers and eliminate wasteful processes. We have used this system to improve the letting of our empty properties, and also our repairs and rental service
- In 2010 the TSA introduced five standards which LA housing providers have to meet. These local standards are aimed at meeting tenant aspirations with our service. We have set three local standards and are now in the process of agreeing, with tenants, local standards for the remaining two
- Adopted a number of clear statements of purpose that drive our service delivery following Systems Thinking reviews. These are:
 - Allocations – to match the right people with the right home
 - Rents – to collect the right amount of rent at the right time
 - Repairs – to do the right repair at the right time, get it right first time and stay fixed
 - Gas servicing – do the right service /repair at the right time and leave safe
 - Home Safeguard – to deal with customer emergencies promptly
 - Private Sector – better homes – better health
- Development of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to give tenants the formal opportunity to take part in strategic performance monitoring and service reviews, to improve performance and increase transparency.

What else will we be doing?

- Undertake the STAR survey (a discretionary survey for housing providers), which is a replacement for the STATUS survey and will be used to measure tenant satisfaction
- Deliver service efficiencies and improvements through the application of Systems Thinking principles and make sure that we do 'what matters' for customers
- Embed value for money and risk management in the housing service culture
- Undertake benchmarking with other providers and import good practice from elsewhere
- Comply with the regulatory framework produced by the TSA and evidence achievement of the standards
- Meet the local standards commitments to tenants contained in 'Our Commitments to You'.

Resources Available

We operate a HRA with an annual turnover of £16 million and from April 2012 we will have greater freedom to set our budget having regard to local circumstances and needs. Our long term financial plans for our landlord services are set out in the HRA Business Plan, which considers the main income and expenditure items over the next 30 years.

To deliver other aspects of this plan we need to secure resources from key partners such as the Homes and Communities Agency, Registered Providers of housing and developers. The Exe Authorities Local Investment Plan needs to provide sufficient resources to help the delivery of our ambitions.

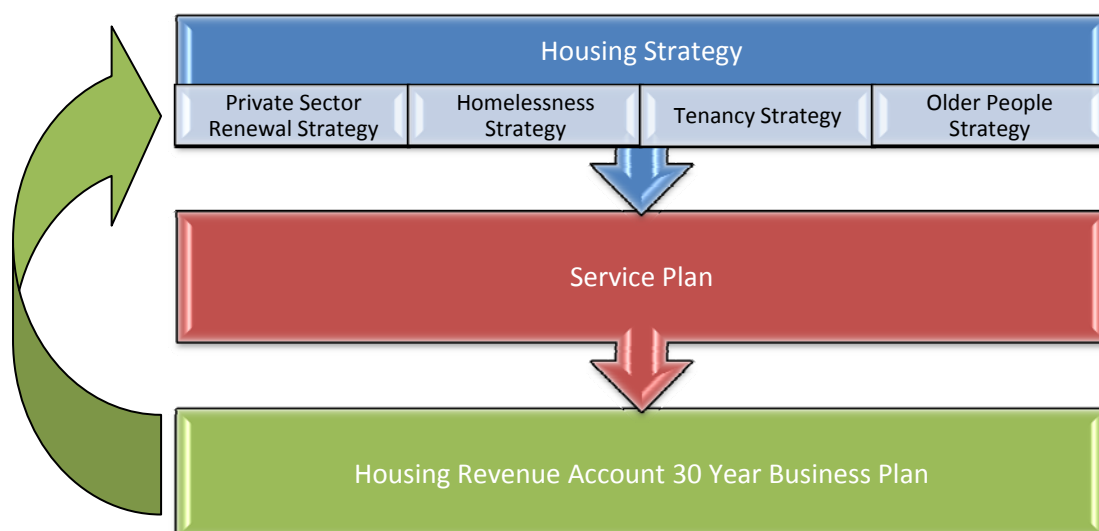
The Council’s Capital Budget provision to meet the demand for Disabled Facilities Grants and improvement loans is also an important element of this plan.

Revenue budgets support the services the Council delivers directly such as Home Safeguard; homeless prevention and housing options; and private sector housing activities.

Next Steps

We will review this plan every year and update it accordingly. Our Service Plan contains the measures we use to see how well we are progressing in achieving the actions mentioned throughout this document. This diagram illustrates how the various documents discussed in this plan work together to deliver the aims:

Figure 2: Delivering our Plan



It is important to remember that we cannot and should not deliver this plan alone and delivery of the aims requires effective partnership working. We are grateful to all our

partner agencies that have helped with drawing up the plan and who will work with us to deliver the key aims.

Agenda Item 11

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 March 2012

Corporate Business Think Tank



Review of Outside Bodies, Panels and Forums

The Corporate Business Think Tank has, in conjunction with Democratic Services, carried out a review of the Council's appointments to Outside Bodies, Panels and Forums. Generally these appointments are made at Annual Council with any subsequent amendments requiring agreement at a Full Council Meeting.

Think Tank members proposed criteria for deciding whether or not formal appointments needed to be made by Council:

- The Council makes a financial contribution to the Outside Body;
- There is a clear need for the business of the Outside Body to be reported back to Council; or
- The Council has a partnership relationship with the Outside Body

If agreed, Councillors would only be formally appointed to Outside Bodies where the criteria was met. The process would draw a clear distinction between formal Council appointments and those which had a more local relevance. The review was to rationalize the existing arrangements, not to remove representation by District Ward Councillors on any outside body or devalue the work of any Outside Body.

The Think Tank discussed the need for Members to report back on Outside Bodies and felt that where the Council appointed a representative, there needed to be a process of feedback, particularly with regard to the management of the funding and partnership work.

Bodies outside the criteria: Following a district election, Democratic Services will inform Outside Bodies of the contact details of the elected Ward Members. Similarly, where an Outside Body approaches the Council for a representative, Democratic Services will provide the contact details of the local Ward Member(s) so that arrangements can be made direct. It follows that any subsequent changes to representation to these Outside Bodies (which fall outside the criteria) need not be referred to Full Council.

Democratic Services together with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Business tested the above proposals against existing Outside Bodies, Panels and Forums, identified those that fell clearly within the criteria and contacted the Council's representative of the remainder to seek their views.

Recommendation

1. That Appointments of Members to Outside Bodies, Panels and Forums be made by Council only where the following criteria apply:

- The Council makes a financial contribution to the outside body
- There is a clear need for the business of the outside body to be reported back to Council
- The Council has a partnership relationship with the outside body

2. In the case of outside bodies falling outside the criteria in 1. above, Democratic Services will provide the contact details of the ward member(s) so that arrangements can be made direct.

Councillor Ray Bloxham
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Business

Agenda Item 12

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1 March 2012

Quarterly Monitoring report



Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – 3rd Quarter 2011/12

Summary

Performance information by Corporate Priority for the 2nd Quarter is attached to this report to allow Members to monitor overall performance and identify any areas where improvement may be necessary.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members consider performance against Service Plan Key Service Objectives and Performance Measures for the 3rd quarter of 2011/12.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

This report demonstrates our progress in achieving our Corporate Priorities by means of Service Plan Key Strategic Objectives and Performance Indicators, including Systems Thinking Measures. Addressing these areas will ensure the continuous improvement of services and the Council overall.

b) Alternative Options

None.

c) Risk Considerations

A failure to make satisfactory progress in addressing the areas of concern may lead to the Council being criticised by its customers and inspectors in a future inspection and could also compromise the Council's reputation and budgets.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

One of our corporate priorities is 'Excellent services for our customers' and these performance reports help members understand whether we are improving services from our customers' point of view. Quarterly and monthly performance monitoring conforms with existing Council policy and the Council's current budget. However, any consequent improvement action could have policy and financial implications.

Positive Impact Overall

Affordable Homes.
Thriving Economy.
Safe Environment.
Clean Environment.
Green Environment.
Recycling.

Excellent Customer Service.
Inspirational Council.
Providing more service at same cost.
Create Cashable Savings

e) Date for Review of Decision

Monitoring of the performance of Service Plan Key Service Objectives and Performance Indicators, including Systems Thinking Measures, is carried out by the Committee at the end of each quarter.

1 Main Body of the Report

Key Issues and how they are being addressed

Finance

- **Customer Service Centre (CSC)**

We currently have a list of customers waiting for food caddies to be delivered as we have none in stock and there is time lack in delivery. This causes preventable demand as customers chase delivery and queries cannot be instantly resolved. Reordering stock level procedures are being revised.

- **Revenues & Benefits**

We have got ourselves in position that we are working on work that is 7 days old whereas we want, and have been for awhile, in a position of working on current work. The older the work the more preventable demand that is generated and leads to customer dissatisfaction.

We intend to work on this mini backlog over a few weekends to pull ourselves back to current work position, this will then be carefully monitored to ensure we are dealing with demand as it arrives. We are currently seeing an increase in workload as the numbers of changes on customers' circumstance have increased and more customers are telephoning with enquiries to maximise entitlement and check understanding of Government welfare changes and reduction in their benefit levels.

- **Financial Services**

A key piece of work at the moment is ensuring from April 2012 all our asset income and costs can be recorded to an individual asset level ensuring accurate management information is available to aid asset management decisions.

Environment

- **Environmental Health**

Significant number of calls to Environmental health required a call back with technical advice and could not be dealt with at first point of contact. Generated significant amount of failure demand. Office based duty Technical Officer introduced on trial basis to take and give immediate response to technical enquiries

- **StreetScene**

Demands for Streetscene services at weekends not always able to be met due to 5 day working arrangements. Seven day working trial underway showing greater responsiveness of service and savings in overtime costs but there are issues being stretched on some days. Trial currently being reviewed.

- **Health and Safety**

New Hand Arm Vibration regulations have placed restrictions on time Streetscene workers can use power tools. This is having a significant impact particularly on grounds maintenance and the use of strimmers, chainsaws, mowers etc. Alternative working methods and equipment are being trialed and different approaches to maintenance of open space are being considered

Economy

- **Planning**

Find a way to deliver infrastructure (physical and social) to support new development in the District: The Draft Local Plan is currently out for consultation on its proposals for new development for the next 15 years in the District. We will shortly commission consultants to commence work on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule for the rest of the District, following the completion of the work on the New Growth Point Area. Reports have been going to Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Development Management Committee on both CIL and an Upfront Revolving Infrastructure Fund. It now seems likely that the Local Enterprise Partnership will create a Revolving Infrastructure Fund using the Government's Growing Place Fund.

- **Estates**

Management of the Council's assets: The Electronic property register is all but complete. The outstanding issue remains the finance element. There have been combined finance and economy Think Tank meetings on the Principles for Managing Assets for commercial return and community benefit. A presentation by the Head of Assets for Locality on community asset transfer has raised issues that need to be addressed. The Council is being used as a guinea pig for whole life costings of community buildings as part of the foundation work for any community transfers. Also working on business financial planning for each of the Council's assets.

- **Economic Development**

Providing support to local businesses (including visitor based ones) for the benefit of the economy of the District: A Economic Strategy has been drafted and consulted on with specialist stakeholders and the wider public in concert with the Council Plan, Local Plan and other subject specific strategy. Updated economic policies have been proposed for the Local Plan and are being consulted on as part of the Draft Local Plan. The Council is working with the East Devon Business Forum and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to help secure maximum economic benefit in the New Growth Point Area and across the rest of the District. We are preparing a bid for the Rural Economy Growth Review fund – 1st deadline 31st January 2012.

Housing

- **Reform of the Housing Revenue Account**

We are making final preparations for the self-financing regime being introduced as part of the Localism Act which is due to commence in April 2012. The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan has been revised using the assumptions in the guidance on self-financing, and we have obtained treasury advice on servicing the debt (£84.7 million) that Government will be passing on to us in return for freedoms and flexibilities to run our landlord services having regard to local circumstances. A loan portfolio from the Public Works Loan Board is being designed to ensure that we have sufficient resources to invest in services for tenants and maintaining the housing stock to a high standard, whilst paying off the debt at a pace we can afford.

- **Homeless prevention**

We are working to maintain high levels of homeless prevention against an increase in the number of homeless approaches. The economic climate, increased unemployment and welfare reform is adding pressure on the service as more people seek our assistance. We have successfully reduced the number of homeless households where we have a duty to secure accommodation and have been making use of the private rented sector thereby minimising the trauma of homelessness and the cost of bed and breakfast/temporary accommodation.

Keeping homeless numbers down through early intervention and prevention is a priority for the Service.

- **Private sector enforcement and reducing empty homes**

We are working with limited resources to improve housing conditions in the private rented sector to ensure that minimum standards are achieved. Fire safety; access to amenities; and good repair standards are priorities. We are also implementing our adopted Empty Homes Strategy and targeting long term empty properties for attention. We have raised the profile of this issue in recent months as part of our campaign to make good use of the existing housing stock. Statutory enforcement action is being taken in respect of several long term dilapidated properties.

ICT

- **Business Solutions Capacity**

I think this will be a perennial issue. To match capacity to the ICT driven changes that our employee customers are now asking for from ICT would require several more ICT analysts.

Obviously we cannot afford these analysts so the best approach is ensure we have good allocation of resources to get the greatest good.

- **ICT Security work for Code of Connection**

There is still much to do to but we are unlikely to ever meet all of the requirements that the code sets out as we believe that some of it is dubious and a bit “over the top” for a district council. We operate to the spirit of the code and work closely with the assessors to ensure we are focused on the main issues.

The Code will change again this year as a result of the Public Sector Network (PSN) requirements.

- **Year end**

Absence of a key member of staff is causing concern for running of the year end for Revenues and Benefits. The ICT Business Solutions Manager has taken on the task and is learning the process very quickly but it has increased the risks of a problem causing us to miss a deadline.

A report showing the measures recorded quarterly by the council appear in Appendix A. This appendix is arranged by Priority Outcome and consists of a detailed breakdown of measures which are showing as of ‘Concern’ only and then a summary bar chart showing progress towards the Priority Outcome for all Key Service Objectives and Performance Indicators.

An explanation and definitions of these measures can be found in Appendix B.

Legal Implications

No legal comments are required.

Financial Implications

No direct financial implications.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

Relevant Directors, Heads and Officers have contributed to the appendices.

Background Papers

Appendix A – Detailed Measures report for areas of concern plus bar chart summary for each Priority Outcome.

Appendix B – Explanation and Definitions.

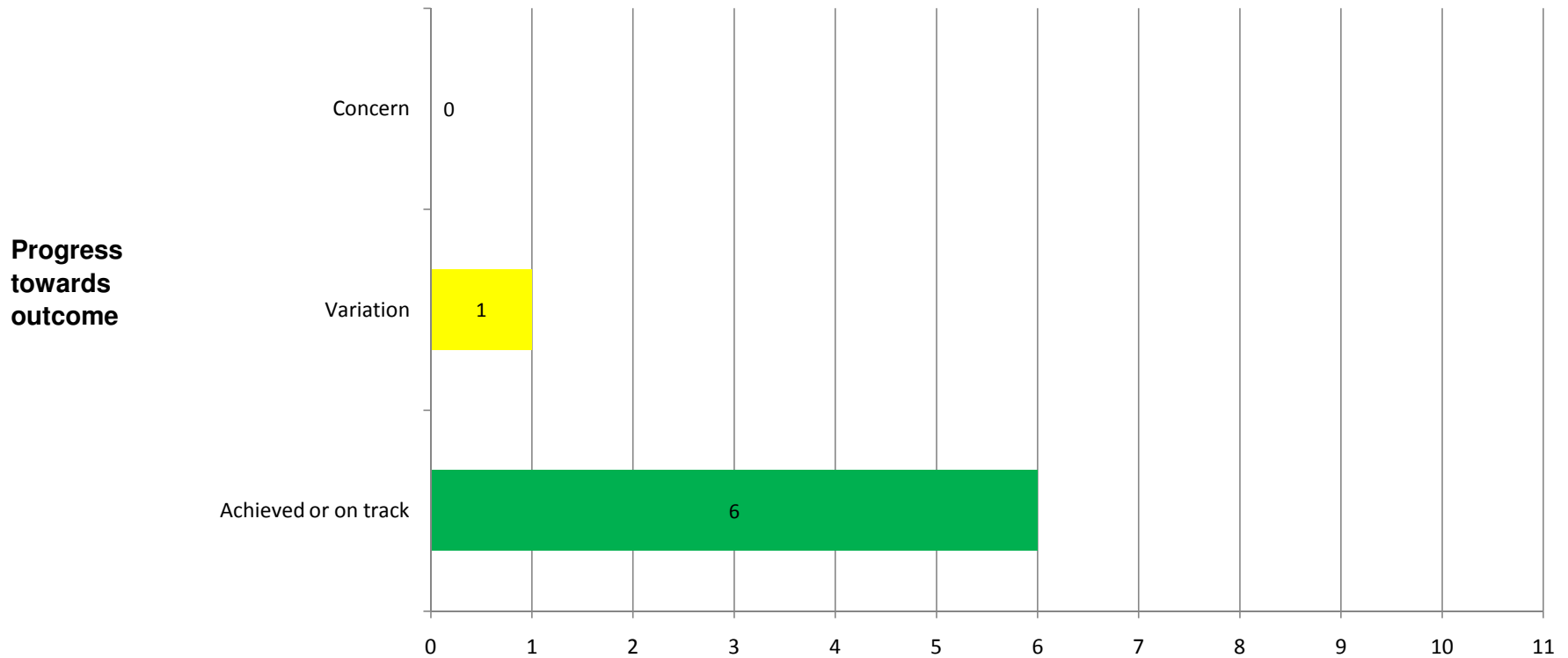
Joanne Avery, ext. 2332
Management Information Officer

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
3 February 2012

PRIORITY ONE: Thriving Communities

a. Outcome Make more affordable homes available for our residents

Quarter Three Results 2011/12



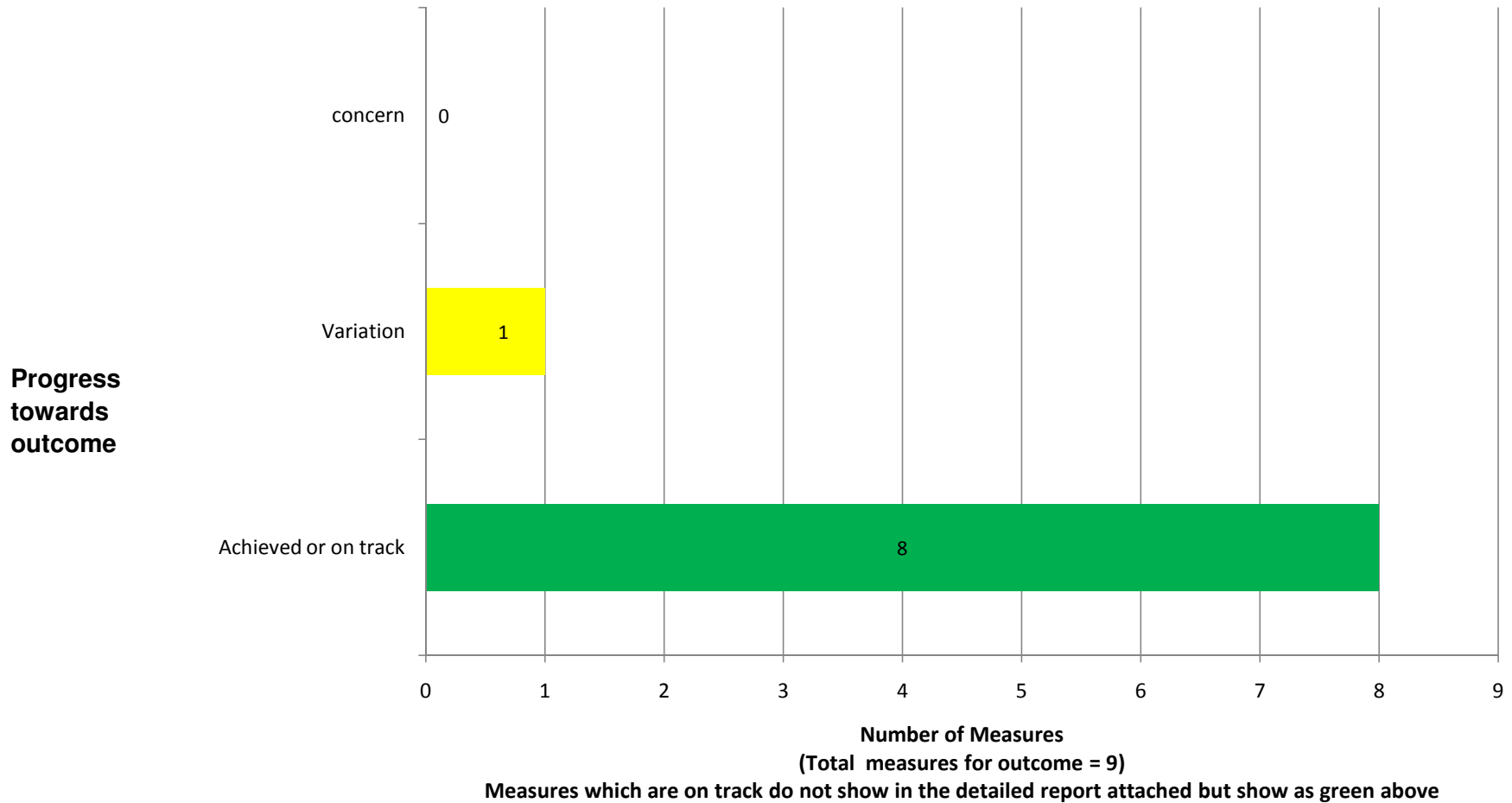
Number of Measures
(Total measures for outcome = 7)

Measures which are on track do not show in the full report attached but show as green above

PRIORITY ONE: Thriving Communities

b. Outcome Maintain residents' high satisfaction with their area and home as places to live

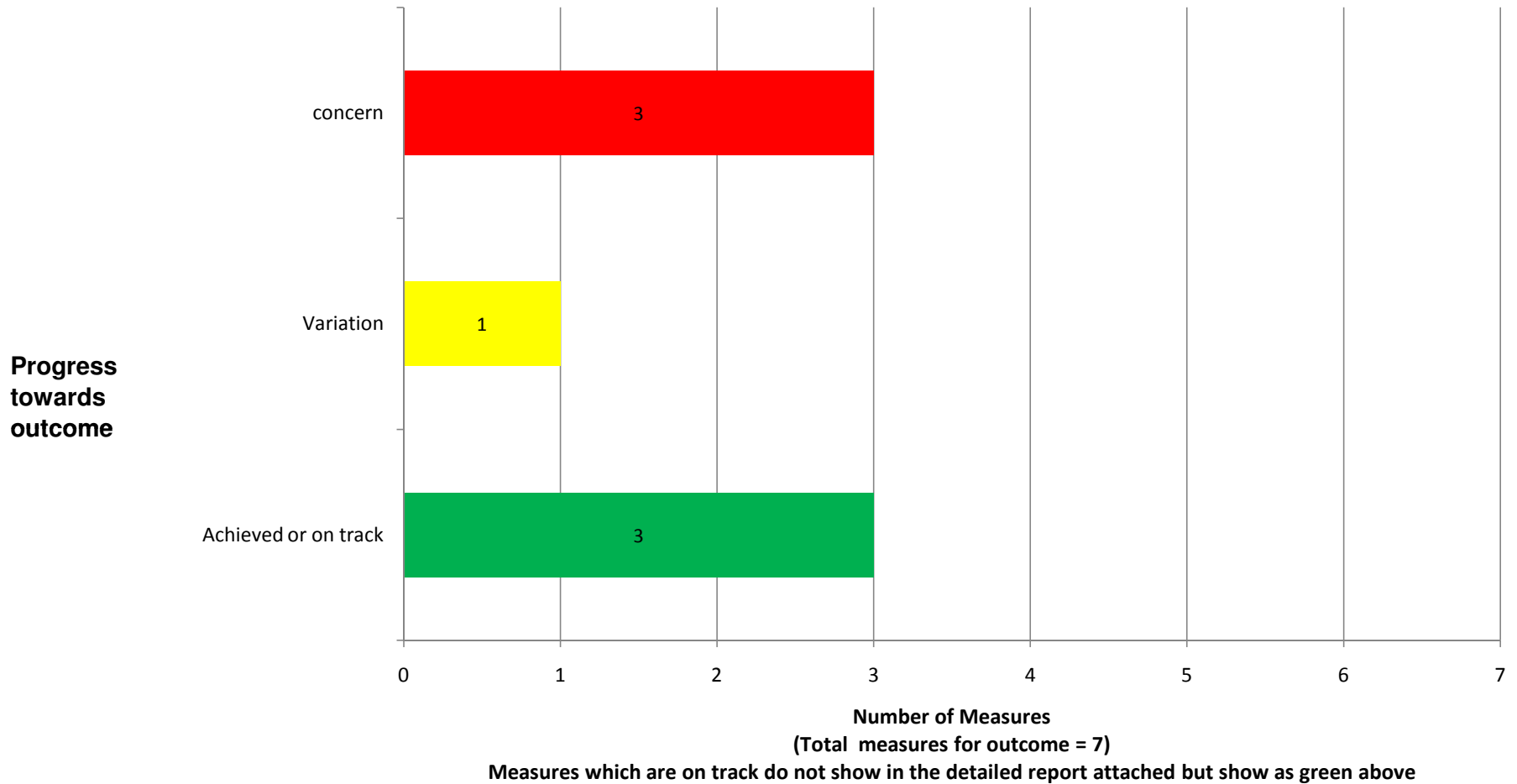
Quarter Three Results 2011/12



PRIORITY ONE: Thriving Communities

c. Outcome Delivery of strategic employment sites in the West of the District

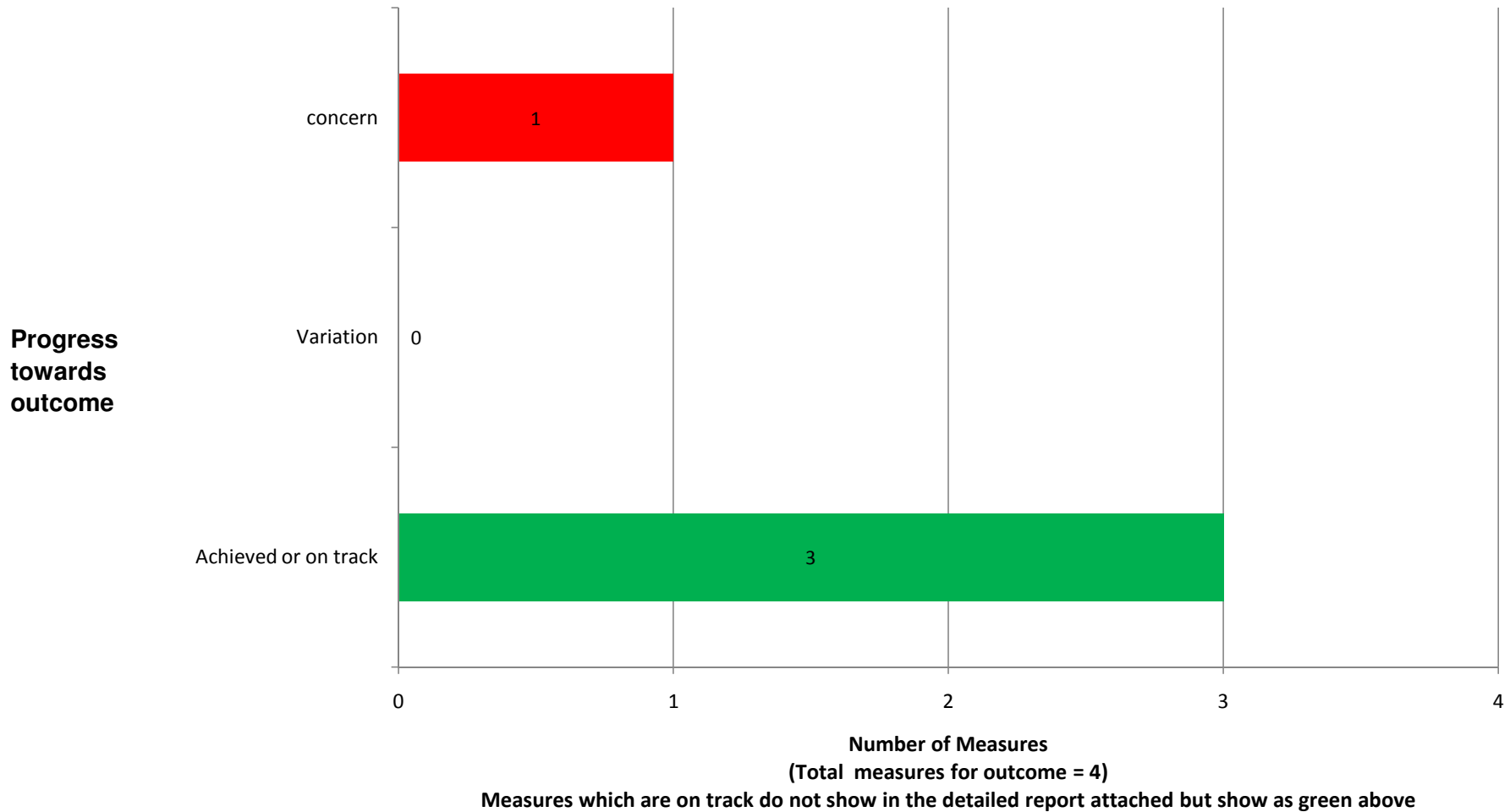
Quarter Three Results 2011/12



PRIORITY ONE: Thriving Communities

d. Outcome Regeneration of Exmouth and Seaton

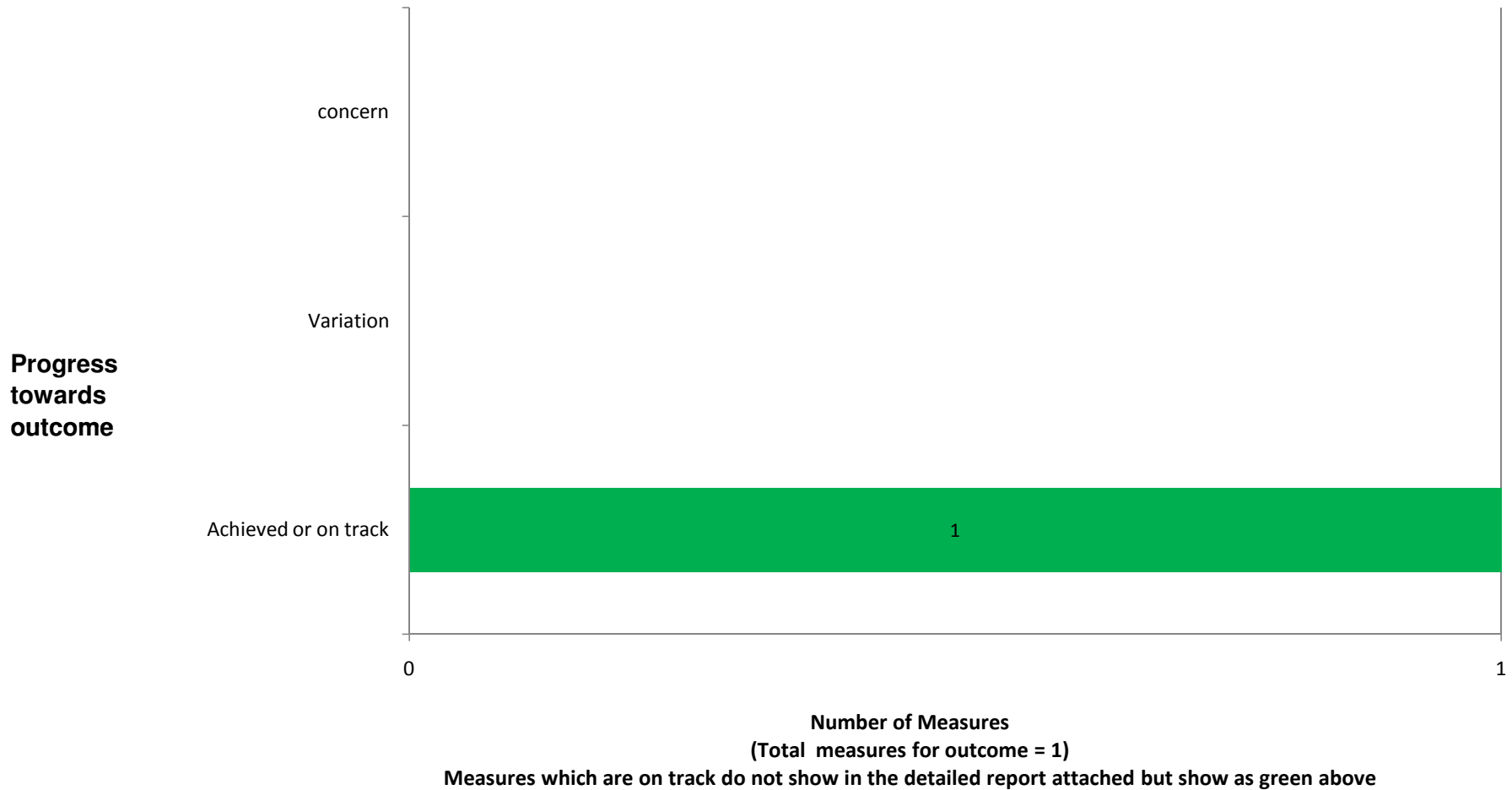
Quarter Three Results 2011/12



PRIORITY ONE: Thriving Communities

e. Outcome Delivery of economic growth throughout the District

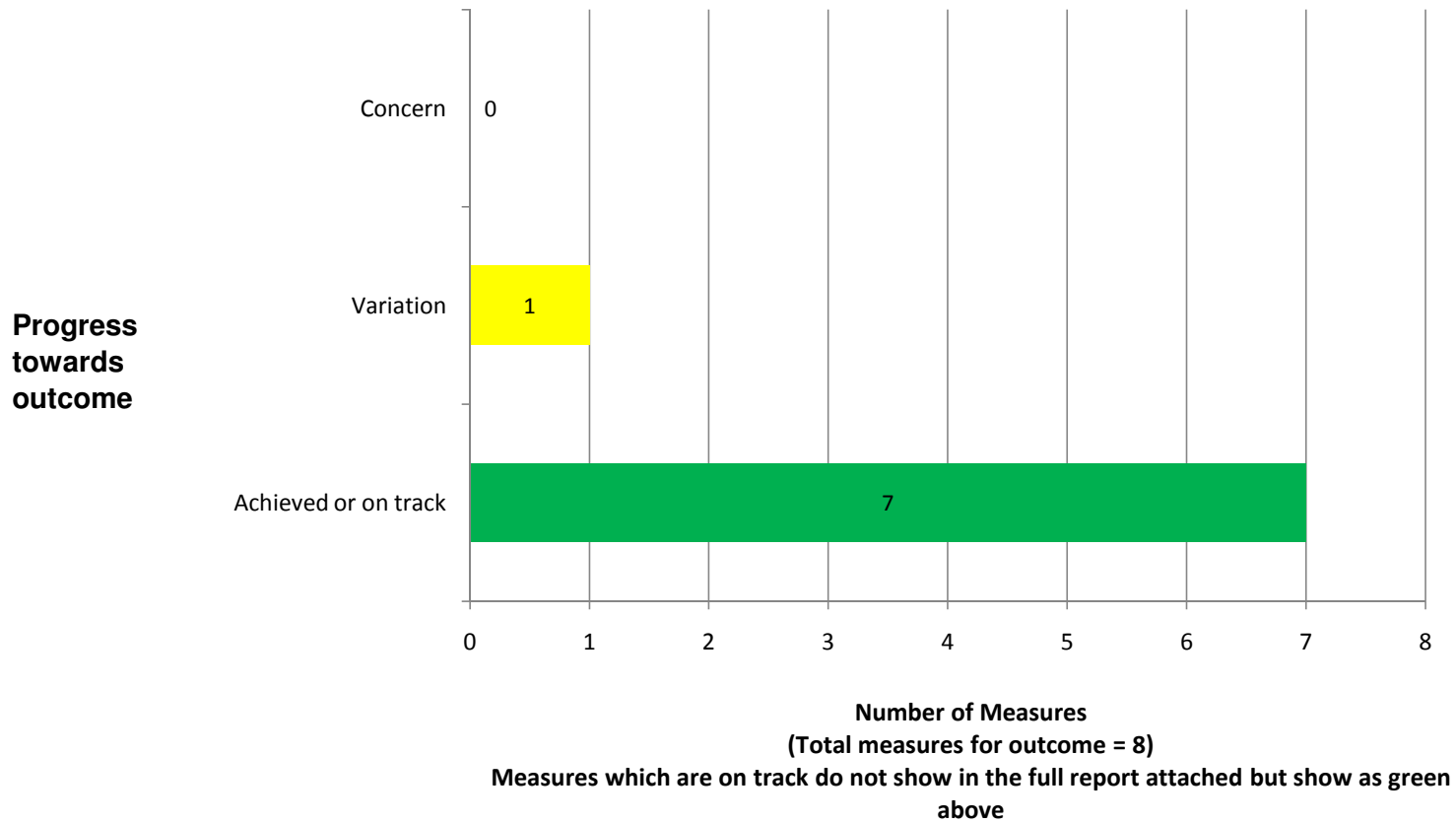
Quarter Three Results 2011/12



PRIORITY TWO: An Outstanding Environment

a. Outcome Outstanding environment

Quarter Three Results 2011/12

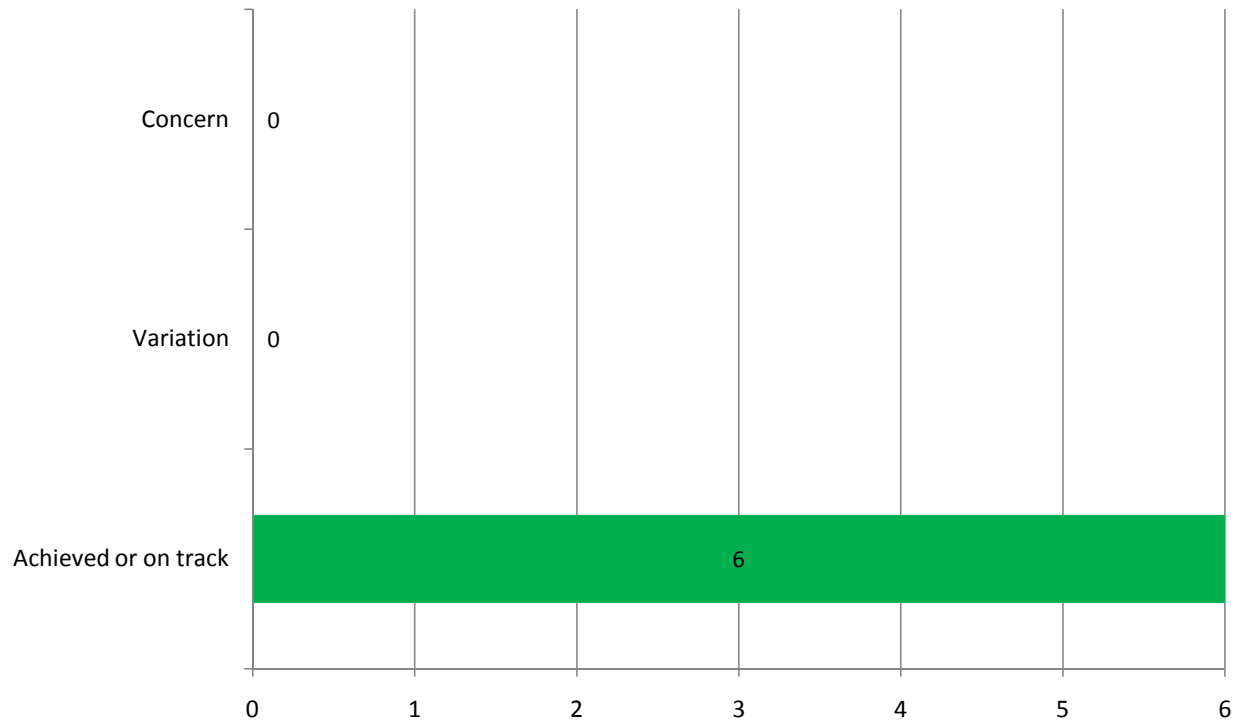


PRIORITY TWO: An Outstanding Environment

b. Outcome A rise in recycling and composting and a fall in the disposal of other waste

Quarter Three Results 2011/12

Progress towards outcome



Number of Measures

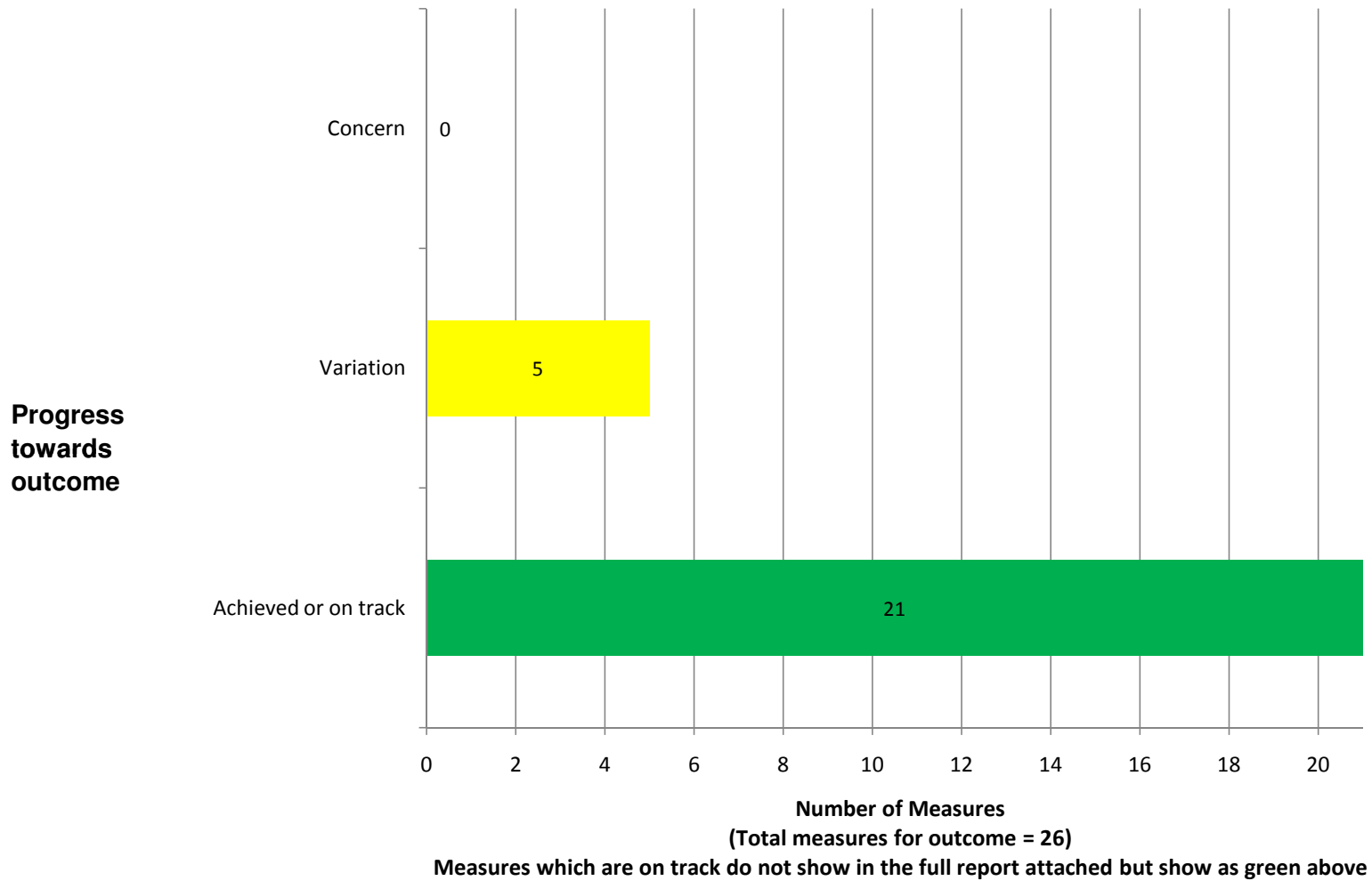
(Total measures for outcome = 6)

Measures which are on track do not show in the full report attached but show as green above

PRIORITY THREE: Excellent services for our customers

a. Outcome Efficiencies: financial and time-saving

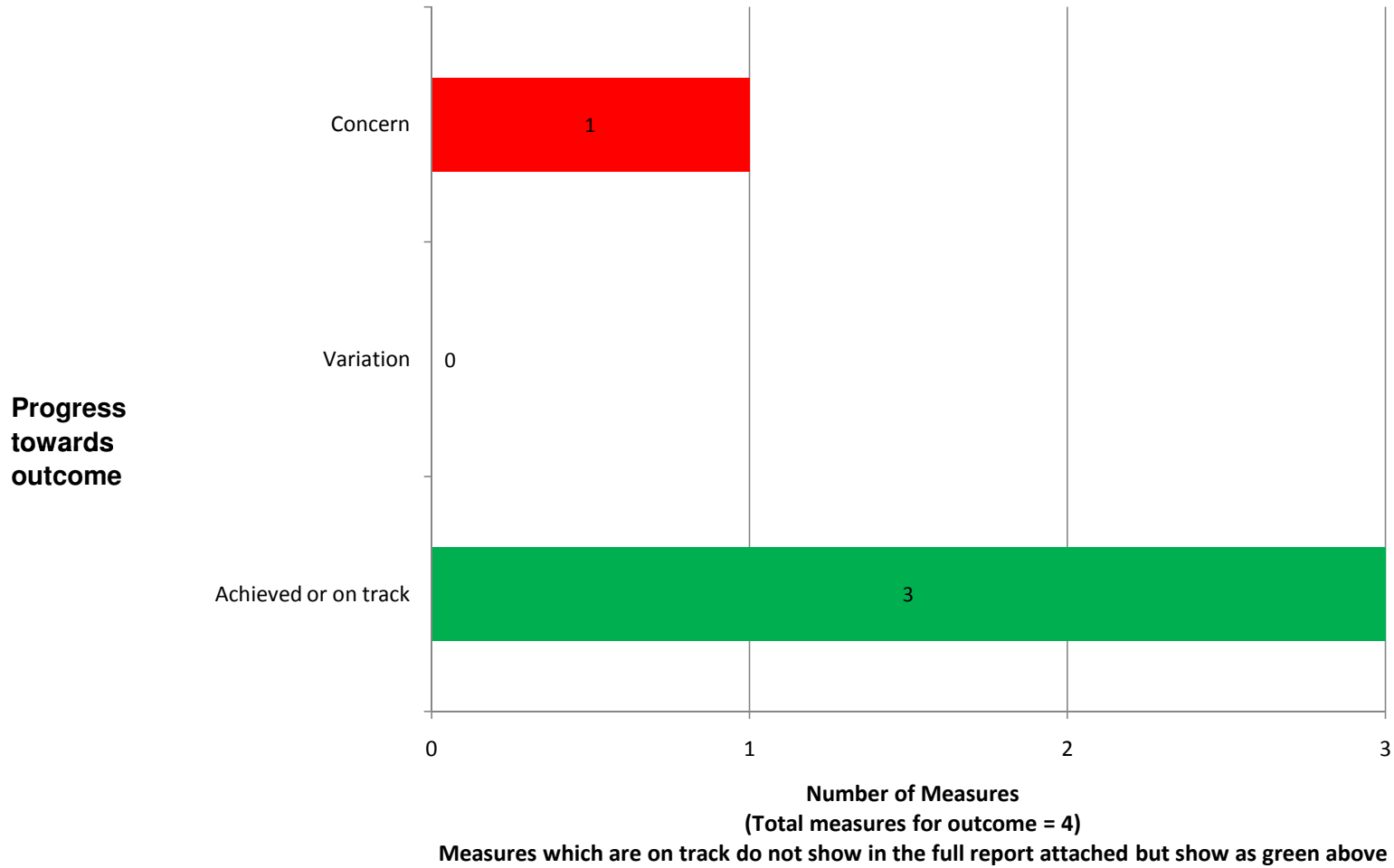
Quarter Three Results 2011/12



PRIORITY THREE: Excellent services for our customers

b. Outcome Improved services through understanding our customers

Quarter Three Results 2011/12

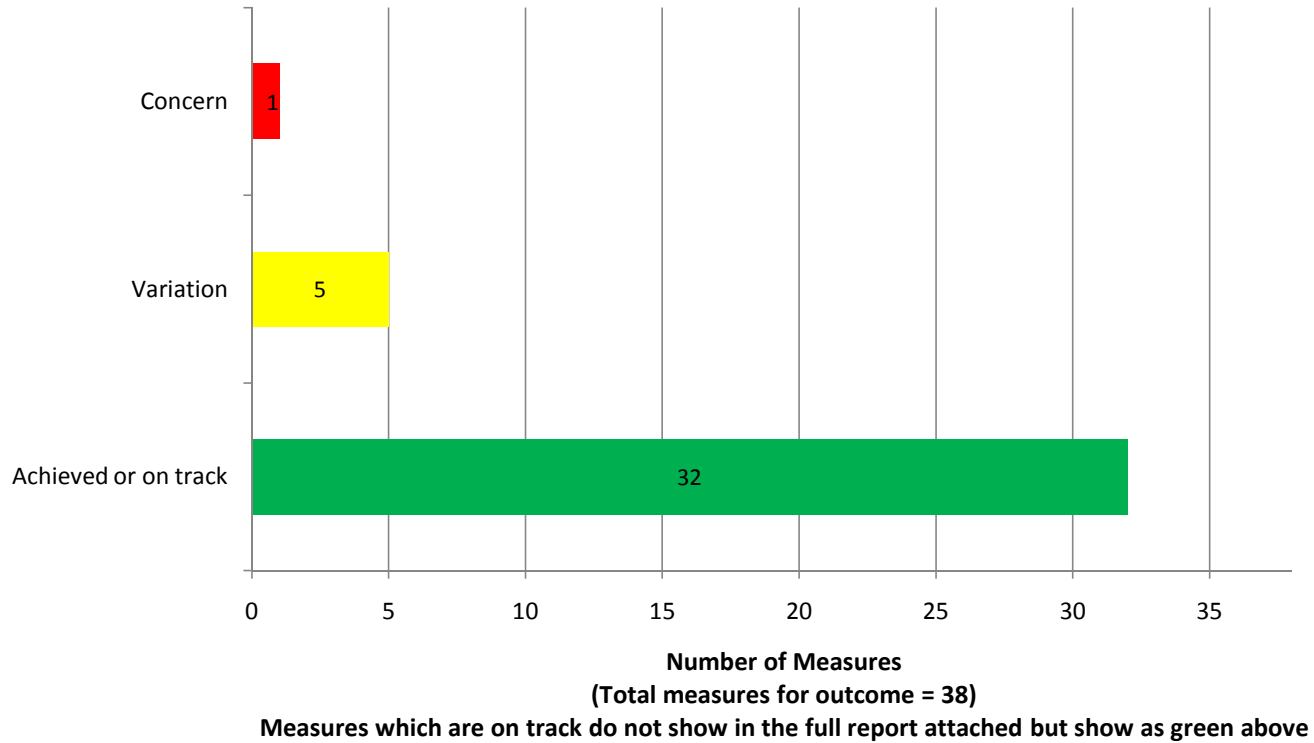


PRIORITY THREE: Excellent services for our customers

c. Outcome Consistently satisfied customers

Quarter Three Results 2011/12

Progress towards outcome



Quarterly Performance Report 2011-12 concern only

Quarterly report for 2011/2012

Arranged by Aims

Filtered by Flag: Include: Monthly, Quarterly

Exclude: Archive

Filtered by Performance Status: Include PI Status: Concern

Include Objective Status: Concern

Key to Performance Status:

Key Strategic Objectives: No Data available Milestone Missed Normal Concern Variation Achieved

Performance Indicators: No Data Concern Variation Achieved Excellent

Key to change on same period in previous year:

↑ Improved Performance ↓ Worse Performance ↔ Unchanged

Key to +/- Column:

+ Higher figures are better - Lower figures are better OFF Direction cannot be determined

* indicates that an entity is linked to the Aim by its parent Service

Quarterly Performance Report 2011-12 concern only

Priority: Thriving Communities

Outcome: Delivery of strategic employment sites in the West of the District

Key Strategic Objectives

Objective Status	Title	Comments	Budget	Officer Notes
Concern	<u>Skypark to have progressed to building works on site by 2011.</u>	No formal start on site during 2011. However access works are now imminent.		Resources: External Funding and the Growth Point Team (TA)
Concern	<u>To deliver planning permission for the new Cranbrook station in 2011, alongside public transport</u>	Timescale has slipped to allow for further negotiations with Environment Agency to address flood mitigation measures.		Resources: The Growth Point Team and External Funding (TA)
Concern	<u>To facilitate the delivery of the early stage buildings on phase 1 of the</u>	Delivery of the Science Park Centre remains a key challenge. New project team being established to pull together an application to the		Resources: £250,000 Revenue, the Growth Point Team and

Quarterly Performance Report 2011-12 concern only

Priority: Thriving Communities

Outcome: Delivery of strategic employment sites in the West of the District

Key Strategic Objectives

Objective Status	Title	Comments	Budget	Officer Notes
	Science Park	new Growing Places Fund to facilitate this.		External Funding (TA)

Outcome: Regeneration of Exmouth and Seaton

Key Strategic Objectives

Objective Status	Title	Comments	Budget	Officer Notes
Concern	<u>Project manage the delivery of a commercial building in the Strand Gardens</u>	Amended planning application to be submitted by DCC shortly		Resources: £1,000,000 Capital, Corporate Director & Estates Team (TA)

Priority: Excellent services for our customers

Outcome: Improved service through understanding our customers

Key Strategic Objectives

Objective Status	Title	Comments	Budget	Officer Notes
Concern	<u>Work with ICT on two key ICT improvements that will provide a better service for our customers</u>	This has not progressed since last quarter.		

Outcome: Consistently satisfied customers

Performance Indicators

Title	+/-	Prev Year End	Current Target	Q1 Act	Q2 Act	Q3 Act	Q4 Act	Improvement	Responsible Officer
<u>Number of random vehicle licence checks</u>	+	228	113 (3/4)	14	31	74		↓	John Tippin

Management Notes:

(Quarter 3)

There have been capacity issues within the team which will be eased when a post is filled. It is hoped to appoint a new part time member of staff early in 2012.

Forward Plan for Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Month	Topic
29 Mar 2012	Strategic Commissioning NHS Devon Flood Management Act implementation – update from Devon County Council (Martin Hutchings) Review of Car Parks
26 Apr 2012	Update on Equalities Action Plan Recording at Meetings Review of the Year – Draft Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report
7 June 2012	Broadband (tbc) Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – 4 th Qtr 2011/12
5 July 2012	Post Office Local feedback on local pilot schemes – Member Champion for Rural Communities (tbc)
26 July 2012	
30 August 2012 (if required)	
27 September 2012	Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – 1 st Qtr 2012/13
25 October 2012	
22 November 2012	Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – 2 nd Qtr 2012/13
3 January 2013	
16 January 2013	Special Budget meeting (all day)
24 January 2013	
28 February 2013	Quarterly Monitoring of Performance – 3 rd Qtr 2012/13
28 March 2013	
25 April 2013	

Topics for scoping and allocation to the Forward Plan:

- Transfer of assets to Towns and Parishes
- On-street parking financial detail
- Update on the Localism Act resource implications
- Shortage of housing for elderly in rural communities
- Local Plan production
- Tour of Growth Point area and projects

Task and Finish Forums Update

- Community Infrastructure Levy – Due to commence in April 2012
- High Street/Town Centre Health Check – First meeting set for 9 March 2012 at 9am. Membership confirmed as: Tim Wood (Chairman); Graham Brown; Roger Giles; Pat Graham; Steve Hall; Sheila Kerridge; and John O’Leary.
- HRB TaFF are continuing – Garage Management; and Sheltered Housing.