

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Strategy and Resources Committee held in the Barum Room - Brynsworthy on Monday, 6th January, 2025 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Clayton (Chair)

Councillors Bell, Crabb, D Knight, R Knight, Lane, P Leaver, Maskell, Milton, Prowse and Wilkinson

Officers:

Chief Executive, Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Customer Focus, Head of Environmental Enhancement and Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Also Present in person:

Councillors Norman, Patrinos, Walker and Worden

Also Present virtually:

Councillor Hunt

91. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hunt and C Leaver.

Councillor Hunt joined the meeting virtually.

92. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2024 (ATTACHED).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2024 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

93. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

There were no items, which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered as a matter of urgency.

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS.

Councillors Lane and Prowse declared a personal interest in Items 7, Council Tax Reduction Scheme and 8, Council Tax Discounts and Premiums as they owned more than one property.

95. MATERIAL RECOVERY FACILITY INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The Committee received an update from the Head of Environment Enhancement in relation to the Material Recovery Facility Infrastructure project.

The Head of Environment Enhancement provided the following:

- The project was drawing to a close with the baler parts having been delivered safely just before Christmas 2024.
- The installation of the new baler had begun and was on track to be operational early February 2025.
- Financially the project was on track.

The Committee noted the update.

96. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Committee considered a report by the Revenues and Benefits Manager (circulated previously) regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Head of Customer Focus highlighted the following:

- The Council Tax Reduction Scheme was an income based scheme and the bandings for income levels could be seen in the table on page 16 of the report.
- There were no proposed change to the scheme this year and we remained one of the few authorities who awarded 100% relief for those on low incomes.

Councillor Prowse gave thanks to the Team who had been dealing with large numbers of queries and applications.

The Head of Customer Focus gave the following responses to questions:

- Assistance was already provided, face-to-face at community offices, to help with completing the application form.
- The reduction for childcare costs for two children was set as part of the Devon wide scheme.
- The proposal in front of Members today was to adopt the scheme unchanged.

RECOMMENDED that Council adopts and continues with the current Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2025/26 to include the uprating of applicable amounts, premiums and non-dependant deductions, as shown in the scheme.

97. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUMS

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Customer Focus (circulated previously) regarding Council Tax Discounts and Premiums.

The Head of Customer Focus highlighted the following:

- The table at section 4.7 of the report detailed the current level of discounts and premiums,
- The table at section 4.11 of the report (shown on agenda pages 146 and 147) detailed the proposed discounts and premiums for the financial year 2025/26.

The Chair confirmed there was still no progress from Devon County Council on the request for the extra income from the second homes council tax premium to be ring-fenced to help ease the housing crisis.

RECOMMENDED that Council make the determinations in relation to the classes of dwellings as set out in the following table, as detailed in the report at 4.11:

Class A (includes second homes) Dwellings which are no one's sole or main residence which are substantially furnished 28-day planning restriction ³	0% discount / 0% premium.
Class B (includes second homes) Dwellings which are no one's sole or main residence which are substantially furnished No planning restriction ⁴	0% discount / 0% premium.
Class C Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (For the purpose of Class C, in considering whether a dwelling has been unoccupied for any period, any one period, not exceeding six weeks, during which it was occupied shall be disregarded).	100% discount for a period of three months.
Class D structural repairs Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Maximum 12 months).	0% discount.
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings premium) After 1 year up to 5 years of becoming empty.	100% premium.
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings Premium) Dwellings empty for 10 years or more.	300% premium.
Class D structural repairs Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Maximum 12 months).	0% discount.
Premium - Dwellings which are	100% premium.

unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings premium) After 2 years up to 5 years of becoming empty.	
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings Premium) Dwellings empty between 5 years and up to 10 years.	200% premium.
Premium - Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty dwellings Premium) Dwellings empty for 10 years or more.	300% premium.
Premium- Dwellings which are unoccupied and furnished (second homes).	100% premium.

³ restricted by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days

⁴ the occupation of which is not restricted by a planning condition preventing occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in the relevant year

98. APPROVAL AND RELEASE OF S106 PUBLIC OPEN SPACE FUNDS - CROYDE AND SOUTH MOLTON

The Committee considered a report by the Parks, Leisure and Public Open Space Officer (circulated previously) regarding Approval and release of S106 Public Open Space Funds – Croyde and South Molton.

The Head of Environmental Enhancement highlighted the following:

- An allocation of £23,018.29 to Georgeham Parish Council towards the cost of purchasing and installing additional play equipment and safety surfacing at Croyde Play Park.
- An allocation of £314,187.56 to South Molton Football Club towards the cost of new sports pitches and clubhouse facilities at Limers Lane.

In response to a question about what happened to unspent S106 funds under devolution. The Chief Executive replied that any unspent funds would transfer as an asset of the relevant authority and had to be spent per the original restrictions placed on the funds.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That £23,018.29 be allocated to Georgeham Parish Council Parish towards the cost of purchasing and installing additional play equipment and safety surfacing at Croyde Play Park;
- (b) That £314,187.59 be allocated to South Molton Football Club towards the cost of new sports pitches and clubhouse facilities at Limers Lane;

- (c) That the Equality Impact Assessment as summarised at paragraph 6 of the report be noted; and

RECOMMENDED:

- (d) That Council vary the capital programme by £337,205.88 and the funds be released subject to a funding agreement upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed by the Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer for external projects.

99. NORTH DEVON COUNCIL (OFF STREET PARKING PLACES) ORDER 2025

The Committee considered a report by the Car Parks Manager (circulated previously) regarding North Devon Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2025.

The Lead Member for Commercialisation and Resources introduced the item. The Car Park Review Working Party, which included cross party members, had attended three workshops to discuss and agree on a revised charging tariff for North Devon Car Parks. There was a need to make a charge for users of the car parks the first being to avoid the car parks being completely full of residents and workers, there being no spaces available for visitors to the town and the second the revenue received helped towards the cost of maintenance of the car parks.

The Lead Member went on to explain that although the cost of permits seemed to be increasing substantially they were still good value. The decision had been taken to freeze the annual permit cost of £225 at the new Seven Brethren car park to encourage use – the new car park was to open shortly.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the following:

- The working party had met three times and looked at a range of data around, permits, income levels per car park, payment methods – which varied from car park to car park, 30-minute usage compared to hourly and car park charges locally and in neighbouring authorities.
- The report sets out, in summary, the requests made by Parish and Town Councils, as seen on pages 157 – 161 of the agenda.
- The proposed off street parking order and associated increase in charges was contained within Appendix A of the report.
- A summary of proposed increases for North Devon Council owned carparks could be seen at Appendix B of the report.
- The increase in yearly permits was made by comparison with other authorities. In the Torridge District Council area, a yearly permit was £500 and in the Mid-Devon District Council area, a 12-month permit was in the region of £491.
- Charges for short stay and long stay car parks was looked at as well as coastal car parks. For consistency, it was decided by the working group to increase charges by 10 pence per hour across all car parks.
- Looking at long stay car parks, the working group decided that as the Seven Brethren long stay car park was further away than other long stay car parks to

retain the current all day charge of £2.50 but to increase all other long stay, all day car park charges by a £1 to £3.50.

- The working group looked at the Green Lanes car park charges as this was now Council owned and needed to be brought into line with other Council owned car parks.
- Car parks in South Molton were looked at. There were two car parks in South Molton the larger long stay central car park and the short stay car park across the road known as the Sheep Pen.
- The short stay car park had historically had an element of long stay to it and was next to a privately owned car park at the George Arcade, which charged 50p per hour.
- In keeping with staying consistent across other areas, the working group were proposing to apply the short stay charges to the Sheep Pen car park.
- Representations from the Town Council had been received in relation to this proposal and a Ward Member, Councillor Worden, was at the meeting to address the committee in relation to the proposal.
- The proposals of increasing charges by 10p per hour was still cheaper than those of neighbouring authorities.
- Torridge District Council currently charged £1.50 an hour in its towns and £1.70 an hour in coastal areas. The charges in North Devon for 2025/26 would be £1.40 per hour in towns and £1.60 per hour in coastal areas
- Mid-Devon District Council currently charged £1.60 in their town centre car parks.
- The financial considerations tied in with the medium-term financial plan that had already been agreed by Members and the proposals to increase charges for the next financial year could potentially give an estimated revenue of around £350,000.

The Chair gave thanks to the Car Park Review working group for their work.

Councillor Worden addressed the committee regarding concerns over the short stay car park in South Molton. His concern was that there would be a loss of revenue to the Council, as the increase in charges would mean the car park would be deserted. The Town Council was so concerned about the changes they had held an extraordinary meeting to discuss this issue. They would re-open the car park at the Pannier Market if the changes were to go ahead. There was a lorry park that was currently under used which it was felt could be considered for general car park use in the future. The jump from 50p per hour to £1.40 and £14 for all day parking was too big an increase.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive responded to Councillor Worden to say that the lorry park had been brought to the attention of the Car Park Team who were looking into its potential use and any changes would come to a future committee for consideration.

The following changes to the Off Street Parking Order 2025 were raised by Members, which would be relayed back to and checked by the Car Parks Team:

- **Swimbridge** did not have a car park as mentioned in Appendix A, on page 228 of the agenda.

- The proposal to make the Sheep Pen car park, South Molton, into a short stay was rejected by the committee and should remain a long stay. This to be reviewed alongside the lorry park next year.
- **Ropery Road**, Ilfracombe under Ancillary Matters, (N10) – no sleeping, as mentioned in Appendix A, on page 225 of the report, needed to be removed. The report at section 4, on page 159, of the agenda refers to the removal of N10.
- **Wilder Road**, Ilfracombe charges as mentioned in Appendix A, on page 225 of the agenda should be £1.40 per hour between 15 March and 31 October. This was correct in Appendix B, on page 262 of the agenda.
- **Town Hall Forecourt**, Lynton as mentioned in Appendix A, on page 235 of the agenda, under Permits and Tickets, (P5), remove the words ‘or Tourist Information Office’ as there had not been a tourist information centre in the town for many years now.
- **Town Hall Forecourt**, Lynton under Ancillary Matters as mentioned in Appendix A, on page 235 of the agenda amend the (N5) to (N13) Owned and operated by Lynton Town Council – North Devon Council do not own the car park.
- **Marine Drive**, Woolacombe was owned and managed by the National Trust so should be amended on the order, as mentioned in Appendix A, on page 240 of the agenda.
- **Woolacombe Village Hall**, Woolacombe, under Ancillary Matters as mentioned in Appendix A, at the top of page 242 of the agenda, amend (N4), to owned by Woolacombe Hall Trustees.

In response to a question about what could be done about electric vehicles using a charging point but not charging their vehicle. The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive advised that if the vehicle had paid for a parking ticket for the length of time the space was used the Council could not penalise if the vehicle was not charging its battery.

The Lead Member for Commercialisation and Regeneration added that the company who owned the charge points for electric vehicles could bring in a penalty if the car was not charging whilst using a charge point space.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That after consultation as requested by parishes and amendments for North Devon Council Car Parks be included as set out as follows, effective from 1 April 2025:
- (b) Delegated power be given to the Head of Place, Property and Regeneration in consultation with the Leader, Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer to make the Order following the consultation, subject to there being no material objections or amendments necessary;
- (c) **Braunton Parish Council** – Braunton Parish Council had not requested any amendments.
- (d) **Combe Martin Parish Council** - Combe Martin Parish Council had not requested any amendments.

- (e) **Instow Parish Council** – to accept changes to charges and regulations for Instow Marine car park and include the amendments into the Off Street Parking Order as seen at section 4 of the report and as shown in Appendix A of the report.
- (f) **Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council** - to accept changes to charges and regulations for Bottom Meadow, Cross Street, Esplanade, Lower Lyndale, Upper Lyndale, Upper Valley of the Rocks, Valley of the Rocks and Watersmeet car parks and include the amendments into the Off Street Parking Order as seen at section 4 of the report and as shown in Appendix A of the report.
- (g) **South Molton Town Council** – to accept changes to charges and regulations for South Molton Central Car Park, and South Molton Coach and Lorry Park and include the amendments into the Off Street Parking Order as seen at section 4 of the report and as shown in Appendix A of the report and subject to the Sheep Pen Car Park remaining a Long Stay Car Park; and

RECOMMENDED:

- (h) That Council vary the charges and regulations for all North Devon Council owned Car Parks as outlined in Appendix A of the report, subject to amending the designation of the Sheep Pen Car Park, South Molton from short stay to long stay and include the amendments into the Off Street Parking Order, subject to including changes as identified by Strategy and Resources Committee.

Chair

The meeting ended at 11.22 am

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.