

EXECUTIVE

6 JANUARY 2026

Present:

Councillors Buscombe, Hook, Keeling (Leader), Nuttall, Palethorpe (Deputy Leader), Parrott, G Taylor and Williams.

Members in Attendance:

Councillors Bullivant, Clarence, MacGregor and Rogers

Apologies:

Councillors Nutley

Officers in Attendance:

Phil Shears, Managing Director

Charlie Fisher, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Gordon Bryant, Head of Financial Services and Audit and Section 151 Officer

Tracey Hooper, Head of Customer and Digital

Nikki Rawley, Council Tax Lead Officer

Sue Heath, Audit and Information Governance Manager

Chris Morgan, Assistant Democratic Services Officer.

202. MINUTES

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Keeling and **SECONDED** by Councillor Palethorpe and

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the previous meeting on Tuesday 2nd December 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

203. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

Councillor Keeling thanked the Council's Refuse teams for their work over the Christmas and New Year Period. Councillor Williams spoke to this item and commended those teams and their work.

204. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

None received.

205. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Forward Plan was noted. Councillor Keeling highlighted a meeting later that day to discuss the Executive Forward Plan for 2026 with the Senior Management Team.

206. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None received.

207. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2026/2027

The Executive considered the report which provided an update to Members on the operation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and sought support for the continuation of the scheme for year 2026-27. The report proposed no change to the current working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme (WACTR) itself but highlighted the need to uplift the income thresholds within the bands to reflect any annual uprating in welfare awards or make allowances to disregard increases above the rate of inflation.

The report included appendices containing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26, the Discretionary Discount and Exceptional Hardship Relief Policy, Exceptional Hardship information and an Equality Impact Assessment.

Councillor Parrott introduced the report, the rationale behind the report and the recommendations, highlighting the Council's continued up to 100% support scheme as leading policy in Devon and other Local Authorities.

Councillor Keeling spoke in support of the scheme as a priority for the administration despite the challenges to the Council's Budget and that it provided support for those who needed it. Councillor G Taylor spoke to this item in support of the recommendations.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Parrott and **SECONDED** by Councillor Keeling and

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

1. RECOMMENDS to Council that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (attached as Appendix A) is adopted for the year 2026-27 with the income amounts uprated in line with annual uprating of welfare awards which are usually confirmed before the end of this calendar year.
2. RECOMMENDS to Council that delegated authority is given to the Council Tax Lead Officer to amend the income bands within the scheme to align with the uprated amounts, once confirmed by Government

The reasons for the decision are included within the Report, along with alternative options considered (8.1).

208. 2026/27 TO 2028/29 INITIAL FINANCIAL PLAN BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Executive considered the report which detailed the initial Financial Plan Proposals for 2026/27 to 2028/29. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider these proposals at their meetings on Tuesday 13th January 2026 and Tuesday 3rd February. The Executive would meet on Tuesday 10th February to recommend the Final Financial Plan to Full Council for adoption on Tuesday 24th February.

The report and appendices included the budget timetable, the Council Tax Base, a Council Tax Calculator, a summary of the revenue budget plan from 2025/26, a summary of the fees and charges, the Capital Programme 2026/26-2028/29 and the Council's Financial Plan 2026-2031.

Councillor Parrott introduced the item and the recommendation. He thanked the work of the Chief Finance Officer and the Finance Team and highlighted the number of upcoming meetings where Members will consider the Budget proposals and the annual survey for residents. Councillor Parrott gave an overview of the main elements of the report including the Local Government Settlement, an overview of Council Services and the main highlights of the initial Budget Proposals including a 2.99% increase of Council Tax, the continued up to 100% Council Tax Reduction Scheme, an average 5.4% increase to Fees and Charges and the range of investments relating to parks, waste facilities, housing, leisure, infrastructure, climate change and support to the community and voluntary sector.

The Head of Financial Services and Audit highlighted that although the Local Government Settlement is a 3-year settlement, it represented a reduction in real terms cash for the Council but welcomed the certainty that a multi-year settlement provided.

Councillor Palethorpe asked for clarification regarding multi-year inflationary funding to voluntary group grants. The Head of Financial Services and Audit highlighted that the multi-year settlement provided certainty, but individual grants were subject to annual agreements.

Councillor Buscombe spoke to this item regarding Business Rates. The Head of Financial Services and Audit responded that this was the first year of the Business Rates reset and commented on the ending of the pooling arrangements in Devon.

Councillor Keeling thanked the work of the Executive Member and Officers involved in the proposals and highlighted the consultation meeting with Towns and Parishes on Thursday 18th December 2025.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Parrott and **SECONDED** by Councillor Keeling and

RESOLVED

1. That comments be invited on these budget proposals.

The reasons for the decision are included within the Report, including any alternative options considered.

209. REFERRAL FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE - GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING REPORT

The Executive considered the referral from the Audit Committee to review the Governance Improvement Plan Monitoring Report. The Audit Committee had considered the report at their meeting on Wednesday 17th December 2025 and agreed to refer the report to the Executive for their consideration and information. The Audit Committee wished to commend the report and highlight the progress within it.

Councillor Keeling introduced the item, and he and Councillor Palethorpe thanked the Audit Committee for their work and the Council's Audit and Information Governance Manager for her work. Councillor Hook highlighted the Decision-Making Flowchart, available on the Council's website, which gave a clear understanding of the role of the Executive and decision making.

Councillor Buscombe asked for clarification regarding the Councillor Role Profiles. Officers responded that this was a result of the work of the Constitution Review Working Group and draft examples were shared with Members. The Role Profiles were due to be on the agenda for Full Council on Thursday 15th January 2026.

The Executive noted the report.

210. FOR INFORMATION - INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISIONS

None.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.31 am.

Chairman