

Overview and Scrutiny – Executive Member Bi-Annual Update - Neighbourhood Services

Councillor David Palethorpe – Deputy Leader

Services and legal responsibilities covered by Executive Member remit:	Neighbourhood Services covers a wide range of frontline and regulatory functions including Parking and Enforcement, Environmental Health, Licensing, Anti-Social Behaviour, Community Wardens, and the Council's Health and Safety responsibilities.
Strategic Plan objectives	<p>The focus this year has been on professionalising enforcement, improving resilience, and ensuring fairness and proportionality across all services.</p> <p>The service operates at the heart of the Council's Modern 25 transformation, seeking cost neutrality, efficiency, and legal robustness while maintaining public confidence</p>
Service Delivery updates (inc. budget monitoring, performance information, risks, customer feedback)	<p>Key Achievements and Updates</p> <p>Parking Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performance: Parking income remains strong, up 2.3% year-on-year, with end-of-year projections showing approximately £13,000 above budget on a £4–5 million income base.• Resilience and Compliance: Following an internal audit of the Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) process, an established technical officer post will now be filled, improving resilience and segregation of duties between issue, appeal, and tribunal functions.• PCN Backlog:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Historic backlog reduced and legacy errors removed.○ Over 500 cases written off in accordance with the Limitation Act (over six years old).○ Current recovery uses smaller, validated batches through the Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC).○ Recovery now monitored through a live Power BI dashboard.• Future Focus: Continue to strengthen governance, data quality, and legal compliance before any system automation.• Progress reports to Audit Committee <p>Residential Mobile Homes Charging Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Executive Approval (7 Oct 2025): Adopted a new risk-based licensing and charging framework.• Purpose: Ensure compliance with safety and management standards, while ending subsidy by the general taxpayer.

- **Structure:**
 - Risk adjustment: higher fees for poorly managed sites
- Expected Income: £13,000–£30,000 annually depending on site risk profiles.
- Public Message: Fair, proportionate, and transparent – charging site owners, not residents.

Counting House (Cash Handling Facility)

- Decision taken to retain the service in-house.
- Target: Cost-neutrality by 2026/27, through shared contracts with neighbouring authorities.
- Exploring expansion to include Torbay Council, which is closing its own cash facility.
- Model: Partner councils pay based on their cash volume, reducing TDC's own cost base.

ASDA Car Park Agreement

- Legal review confirmed that historic pricing clauses breach competition law (anti-competitive).
- A new compliant agreement is being negotiated to protect the Council's interests while ensuring lawful operation.
- Public communications emphasise that TDC is acting responsibly and lawfully.

Health & Safety Modernisation

- New lone-working technology (apps and “pebble” devices) now rolled out to higher-risk teams including Environmental Wardens and Parking Enforcement.
- Unified Health & Safety Management System (shared with Torbay) operational from October 2025, providing real-time dashboards and alerts.
- Review underway on extending bodycams to parking officers following increased aggression.
- A serious retail premises accident involving a 16-year-old employee remains under investigation; prosecution expected in 2026.

Licensing & Enforcement

- Taxi/Private Hire: Closing the “Exeter loophole” by introducing a local knowledge test and reviewing fees to ensure full cost recovery.
- Premises Licensing: Draft Licensing Act Policy currently out for consultation (closing 30 Nov).
- Pavement Licences: Enforcement has achieved full compliance in Newton Abbot and Teignmouth after targeted intervention.
- General Enforcement Policy: Consolidation of multiple legacy enforcement policies into a single overarching policy is underway for completion early 2026.

Environmental Protection & Community Wardens

- Capacity Improvement: 1.5 FTE fixed-term officers recruited; stabilising response times and service coverage.
- Clean Devon Grant: Funded mobile CCTV deployment at fly-tipping hotspots.
- Dog Control: PSPO renewed until 2028; enforcement and signage improved.
- Pest Control: New chargeable service introduced in 2024, reducing net costs to the Council.

Unauthorised Encampments & Community Safety

- Improved joint working with Devon & Cornwall Police after recent liaison with the Superintendent.
- Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) have proven effective, e.g., Coach Road case resolved swiftly.
- Clear commitment to support the police while ensuring proportionate enforcement.

Service Integration and Modernisation

- A structural integration of Planning Enforcement and Anti-Social Behaviour teams is underway to improve efficiency, resilience, and consistent case management.
- Draft General Enforcement Policy will underpin a “One Council” approach to proportionate enforcement and evidence-based decision-making.

Financial Context

Neighbourhood Services contributes significantly to income generation (primarily through Parking) and regulatory cost recovery.

- Total income (2024/25 outturn): ~£4.3 million
- Net cost to the Council continues to fall through Modern 25 savings and cost recovery.
- 2025/26 priorities: expand partnership income (Counting House, potential shared enforcement contracts).

Key Messages

1. Enforcement is becoming fair, consistent, and transparent across all service areas.
2. The Council is acting lawfully and resisting external pressures that could compromise compliance.
3. Modernisation is improving resilience and protecting staff and the public.
4. Collaboration with police and partners remains central to community confidence.
5. Income streams are stable and sustainable—not exploitative

<p>Upcoming decisions, how Overview and Scrutiny can support the delivery of the strategic plan or any other information relevant for the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Plan</p>	<p>Areas Overview & Scrutiny may wish to Consider Further</p> <p>Parking Enforcement Resilience and Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assess the impact of new staffing and segregation measures. ○ Review outcomes from the TEC recovery process and Power BI monitoring after six months. <p>Mobile Homes Licensing Impact Review (2026/27)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluate whether the new fee structure improves compliance and site conditions. ○ Consider feedback from site residents and owners on the fairness of the system. <p>Counting House Shared-Service Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scrutinise partnership arrangements with Exeter and potential expansion to Torbay. ○ Assess cost neutrality and risk management in a multi-authority setting. <p>Community Safety and Police Liaison</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review the Council's approach to unauthorised encampments, including data sharing, timescales, and communication with residents. <p>Health & Safety Modernisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Examine the rollout and effectiveness of lone-worker technology and data protection safeguards linked to bodycams. <p>Unified Enforcement Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scrutiny could test the policy's proportionality and consistency once drafted, particularly regarding low-level offences and equality impacts. <p>Licensing Fees and Economic Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore whether revised taxi and private hire fees strike the right balance between cost recovery and supporting local drivers. <p>Conclusion</p> <p>Neighbourhood Services under David Eaton and his team has made significant progress in modernising enforcement, strengthening governance, and improving resilience across multiple frontline functions. The focus for 2026 will be embedding consistency, developing shared-service opportunities, and ensuring that every aspect of enforcement is fair, lawful, and defensible.</p>
--	---