



Annual Report

Progress towards our Corporate Plan
2023-2027

June 2026

Foreword

We are pleased to share with our residents this year's annual report, highlighting another year of strong performance in delivering against our corporate plan.

Over the past year, we have remained focused on our overall vision and our five priorities, which are in place to ensure we are playing our part in making North Devon a place where people want to live, work and visit. This report sets out the progress we have made and demonstrates how our priorities are being translated into real outcomes across North Devon.

Our achievements are the result of a collective effort. We have worked closely with our partners, local organisations and communities to deliver improvements and respond to the challenges we face. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this work, and particularly our staff, whose commitment and professionalism continue to make a real difference.

We know there is more to do, and we are committed to continuing to build on this strong foundation—ensuring that our work remains responsive, sustainable, and centred on the needs of our residents.

We look forward to continuing this progress and delivering positive outcomes for North Devon in the year ahead.



Councillor David Clayton
Leader



Ken Miles
Chief Executive



Vision statement

“North Devon will be a sustainable, inclusive community; fostering prosperity and well being for all.”

Our priorities



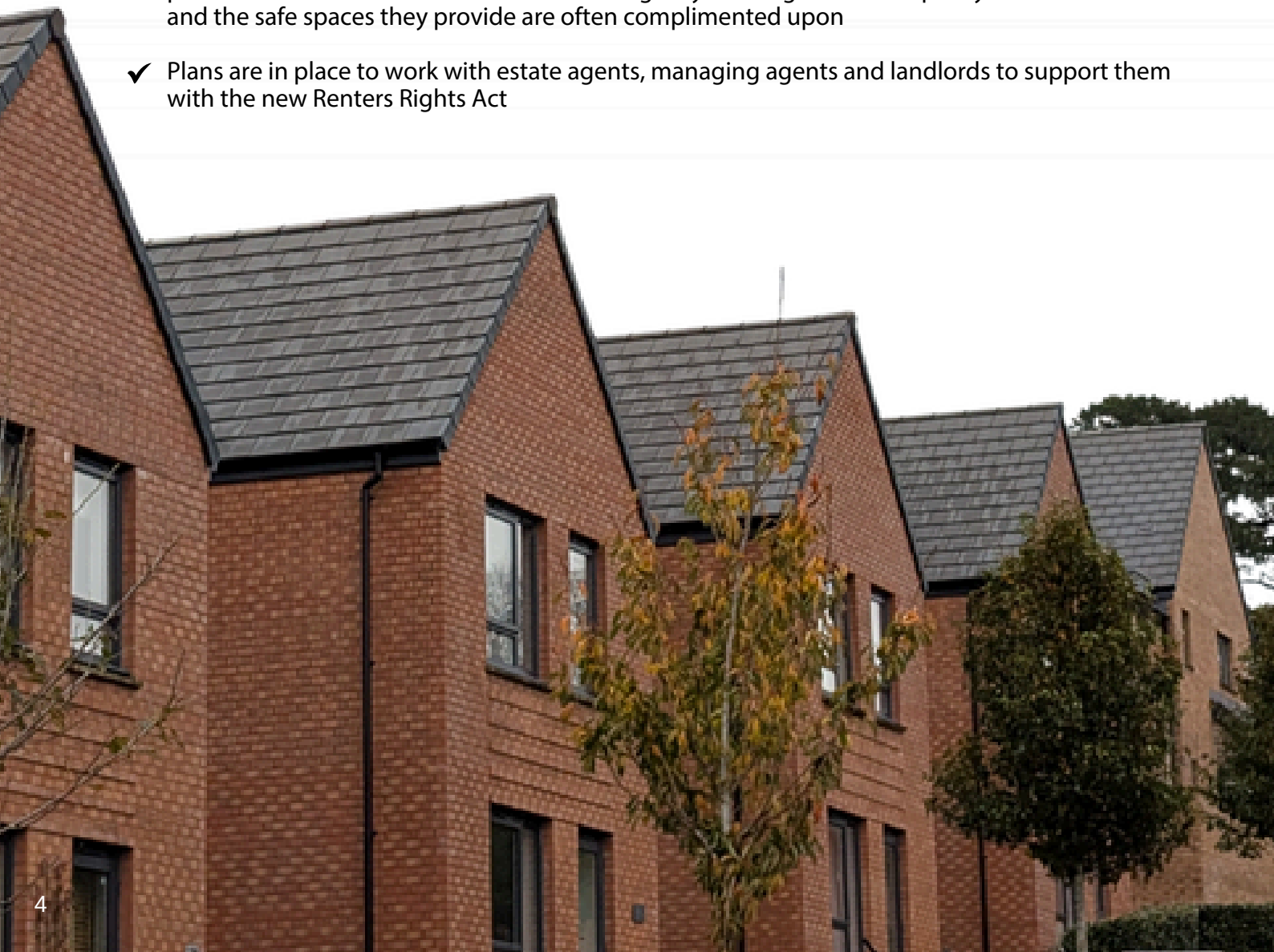
Housing

Overall Objective

We will strategically plan and deliver housing provision to try to meet local needs and to tackle the widening imbalance between supply and demand and increase the availability of decent, affordable and accessible accommodation for residents in need.

Delivery since January 2025

- ✓ Adopted a new housing strategy for North Devon with three themes: prevent homelessness, provide new housing supply and make homes healthy
- ✓ Became a Local Authority Registered Provider to directly provide social housing. This will be the first time we have held social housing stock since 2000. The revenue generated will be used to provide more secure and sustainable housing. Our first homes will be available from summer 2026 in Barnstaple, followed by properties in Ilfracombe (see below)
- ✓ Launched Ilfracombe Healthy Homes - our project to improve housing standards and security in the town, converting three empty buildings in the town centre to create 14 social housing homes that are of good quality, and energy efficient for the benefit of those in need of housing in the local community
- ✓ Made a £4 million commitment to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation to provide better solutions for those with emergency housing need. The quality of these homes and the safe spaces they provide are often complimented upon
- ✓ Plans are in place to work with estate agents, managing agents and landlords to support them with the new Renters Rights Act



Pride of place and prosperity

Overall Objective

To promote economic development, support the regeneration of our Places and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors by making North Devon a more attractive, vibrant and successful area.

Delivery since January 2025

- ✓ The regeneration of Seven Brethren continued with the demolition of the former North Devon Leisure Centre and the start of ground works for flood defences and housing
- ✓ The Barnstaple Market Quarter Project has continued with the opening of Barnstaple Central car park, as well as the refurbishment of 36 Boutport Street and the redevelopment of 37 Boutport Street, providing flexible workspaces and studio/retail space, as well as 10 affordable homes for rent
- ✓ Delivered new seafront public conveniences in Ilfracombe
- ✓ Improved wayfinding in Barnstaple
- ✓ Completed works to refurbish Bridge Buildings in Barnstaple which will see the historic listed building revitalised into a vibrant cultural hub with a new performance space for arts and cultural events, as well as an accessible terrace
- ✓ Opened the new Seven Brethren long stay car park
- ✓ Tarka Leisure Centre celebrated 1 million active visits in August 2025
- ✓ Developed A Place Story for Northern Devon with Northern Devon Futures, setting out why the region is ready for investment, partnership and growth



Climate and Environment

Overall Objective

To protect and enhance our natural environment and to promote sustainable practices, reduce carbon emissions, tackle climate change and protect biodiversity within the council's jurisdiction.

Delivery since January 2025

- ✓ Installed solar panels at Ilfracombe Pool and North Devon Crematorium
- ✓ Secured funding for energy efficiency improvements at Brynsworthy Environment Centre and The Landmark Theatre, with air source heat pumps to be installed
- ✓ We are adding more electric vehicles to our fleet, increasing from two to six this year
- ✓ Installed a new recycling baler and system, allowing us to better separate materials and recycle higher volumes of material.
- ✓ We have published our first Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report, which is available on our website
- ✓ Adopted a new air quality strategy, which sets out our approach to maintaining and improving air quality in the district



Financial security

Overall Objective

To reduce the reliance on core funding government grant whilst maintaining financial security by managing the council in a prudent manner, taking opportunities to increase income and by being risk aware and not risk adverse.

Delivery since January 2025

- ✓ A Local Government Association review of our governance found: "NDC understands effective governance and has in place the main elements of good governance, for example a risk register, an annual governance statement, codes of conduct". The recommendations raised have all been completed
- ✓ Strong external audit (Bishop Fleming) opinion on our 2024/25 statement of accounts and on our arrangements for financial sustainability and our governance arrangements. We are achieving value for money arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness
- ✓ Set a balanced budget for 2026/27 and have established a cross-party councillor working group to look ahead to financial challenges as part of delivering our Medium Term Financial Strategy
- ✓ Secured £1.2m of funding from Homes England in relation to our social housing projects to reduce our need for external borrowing



People matter

Overall Objective

To be seen as a vibrant, attractive employer by being an ambitious and caring council that develops and looks after its communities and delivers excellent customer focussed services that meet the needs of its residents.

Delivery since January 2025

- ✓ Opened the Town Centre Hub at Green Lanes Shopping Centre with expanded hours for face-to-face customer service assistance
- ✓ Introduced a virtual chatbot to assist customers navigating the North Devon Council website
- ✓ Extended the street marshal scheme in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe town centres for a further 12 months
- ✓ Launched Lets Talk North Devon for community engagement and consultations
- ✓ Developed a mentoring hub to provide guidance and support to our staff undertaking apprenticeships
- ✓ Delivered emergency planning sessions to ensure communities are prepared for incidents and emergencies
- ✓ Continue to operate the North Devon Community Lottery, which has now raised more than £81,000 for good causes across the district



Reviewing our core services

Our recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (page 9) found we are comparing favourably with similar councils in a number of areas.

In 2024/25 we asked residents 'how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with our service delivery?' and 80 per cent were either satisfied, or very satisfied, compared to 56 per cent of respondents nationally who were asked how satisfied they are with how their local council runs things.

Waste and recycling collections

Our recycling rate has been around 44-45 per cent on average over the last few years. We are currently ranked 109th out of 321 local authorities across the UK for 2024-25, and the South West has the highest average recycling rate nationally.

Our residents are throwing less waste away too, with an average of 420kg of black bag waste per household, below the median of 430kg.

To build on this we have established a councillor-led working group to identify and drive further improvements.

Housing benefit

We are performing better than neighbouring councils on the average time to taken to process housing benefit claims. It takes us an average of 6 days to process claims compared to 8 days across comparative authorities.

Planning applications

We are performing well when it comes to processing planning applications. In quarter two of 2025, we processed 96.6 per cent of planning applications for major developments on time, compared to an average of 89.9 per cent in our nearest neighbour group.

When it comes to non-major developments, we are processing 97.5 per cent of applications on time, compared to 88.7 per cent in our nearest neighbour group.





Peer Review

An independent review of North Devon Council has praised its staff and leadership, and its dedication to improving outcomes for residents.

We hosted a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge from 21 October to 24 October 2025 in which a team of experienced senior local government councillors and officers reviewed the workings of the council.

The challenge is designed to support local councils in improving their performance and governance. The peer review team spoke to more than 130 people including council staff, members and external stakeholders, as well as gathering information from meetings to produce feedback.

Overall messages and observations from the review were that the council is well led and has a strong pride of place, with staff and members who are loyal and enjoy working for the council and are ambitious in improving outcomes for residents.

It noted we manages our finances effectively and pragmatically and highlighted strong and productive partnerships with external stakeholders including the voluntary and community sector, the police, neighbouring authorities and local businesses.

It recommended we consider improving a perceived imbalance of leadership between officers and councillors, and provide greater clarity on the functions of lead members. Further recommendations include the implementation of a savings and efficiencies programme, and addressing officer capacity.

The full report sets out detailed feedback and is available to view on the our website.



Looking ahead to local government reorganisation

The structure of local government across England is set to change from May 2028 in a process called local government reorganisation. This means Devon's current 'two-tier' system with a county council and eight district councils will end.

Last year, councils across the county developed proposals for new unitary authorities which will provide all council services. North Devon Council was one of seven district councils in Devon to jointly submit a proposal which would result in three unitary authorities:

- **Exeter and Northern Devon** – a unitary authority with East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge
- **Torbay and Southern Devon** – a unitary authority with South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and West Devon
- **Plymouth City Council** remaining a standalone unitary authority.

The model is one of five proposals submitted by councils across Devon. The UK Government conducted a consultation on the proposals submitted by councils in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay between 5 February and 26 March 2026.

The Government will decide which of the proposals, if any, to take forward, and a decision is expected in July 2026.

Case Studies

Addressing affordable housing

In August 2025 we registered as a social housing provider. This means we can now provide housing for social rent, a category of housing that is in short supply in our communities.

This is a sign of our ambition in this area and it gives us a vehicle in which we can hold properties that we currently own, or are in the process of creating. This means around 24 homes will be held by us as a registered provider and let for social rent.

The first of these at 37 Boutport Street in Barnstaple, will soon be available, with 10 affordable homes for rent.

Elsewhere, Ilfracombe Healthy Homes is our project to improve housing standards and housing security in the town.

Healthy Homes will see us convert three empty buildings in the centre of Ilfracombe to create 14 homes that are of good quality, affordable and energy efficient for the benefit of those in need of housing in the local community.

As a registered housing provider, we will maintain control of the properties and the revenue generated will be used to expand the project and provide more secure and sustainable housing for Ilfracombe.

The project has been made possible with £2million from the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.



Photos: Theo Moye



The Household Support Fund and Crisis and Resilience Fund

We have continued to provide rapid short-term financial support to those who need it with the Household Support Fund and the new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF).

Funded through the Department of Work and Pensions, the CRF is a national programme providing funding to local authorities to help residents who are experiencing financial crisis, while also strengthening long-term financial resilience across communities.

Launched in April 2026, residents are able to receive support through several schemes under the CRF. North Devon Council will deliver support in the following key areas:

- crisis payments
- housing payments
- resilience services
- oil/LPG heating payments

It replaces the Household Support Fund, of which we administered seven schemes between 2021 and 2026, dispensing more than £2million to those most in need.



Ilfracombe Poverty Truth Commission

Poverty Truth Ilfracombe seeks to discover the answer to the question, 'what if people who struggled against poverty were involved in making decisions about tackling poverty?'

The commissioners comprise two groups of people. Half of them are people with a lived experience of the struggle against poverty, while the other half are senior leaders from authorities, including North Devon Council. Over 12 months we have been working collectively to understand the nature of poverty, the underlying issues that create it and exploring creative ways to address them.

The commission has helped us shape our housing provision in Ilfracombe (see page 11). Community commissioners visited the properties at Oxford Grove and the High Street and shared their lived experiences to co-create a retro-fit specification for the homes. We will also be producing a Landlord Charter to strengthen housing standards in the private rented sector.

Being part of the Poverty Truth Commission has also strengthened our working with partners across health, schools, housing, police and voluntary organisations, creating a platform for what we hope will be long term change.