

WHPC Meeting 7th January 2025

Agenda Item 25/014

Public Consultations

1. **Purpose:** To consider the WHPC response, if any, to current public consultations:
2. **EDDC: Tree, Hedge & Woodland Strategy** (Final draft)

East Devon District Council (EDDC) is working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2040, and to help achieve this, has prepared a district-wide Tree, Hedge & Woodland Strategy. WHPC responded to an earlier consultation on the draft strategy (August 2024).

EDDC invite further comments on the final revised strategy:

- [The final draft and consultation is available on the EDDC website](#)
- Deadline 5pm 31st January 2025

3. **Government: Local Audit Reform**

As part of its devolution plan, the Government is looking to transform the local audit system, 'to give greater clarity on the purpose of audit and accounts, and ensure they take centre stage in local scrutiny'. The government seeks to radically simplify the system, bringing as many audit functions as possible into one body, and is now engaging with the sector on how to do this, subject to legislation.

Local bodies within the framework and must publish audits include:

- Local authorities, including Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), National Park Authorities and transport authorities.
- Smaller authorities, including town, parish, community and neighbourhood councils, parish meetings, internal drainage boards, Charter Trustees, Port Authorities and Conservators. These bodies publish Annual Governance and Accountability Returns under a simplified framework. Many aspects of the local audit and accounting system do not apply to these smaller bodies or apply in a modified form.
- National Health Service (NHS) bodies. Parts of the framework apply, including audit firms' services and oversight by the NAO, FRC and ICAEW. Parts of the framework do not apply, such as an appointing body.

The consultation is focussed, in the first instance, on addressing the backlog and reforming the system of audit for the 317 district, county and unitary authorities in England.

- The consultation is available on the GOV.UK website: [Local audit reform: a strategy for overhauling the local audit system in England](#)
- Deadline for responses 29 January 2025.

4. For Decision

Councillors are invited to decide the Parish Council's response, if any to the consultations.

Anne Oliver, Parish Clerk

30th December 2024