

# VERITA

**Independent investigation into the actions of EDDC following  
the allegations and criminal charges against John Humphreys**

A supplementary report for

East Devon District Council

June 2023

Authors:  
Nicola Salmon  
David Scott

© Verita 2023

Verita is an independent consultancy that specialises in conducting and managing investigations, reviews and inquiries for regulated organisations.

This report has been written for East Devon District Council and may not be used, published or reproduced in any way without their express written permission.

Verita  
338 City Road  
London EC1V 2PY

Telephone 020 7494 5670

E-mail [enquiries@verita.net](mailto:enquiries@verita.net)  
Website [www.verita.net](http://www.verita.net)

## **Contents**

<b>1. Background and scope</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Evidence gathered</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3. Findings and conclusions</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Appendix A Message to EDDC Members from Chair of Council, 22 March 2023</b>	<b>22</b>

# 1. Background and scope

## Introduction

1. This report sets out Verita's additional findings and conclusions from the second phase of work we carried out in the independent investigation commissioned by East Devon District Council (EDDC).
2. It should be read in conjunction with our earlier report. That report was completed on the basis of all the information that was available to Verita in the course of the first phase of the investigation.
3. We have reviewed our recommendations from the first report, but we propose no changes to them.
4. At the request of the commissioning group, we have removed the names of EDDC officers from the first report and used their job titles instead.

## Background

5. On 15 March 2023 EDDC published Verita's report of the investigation into the actions of EDDC following the allegations and criminal charges against John Humphreys. The report was due to be presented to a Full Council meeting scheduled for 23 March.
6. On 21 March, Devon & Cornwall Police contacted the Director of Finance (DF) of EDDC. The DF is a member of the investigation commissioning group. He was told by the Police about new information that appeared to cast doubt on the accuracy of evidence that had been gathered in our investigation.
7. The new information appears in the minutes of a Devon County Council LADO MAS meeting on 9 March 2016. Although Verita had seen a published independent report commissioned by DCC about these meetings, Verita had not seen the minutes themselves before completing our first report.

8. Verita advised the commissioning group that the new information, if validated, was likely to have significant implications for the findings and conclusions set out in our report. We considered that the new information needed further evaluation. As a result, the commissioning group asked Verita to re-start the investigation.

9. EDDC's then Chair of Council (who was a member of the commissioning group) wrote to Council Members (copied to officers) on 22 March. He advised them of these developments and postponed the Full Council meeting. A copy of the text of this message appears at Appendix A.

### **The new information**

10. In 2016 Devon County Council (DCC) held three meetings described as LADO MAS meetings. The meetings involved the DCC Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Devon & Cornwall Police (the Police) and senior officers from DCC. The former Monitoring Officer of EDDC (referred to hereafter as the fMO) attended all those meetings.

11. The meeting on 9 March 2016 was the first in this series and was described as the "Initial Strategy Meeting: Managing Allegations Against Adults Working with Children".

12. Under a section titled "General discussion", the minutes of the meeting recorded that:

*"The Chief of East Devon District Council had been alerted to the situation."*

13. This record appeared to contradict the evidence given by the fMO and the CEO of EDDC in our investigation.

### **Our approach to the second phase of the investigation**

14. On 23 March 2023 DCC forwarded a copy of the minutes of the March 2016 LADO MAS meetings to the DF of EDDC, who passed them on to Verita that day. As per further requests, on 12 April 2023 and 24 April 2023, DCC shared the minutes of other LADO MAS meetings in

April and November 2016 relating to Humphreys. DCC also forwarded details of a referral from the NSPCC in 2014.

15. We accepted receipt of these documents on the explicit understanding that they remained strictly confidential and would only be used by Verita for the specific purposes of our investigation.

16. Our key priority was to validate any new information before asking further questions of the fMO, the CEO and DCC. We also learned from the Police that the fMO had exchanged correspondence with them about Humphreys outside the DCC meetings. We sought to validate this information in our enquiries.

17. All our questions were dealt with in correspondence at the request of the participants. We repeated our offers to the fMO and CEO to be interviewed in person, but they chose to reply in writing.

18. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Arnott, requested an interview with the investigation team as he believed he had relevant information to give to Verita. We met with Cllr Arnott on 29 March 2023.

### **Our aims**

19. It was essential for us to determine if the statement contained in one line of the 9 March 2016 DCC minutes was accurate, consistent, and reliable evidence. We sought to discover whose words the line in the minute were, and to confirm to whom the words referred.

20. We also aimed to discover and evaluate the content of the separate correspondence between the fMO and the Police that followed these meetings.

21. Finally, we sought to assess what this evidence meant for the earlier testimony of the CEO and the fMO, and to decide if our evaluation of all the evidence would point us to any different findings or conclusions in the investigation.

## Chronology and delays to the investigation process

22. The second phase of this investigation was more protracted than Verita had expected it to be.

23. We worked closely with the commissioning group to deliver a resolution to this phase of the investigation. The group met 13 times in the 13 weeks between receiving the new information and the production of this report. We thank them for their efforts to facilitate progress and to resolve the barriers we faced.

24. We set out below a chronology of the key dates and events since 15 March 2023.

15 March	EDDC publishes the agenda for a Full Council meeting on 23 March to discuss the Verita report.
21 March	Devon & Cornwall Police (the Police) contact EDDC's Director of Finance (DF) to advise him of new information relevant to the investigation.
22 March	Cllr Ian Thomas (then Chair of EDDC) writes to Council Members to advise them of the receipt of this new information and postpones the Council meeting.
22 March	Commissioning group meets and asks Verita to re-open the investigation.
22 March	The Police confirm they will respond to any written request for information from Verita.
23 March	DF advises Verita that he has asked EDDC staff to search Council records and databases for DCC's minutes of three LADO MAS meetings in 2016 and any correspondence relating to Humphreys.
23 March	DF receives minutes of the 9 March 2016 LADO MAS meeting from Devon County Council (DCC) and forwards them to the commissioning group and to Verita.
27 March	Verita writes to the Police to ask questions about the new information in the DCC minutes, and about other matters relevant to the investigation.
27 March	Cllr Arnott, Leader of the Council, writes to the commissioning group advising them he has learned from two parties about information disclosed to them by the Police.

28 March	The DF writes to Cllr Arnott on behalf of the commissioning group and advises him to contact Verita to allow us to consider any information he has learned.
29 March	Verita interviews Cllr Arnott via Zoom.
6 April	Verita writes to the DF to confirm that due to the unexpected additional work in reopening the investigation, the original budget had now been exceeded. The DF confirms to Verita that the investigation should continue and asks to be kept informed of expected additional costs.
12 April	The DF receives from DCC copies of a NSPCC referral made to DCC in April 2014 and the minutes of a LADO MAS meeting held on 28 April 2016 and forwards them to Verita and the commissioning group.
12 April	Verita writes to the Police urging a response to the questions posed on 27 March.
12 April	The Police write to Verita with answers to the questions.
17 April	Verita sends a supplementary question to the Police.
18 April	Cllr Thomas notifies the commissioning group and Verita that he will step down from the group on 4 May 2023 as he is not seeking re-election as a district councillor. He confirmed that his legal role until the new Chair was elected on 24 May would primarily relate to civic functions and the Annual Council.
21 April	DCC sends to the DF the minutes of a LADO MAS meeting held on 28 November 2016.
22 April	EDDC's interim MO confirms to the DF that a search of the fMO's emails found no correspondence or minutes of DCC meetings, nor any correspondence between the fMO and the Police. Only one potentially relevant email from the fMO is found. It refers to three DCC meetings having taken place in 2016.
24 April	The DF forwards the DCC minutes to the commissioning group and to Verita.
25 April	The Police reply to Verita and advise us that they would need confirmation of consent from the fMO to provide emails he had exchanged with the Police in 2016.
26 April	Verita writes to the fMO and to the CEO posing questions relevant to the investigation.

27 April	The CEO responds to Verita indicating that he would reply after the local elections on 4 May. The CEO tells Verita that he is waiting on a report from the Council's external auditors into concerns he had raised about the procurement process the Council adopted with regards to the Verita investigation. The CEO advised Verita that he reserves the right to view this report before formally responding.
1 May	The fMO writes to Verita enclosing responses to our questions.
5 May	Verita writes to the commissioning group to seek advice on how to proceed in light of the fMO's declining to give permission to access his correspondence with the Police.
10 May	Verita writes to the commissioning group explaining the background to the request to see this correspondence.
11 May	Verita writes to the MO of DCC to ask questions relevant to the investigation.
15 May	The DF advises the commissioning group and Verita that EDDC's MO had contacted the Police direct to seek copies of the fMO's correspondence with them.
17 May	Verita writes to the CEO to ask for his responses to the questions posed on 11 May.
19 May	The CEO responds to Verita saying that the commissioning group has exceeded the budget authorised by Council and that the DF needs to get authority to increase the budget to fund the additional Verita work.
22 May	The CEO writes to Verita advising us that he needs to discuss these matters with the DF on his return from holiday on 30 May. He also cites concerns about the proposed handling of recommendations from our original report.
22 May	Verita writes to the CEO to confirm that no-one had advised us that the work should be paused, and again seeking to encourage his response to the original questions.
22 May	Verita writes again to the MO of DCC to prompt a reply to the questions by 5pm on 26 May.
25 May	The CEO writes to us setting out his answers but asks us to <i>"Please note however that Verita do not have my permission to use, communicate or otherwise publish this information until such time as my Council has received and considered a report from its external auditors, Grant</i>

	<i>Thornton, into concerns that I raised with them about the Commissioning Group.”</i>
25 May	EDDC’s MO confirms that newly appointed Chair of Council, Cllr Eleanor Rylance was to join the commissioning group, replacing its former Chair, Cllr Ian Thomas.
1 June	Verita writes to the DF to update him on responses Verita had received from the CEO since 26 April. Verita advises the DF that it appears the CEO is seeking to restrict our use of his evidence in the investigation.
1 June	Verita writes to the DF to ask for help in encouraging a reply from DCC to questions that had been sent to its MO on 11 May.
9 June	The DF confirms to the commissioning group and Verita that the MO has written to the Police and is arranging a meeting with the fMO.
12 June	The DF writes to Verita to advise that, at a meeting on 9 June, the fMO had forwarded two items of correspondence to the MO of EDDC and giving consent for Verita to confirm this correspondence directly with the Police.
12 June	Cllr Arnott writes to the commissioning group to suggest that Verita be asked to deliver its updated report as a matter of urgency, and that a date should be identified for a debate on the report at Full Council.
12 June	The commissioning group asks Verita to complete the report by 23 June.
13 June	Cllr Rylance writes to the Chair of DCC to request responses to Verita’s questions.
16 June	The DF writes to Verita, enclosing the correspondence released by the Police.
21 June	Cllr Rylance shared the Chair of DCC’s response with Verita that indicates that the matter had been raised with the Chief Executive of DCC. Cllr Rylance requested that Verita continue to finalise its report by 23 June 2023 as agreed, irrespective of whether DCC responds.
23 June	Verita’s draft supplementary report on the investigation is sent to the commissioning group.
26 June	Verita meets the commissioning group to begin the factual accuracy checking process for the report
27/28 June	At the request of the commissioning group Cllr Rylance corresponds with the CEO giving him a final opportunity to allow Verita to use his evidence in the report

28 June	The CEO writes to Verita giving permission for his answers to our questions to be used in the report.
28 June	Following representations made by Cllr Rylance to the Chair of DCC, the MO of DCC writes to Verita providing answers to the questions we posed on 11 May
30 June	Verita's final supplementary report is sent to the commissioning group.

## 2. Evidence gathered

### Validating the evidence

25. In this section we set out the questions we asked of the organisations and people we contacted about the new information from the minutes of the meetings and about other matters referred to in the minutes and in correspondence. Where our questions were answered, we set out the replies.

26. Alongside these enquiries we also asked the DF of EDDC to ascertain if any records of the DCC meetings, or any correspondence about them remained in the Council's information systems. None was discovered. No records were found of correspondence between the fMO and the Police.

27. Verita sought to corroborate and validate the information we received, using four key sources of evidence.

- Devon & Cornwall Police (the Police)
- Former MO of EDDC (the fMO)
- CEO of EDDC (the CEO)
- DCC officers

### Questions and answers: Devon and Cornwall Police

28. We wrote to Devon and Cornwall Police to seek any further background to the statement recorded about "*The Chief of East Devon District Council*" in the minutes of the DCC LADO MAS meeting on 9 March 2016.

29. We asked the Police if they could confirm that the statement in those minutes referred to the CEO of EDDC. We asked, if it did, when he had been alerted, who had alerted him and whether there was any record that he was alerted.

30. The Police advised us that they were unable to provide any further information to that which is outlined in the minutes. They said that the minutes:

*“Provide the official and most accurate written record of the conversations that took place within these meetings”.*

31. We asked if the Police could confirm the advice or instructions that they had given to attendees at these meetings about maintaining confidentiality. The Police told us that, given the length of time since the LADO MAS meetings took place, they could not categorically confirm the terms of the advice or instructions given to attendees.

32. We asked the Police to share with us details of the correspondence that the fMO had shared with them following the November 2016 LADO MAS meeting.

33. The Police confirmed that they had retained this correspondence. They asked if it was available to Verita via EDDC’s own record-keeping, or whether we had permission from the fMO to access his messages during this correspondence. We pursued these matters with the fMO and with the DF of EDDC, and report on them below.

34. We asked the Police if they could confirm what bail conditions were imposed on Humphreys, and whether attendees at the DCC LAD/MAS meetings were advised of them. They pointed to the minutes of the meeting on 28 November 2016 that refer to the fact that Mr Humphreys was on bail and had conditions in place but observed the minutes do not clearly explain what the bail conditions were.

35. The Police confirmed that Humphreys had been bailed, following his arrest on 11 May 2016. The bail conditions were that he should not have contact with the victims of the offences under investigation and that he should not have unsupervised contact with any person under the age of 18 years.

36. The Police advised us that these bail conditions ceased when Humphreys was reported for summons, on 24 January 2017, for the offences under investigation.

37. We subsequently asked the Police about a record from the 18 April 2016 DCC minutes that the Police had taken an action to check with the Barring Service if the fMO could inform Mr Humphreys that he was aware of the latter’s arrest.

38. The Police advised us that they had written to the fMO on 5 May 2016 confirming that he “*should NOT disclose anything to Mr Humphreys at this time*”. That day the fMO emailed the Police and, in response, the investigating officer wrote:

*“Just to clarify, you should not approach Mr Humphreys at all about this matter, unless the advice I receive says otherwise. I thought I had better clarify so that the position is clear.”*

39. The Police reported a further exchange with the fMO on 30 November 2016 after they had sought advice from the Disclosure and Barring Unit in May 2016. The Police confirmed that they had not consulted the Barring Service about Mr Humphreys as he had not made a DBS application.

40. The action point for the Police recorded in the minutes of the 28 November 2016 was to be carried forward to a meeting scheduled for January 2017, but the Police told us they had no record that any further LADO MAS meetings were held.

#### **Questions and answers: the former Monitoring Officer**

41. We asked the fMO if he had received a copy of the DCC minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2016. He told us that he does not have a copy of the minutes and that he did not recall ever receiving them.

42. The fMO had previously told us that:

*“The documentation was all marked as being ‘strictly confidential’ and sent via secure email services.”*

43. He could not recall any discussion at the meeting of the statement in the minutes that “*The Chief of East Devon District Council had been alerted to the situation.*” He could not say who had made that statement, or who had alerted “The Chief”. The fMO told us that he did not share this information with the CEO, or anyone else at EDDC.

44. We asked the fMO about a statement recorded in the minutes of a DCC meeting on 28 April 2016 that read, “*Whilst on bail Mr Humphreys would be permitted to continue his*

*role of East Devon District Councillor.*” He told us that this was not a decision, but simply a statement reflecting the legal position. He added that the same minutes went on to record that the DCC Solicitor raised concerns about Humphreys remaining in his role but acknowledged that he could not be precluded as a matter of law.

45. We asked the fMO why, according to the minutes of that meeting, that *“he wanted Mr Humphreys to know that he was aware of his arrest”* and that *“the police would clarify with the Barring Service whether [the fMO] can inform Mr Humphreys that he was aware of his arrest and police investigation, and update [him].”*

46. The fMO replied:

*“This does not accurately reflect the position. I was not seeking to proactively tell Humphreys. The reason I asked this question was to understand whether I was able to reference it IF Humphreys were to contact me in my capacity as Monitoring Officer. Councillors routinely ask Monitoring Officers questions around matters ‘relevant’ to the discharge of official duties. I was concerned that he might come and try and talk to me about the circumstances on a ‘no names’ or ‘hypothetical’ basis, effectively seeking legal advice and I wanted to be clear on what position I should uphold. As I had been informed strictly not to discuss this matter, I wanted to be clear on my position in respect of any direct contact from Humphreys.”*

47. The fMO confirmed that the Police maintained with him their advice that he should not say anything at all to Humphreys.

48. We asked the fMO to share with us the correspondence he exchanged with the Police following the DCC LADO MAS meeting on 28 November 2016. We told him that the Police would only release his contributions to the correspondence with his consent. We explained to the fMO that we had consulted East Devon District Council about this matter and that their view was that this correspondence was “official”, in that it was conducted by the fMO as a Council employee holding a particular office, and not in a personal capacity.

49. The fMO told us:

*“I do not give my consent to the Police releasing this information to you or anyone else, including East Devon District Council.”*

50. He declined to forward the correspondence to Verita himself.

51. Following our correspondence with the fMO we sought further guidance from the commissioning group about how to proceed.

52. The current MO of EDDC also engaged with the fMO to seek his permission to share the correspondence he had undertaken with the Police. The MO met the fMO on 9 June when he agreed that EDDC could, with his permission, request copies of this correspondence from the Police. The MO approached the Police and, on 16 June we received the messages that the fMO had shared with them.

53. Alongside the efforts to secure the fMO's permission to access this correspondence, the DF also asked EDDC staff to conduct a comprehensive search of EDDC systems and records to see if any records were retained of the minutes of DCC meeting or fMO correspondence with the Police with regards to Humphreys. No records were found.

#### **Questions and answers: the Chief Executive Officer of EDDC**

54. On 26 April we wrote to the CEO to ask him a series of questions about the new information we had received that indicated that he had been alerted in 2016 to the situation concerning Humphreys.

55. We asked if he had, in fact, been alerted to the matters concerning Humphreys and, if so, who had alerted him. We asked if he had ever seen a copy of these minutes or if he was aware that this statement had been recorded.

56. Noting that the CEO was heavily involved in the local elections, we asked for a response by 2 May 2023.

57. The CEO wrote to Verita on 27 April confirming that he did not think it appropriate to respond formally before the elections. The CEO also advised us that he reserved the right, before formally responding, to view:

*“A report from the Council’s external auditors (Grant Thornton) into my concerns about the procurement process the Council adopted with regard to this investigation.”*

58. On 17 May we wrote to the CEO to prompt his reply to our questions. He wrote on 19 May saying:

*“I am able to respond but I now understand from [the DF] that the Commissioning Group has exceeded the budget authorised by Council so he needs to get authority for a bigger budget so that more work can be undertaken.”*

59. Following further correspondence between Verita and the CEO he wrote to us on 25 May. In this message the CEO answered the questions we had first put to him on 26 April. However, he also wrote:

*“Verita do not have my permission to use, communicate or otherwise publish this information until such time as my Council has received and considered a report from its external auditors, Grant Thornton, into concerns that I raised with them about the Commissioning Group. This report is in the final stages of preparation, and I understand that it should be received in either the second or third week of June.”*

60. We reported this development to the commissioning group and were asked to complete the supplementary report by 23 June. Following receipt of the report the group met Verita on 26 June to begin the process of fact-checking the draft. The commissioning group decided to offer the CEO a final opportunity to include his evidence in the report.

61. Cllr Rylance exchanged correspondence with the CEO on 27 and 28 June and, later on 28 June, the CEO wrote to Verita to confirm that we could use his answers to our questions in the report.

62. On 26 April we wrote to the CEO and advised him that a statement recorded in the minutes of a Devon County Council LADO MAS meeting on 9 March 2016 appeared to contradict statements he had previously made about this matter. The statement read, “The Chief of East Devon District Council had been alerted to the situation.”

63. Our questions and the CEO’s answers were as follows:

*“Q. Were you aware that this had been recorded in these minutes?”*

*A. No*

*Q. Have you ever seen a copy of these minutes?”*

*A. No*

*Q. Were you alerted to the situation before 9 March 2016?”*

*A. No. I have looked back at my calendar and emails and can find nothing that triggers any recollection. I have also now seen the confidential originating LADO referral from the Police in December 2015, and I can certainly say that I knew nothing of the details that are referred to in it.*

*Q. If so, who alerted you? What action did you take?”*

*A. N/A*

*Q. If not, can you explain why this record was made?”*

*A. No. My observations are the ones I’ve made before, based on the QC’s advice the Council received; at all relevant times, this was a confidential criminal investigation and however distasteful it maybe from time to time an individual is presumed innocent until proven guilty.”*

#### **Questions and answers: DCC**

**64.** On 11 May 2023 we wrote to the Monitoring Officer of DCC and asked about the LADO MAS meetings that took place under DCC’s management in March, April, and November 2016.

**65.** We reassured the DCC MO that our investigation was only concerned with the actions of EDDC.

**66.** Despite our prompting the DCC MO we received no acknowledgement or response to these questions by the time we sent our draft report to the commissioning group on 23 June. Cllr Rylance contacted the Chair of DCC to encourage a response and, on 28 June, the MO replied. Our questions and the DCC MO’s answers are set out below.

**67.** We asked if minutes of all the meetings were sent to the EDDC fMO and other attendees. The MO replied:

*“Yes, as far as I can see from reasonable enquiries”.*

68. The MO reported that the LADO who dealt with these matters at the time was no longer employed at DCC. The DCC MO could not definitively confirm how and to whom the minutes were provided, but told us that:

*“They are usually provided by secure e-mail.”*

69. We asked if any amendments to those minutes had been submitted or agreed afterwards. The DCC MO could not confirm that any such changes had been made.

70. We asked if there was any other record of who had, reportedly, alerted “the Chief of EDDC” to the situation with Humphreys. The DCC MO replied:

*“I am unable to answer this query.”*

71. Three DCC officers had attended the meetings and we asked if those still employed would be prepared to help the Verita investigation. The DCC MO told us that she did not believe that two of the individuals remain in DCC’s employment. She confirmed that a third officer was no longer in the Council’s employment, and she was unable to provide their contact details.

#### **Other clarifications**

72. We asked the DF if “The Chief of East Devon District Council” could refer to any other position in EDDC at the time and whether there was or is any other role that had the word “Chief” in its title. He responded:

*“Not to my knowledge in terms of a job title.”*

### 3. Findings and conclusions

#### Findings

73. We set out below the key findings of this phase of the investigation.

F1 The minutes of DCC's LADO MAS meeting of 9 March 2016 record that *"The Chief of East Devon District Council had been made aware of the situation"*.

F2 The fMO has denied that he received a copy of those minutes and maintains that he is unaware of the statement made in them about "The Chief". Although the minutes of the meetings indicate that they were to be sent to those attending, we have been unable to get definitive confirmation from DCC that the minutes of the 9 March 2016 meeting were sent to the fMO.

F3 Having seen the correspondence between the fMO and the Police we find that it reinforces our view that the fMO was under strict instructions from the Police not to let Humphreys know that he was aware of the circumstances.

F4 Whatever his reasons for asking how he should engage, if at all, with Humphreys, our view is that he did not and this was consistent with Police advice, and with the evidence he had already given us.

F5 The statement in the minutes of the DCC LADO MAS meeting on 9 March 2016 is not attributed to any person or organisation. We found no-one who was able to substantiate or corroborate the statement. We do not know which person or organisation made the statement.

F6 The CEO, after delaying the release to Verita of his answers to our questions, has denied any knowledge of this statement.

F7 We were unable to contact the three former DCC officers who attended the meeting as they had left the Council.

**F8** Our attempts to validate the information were reliant on DCC, the Police and EDDC holding comprehensive contemporaneous records. In the case of DCC and EDDC we found shortcomings in the retention of important information.

**F9** We found no reliable evidence, other than this statement, to confirm that the CEO of EDDC had been made aware of any developments in respect of Humphreys.

## **Conclusions**

**74.** We consider that the record in the minutes of the meeting on 9 March 2016 cast doubt on the evidence given by the fMO and the CEO in the course of our original investigation.

**75.** The statement was, however, recorded in the formal minutes of a LADO MAS meeting, and we have no evidence that it was subsequently amended. In our view it is more likely than not, on the balance of probabilities, that the comment was made in the course of that meeting.

**76.** Although the precise wording of the statement may be open to misinterpretation, we conclude that the reference to “The Chief” could only mean the CEO of EDDC.

**77.** However, because we have been unable to corroborate this statement, we conclude that it does not constitute sufficiently reliable evidence that the CEO of EDDC was aware of the Humphreys situation.

## **Message to EDDC Members from Ian Thomas, Chair of Council, 22 March 2023**

Dear Colleagues,

At its meeting of 28th September 2022, Full Council resolved to appoint Verita to undertake a review of the role of East Devon District Council into matters associated with case and conviction of John Humphreys.

Council further appointed a Commissioning Group, comprising Simon Davey, Cllrs Jess Bailey, Sarah Jackson and myself, as Chair of the Council, to manage the relationship with Verita during preparation of their report.

The Final Report from Verita, published on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023, was due to be presented to Council tomorrow (23<sup>rd</sup> March) with the opportunity for Members to directly ask questions on the report, of the Verita team.

Within the last 24hrs, the Commissioning Group has received further information which, if accurate, it believes has the potential to materially affect some elements of the Verita Report. Accordingly, we have immediately met with Verita to seek their view.

Verita is of the view that the nature of this material does have the potential to stimulate such a review of their report.

Therefore, as Chair of the Council, with the support other members of the Commissioning Group, I do not believe it appropriate we go ahead with the meeting tomorrow.

Once new material has been validated, assessed and properly considered, I will look to re-convene a meeting to consider the Verita Report at the earliest opportunity.

In the interim, I apologise to colleagues for the short notice of this postponement.