

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Tuesday, 6 November 2018 - 2.00 pm

PRESENT Councillor P Watson (Chair)
 Councillors K James, R Boughton, T Inch, T Johns (substitute for
 C Cottle-Hunkin), M Langmead, P Pennington and C Simmons

 Mr Dengate, Mr Harper

ALSO PRESENT S Hearse - Strategic Manager (Resources)
 D Heyes - Finance Manager
 S Kearney - Planning & Economy Manager
 M Richards - Democratic Services Officer
 S Mounce - Council Tax Team Leader
 S Toon - Customer Support Manager
 H Roper - Service Improvement Officer

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cottle-Hunkin and Councillor Parker.

37. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER

It was proposed by Councillor Langmead, seconded by Councillor Pennington and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 6, Abstentions 4)

38. ACTION LIST

The action list was reviewed.

Minute 32 – Affordable Housing

A verbal update on the Torrington Dairy site was given:

- The Planning & Economy Manager had met with the developer and his agent
- Talks were to be held with DCC about Highbridge House
- Discussions had been held with Torridge Vale in relation to them moving.

Minute 31 – Council Discretionary Discount

It was noted that the action against Minute 31 – Council Tax Discretionary Discount had been completed. However, the outcome was still awaited.

39. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded that declarations of interest should be made as and when the specific agenda item to which they related was under discussion.

40. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

The Chair advised the Committee of the resignation of the Non-elected Member, Mr Rice.

41. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

42. QBR Q2

The Finance Manager guided Members through the QBR highlighting major variances and identifying reserves which could be utilised to mitigate the forecast overspend.

Discussion points included:

- staffing and agency costs
- waste and recycling
- interest rates

Supplementary questions were answered as follows:

Homelessness

The correlation between homelessness and planning had been considered when drawing up the Local Plan but the calculations had been based on housing need. The Planning & Economy will investigate how this will be monitored in future and report back.

The Customer Services Manager added that new legislation and Universal Credit had impacted on the homelessness figures, which was unique to this year but it was not possible to forecast future trends.

The Strategic Manager (Resources) referred to a study carried out by the District Council Network which he will circulate.

If possible, a breakdown of the gender divide and age in respect of single people will be circulated by the Customer Services Manager.

Harbour Income

A review of fees and charges is pending.

Very few ships have used the harbour this year and this something the new pilot is examining.

Economic Strategy

There will be an inward investment strategy.

An economic strategy is currently in place for 2014 – 2020 but some information is out of date.

Measures of Income

There are 2 measures – earnings by household and earnings by workplace.

Household earnings were no where near the bottom of the league table but earnings by work were in the lower part of the table.

43. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT TASK & FINISH GROUP AND EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

The Committee was informed about the new legislation surrounding long term empty properties which will come into force on 1 April 2019 and was asked to consider the proposals being put forward by the bill:

- 2019 - a maximum additional premium of 100%
- 2020 - properties empty between 2 and 5 years – 100%
 - Properties empty for over 5 years – 200%
- 2021 - properties empty between 2 and 5 years – 100%
 - properties empty for over 5 years – 200%
 - properties empty for over 10 years – 300%

Potential revenue between 2019 and 2021 could be £102,551.

Comparative discount figures currently applied by other Devon districts were provided.

It was agreed a Task & Finish Group be set up urgently. Councillors Langmead, Watson, T Inch and Mr Harper will sit on the working group.

Councillor James declared an interest as he owns rental property.

Any changes would need to be implemented by 31 March.

The Strategic Manager (Resources) will check the constitution to see whether the recommendations of the Committee will need to go to Full Council or Community & Resources.

44. EXTERNAL GRANTS

At its last meeting, the Task & Finish Group, had looked at examples of how other councils run match funding grant schemes and crowd funding. It was hoped a proposal would be ready for implementation in the 2020/2021 financial year.

Representation on the Task & Finish Group from the External Overview & Scrutiny should be sought at the next meeting of the External Overview & Scrutiny Group.

45. GDPR UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)

The Strategic Manager (Resources) updated the Committee as follows:

- Work with the Devon Audit Partnership was ongoing.
- New forms have been added.
- The Information Asset Register has been added to.
- Retention schedules continued to be worked on but high risk areas had been completed.
- Awareness training has been rolled out.
- Online training has been 60% completed and the leader has been provided with a list of those Councillors who have completed the training.
- Further work required on the final Information Asset Register and data retention.
- The HR Manager and the Senior Solicitor will be attending more detailed training.

46. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LA O&S COMMITTEES

A Joint Task & Finish Group had been set up with External Overview & Scrutiny to review the findings of the Government's report on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The group had identified 6 main areas that were considered important and relevant for discussion and evaluation.

The Task and Finish Group felt that the way both the scrutiny committees operated was very effective and in line with the principles of how they should function.

It was noted that this item was also on the agenda for the External Overview & Scrutiny meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Langmead and –

Resolved:

That the findings of the task and finish group be noted.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

47. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was reviewed and duly updated.

CLTs were discussed and the Strategic Manager (Resources) advised that a PID had been drawn up requesting, £600,000 for CLTs and this would be evaluated at the Capital PID meeting to be held on 29 November.

Leases – Councillor Simmons reminded the Committee about 3 years ago there had been a recommendation that when leases were due for renewal and if the renewal was to be offered at less than market value, the renewal application should come to Community and Resources Committee. It was noted that none had come forward.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 3.39 pm.

Chair:

Date: