

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Wednesday, 27 November 2019 - 2.00 pm

- PRESENT                      Councillor P Pennington (Chair)  
                                     Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors L Ford, S Harding, C Hawkins, C Leather,  
                                     J McKenzie, S Newton and P Watson (present as substitute)
- Mr P Topham
- ALSO PRESENT              S Kearney                      - Planning & Economy Manager  
                                     M Richards                    - Democratic Services Officer
- D Nicholson                    - Great Torrington Community Trust
- Councillors McGeough and Laws
- One member of the public

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked the Committee for all their hard work throughout October and their attendance at the many extraordinary joint meetings which had taken place with North Devon Council.

48.     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Langford.

49.     MINUTES

It was proposed by Leather, seconded by Councillor Newton and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 August be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 9, Abstentions 1)

It was proposed by Councillor McKenzie, seconded by Councillor Harding and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 9, Abstentions 1)

Matters Arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October

Clarification was sought as to how the recommendations on Page 4 were to be actioned as some were desirable aspirations rather than concrete recommendations.

The Planning & Economy Manager responded that the actions in the minutes should be referred to the Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager as she deals with the One Northern Devon process. The Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager to report back to the next meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Leather, seconded by Councillor McKenzie and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 9, Abstentions 1)

50. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public contributions.

51. ACTION LIST

It was noted that all actions on the Action List had been completed.

Minute 25 – Mr Topham confirmed that the Forward Plan element if the action had been completed and that the Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager was working on the list of wellbeing agencies.

52. 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.

Mr Topham declared an interest in relation to item 8 on the agenda - he is a trustee of the Great Torrington Community Development Trust.

53. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

The Chair thanked all those who had attended the North Devon+ meeting on 18 November. The presentation very much linked into the North Devon Biosphere, a partner the Chair would like to see at a future meeting of the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee, together with the AONB.

Councillor Leather spoke about the talk given by Tim Jones who had made the point about northern Devon needing a vehicle to promote the area and he wondered how much North Devon+ were doing to promote the area outside of the South West. The Planning & Economy Manager confirmed that North Devon+ did not have the resource to promote northern Devon outside of the South West - funding had been cut dramatically in the last 2 years.

The Planning & Economy Manager gave an update on Appledore shipyard. He had had a meeting with some prospective business owners who had pulled together a consortium of businesses they would like to locate in Appledore. A business plan had been drawn up and there was a financial ask of the LEP to bridge the gap that they think would make it viable and were optimistic about government intervention. If everything goes to plan it was anticipated that the yard will be back in productive use next year.

55. GREAT TORRINGTON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Di Nicholson of the Great Torrington Community Development Trust introduced herself and gave a brief history of her association with Great Torrington. She summarised the report appended to the agenda and invited questions.

Councillor McGeough joined the meeting.

Members discussed the Trust and commented as follows:

- The Trust should approach Great Torrington Town Council for funding.
- The Trust should approach the Torrington area parishes.
- To consider cutting funding to the Tourist Information Centre and making this completely voluntary.
- The focus of the Trust appeared to be solely on maintaining the building, although it was acknowledged that the Trust was trying hard to encourage more use of the building and to develop ideas such as provision of a play area.
- The Trust does not grant fund any organisations as it is not in a position to do so.
- There are several very successful organisations within Great Torrington, such as The Plough Arts Centre, Dartington Glass and Rosemoor, who are in direct competition with the Great Torrington Community Development Trust.
- Although there are many volunteers in Great Torrington still more needs to be done to attract volunteers from a professional background who can market and promote the Castle Hill building.

- The centre of Great Torrington is often overlooked as the road network tends to take people around the town. A full review and upgrade of signage has been promised by the Highways Department which hopefully will address this.
- The CDT is still waiting for TDC to come back to them on the Neighbourhood Plan as it had been involved in the consultation.

The Chair asked Mrs Nicholson what the CDT would like Torrington to do for them. Mrs Nicholson felt it was very important to ensure funding of the Tourist Information Centre continued. The CDT's income is approximately £40,000 and £4220 of this funds the Tourist Information Centre.

Any help with advertising would also be appreciated.

#### 56. 1610 UPDATE

The Committee noted the non-attendance of the representatives from 1610.

Members discussed the importance of 1610 engaging with the Committee, particularly in light of the issues which had been raised around cleanliness and staffing. It was noted that there had been some improvements but it was felt that there was still an issue with lifeguards not being attentive enough. A reminder was given that any such incidents should be reported immediately on site.

The Planning and Economy Manager explained that the leisure services contract was due for renewal in February 2022. A report will go to Community & Resources outlining the options. The decision will be made by Community & Resources Committee whether to extend the existing contract; to provide the service directly or to go out to tender.

A discussion about equipment and building maintenance took place and the Planning and Economy Manager clarified the responsibilities of 1610 and TDC. A list of frequently recurring problems over the last 12 months will be available for the meeting in January when an invitation will be extended to 1610 again.

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

Resolved:

That 1610 be invited to attend the January meeting of the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee and that a spreadsheet showing frequently recurring problems.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

#### 57. PLAY STRATEGY UPDATE

The Planning & Economy Manager advised the committee that the Play Strategy had been delayed due to resource issues. A written update was circulated to the Committee, which the Planning & Economy Manager expanded on. Tivoli had been contracted to undertake a play strategy review, which involved looking at the

condition of TDC's play estate (a lot of work had already been done on this) and then they will look at the play facilities throughout the district.

The Community Engagement Officer had written to all of the Parish Councils which had provided a better understanding of the facilities available. The Senior Planning Officers had also been carrying out some work on this and a schedule of green spaces had been drawn up.

It was anticipated that a document will be brought back to the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 4 March and taken to Community & Resources on 16 March.

The Planning & Economy Manager confirmed that, although there was a national strategic document, it did not stipulate standards.

Councillor Ford thanked Officers for replacing play equipment in Appledore. The work of Town and Parish Councils in the maintenance, upkeep and enhancement of play areas was noted.

Budgets were discussed and a steer on costs for equipment was requested.

The following comments were noted:

The Head of Paid Service had met with the Chief Executive of Westward Housing and play areas had been discussed.

Bideford Town Council had agreed to give between £25,000 and £30,000 toward play facilities other than those in Victoria Park.

TDC did not have any say in the maintenance of privately owned play areas.

#### 58. FIRE SERVICE

The written update provided by Councillors Ford and Hackett was reviewed.

Councillor Ford said he will attend a further meeting. He made it clear that the group will continue to demonstrate its objections to the proposals. A further written report will be presented.

#### 59. UPDATE FROM THE EXTERNAL GRANTS TASK & FINISH GROUP

Several meetings had taken place and a report with recommendations will be submitted to the next meeting of the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 17 December at 4.00pm. An invitation to that meeting is extended to all Members of the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

#### 60. CSP UPDATE

Apologies from the Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager were noted and it was agreed that this item be deferred until the next meeting.

61. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was reviewed and updated.

Items to be added to the Forward Plan:

22 January	1610 CSP update
4 March 2020	Play Strategy
22 April	AONB North Devon Biosphere Environment Agency

Members discussed Northam Burrows and the involvement of Natural England.

Councillor Ford declared an interest – his brother is Chair of the Royal North Devon Golf Club.

Items to be removed from the Forward Plan:

Officer Task & Finish Group – TBID (Tourism) – this had run its course.

The Committee asked that, when education is scrutinised at the meeting in March, provision be made to look at establishments offering agricultural courses also.

Mr Topham apprised new Members of the Committee on the Partner Evaluation form, explaining that the project was due for review.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 4.11 pm.

Chair:

Date: