

**Mr S Hearse**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Torrige District Council**  
Riverbank House  
Bideford  
Devon  
EX39 2QG



Tel : Bideford (01237) 428700

## **MEETING OF INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

<b>On:</b>	Tuesday 26 July 2022	<b>At:</b>	10.00 am
<b>Venue:</b>	Caddsdwn Business Support Centre, Bideford, EX39 3BE		

### **NOTICE OF MEETING**

From the 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. The Council is also required to follow Government guidance and ensure that all venues used are Covid secure and that all appropriate measures are put in place. Members of the public will be able to attend the meeting in person if they are registered to speak under public participation. Any members of the public who want to view the meeting will be able to watch through the Councils YouTube Channel <https://tinyurl.com/TorrigeYouTube>

**Members are requested to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the meeting**

### **SUPPLEMENT PART I - (OPEN SESSION)**

8.	<b>QBR 1 - Financial Pages Only</b> (Pages 2 - 5) Questions and Answers.
	Meeting Organiser: Dem.Services
	<b>Centre for Public Scrutiny – website</b> <a href="http://www.cfps.org.uk/">http://www.cfps.org.uk/</a>

# Agenda Item 8

## QBR 1 2022/23 – April – June 2022

### **Budget Monitoring – Earmarked Reserves**

Council Tax collection question from **Councillor Pennington**  
How are the collection rates for Council Tax running this year?

#### **Sandra Mounce, Council Tax Team Leader**

I can confirm as at 30.06.2022 we have collected 33.51%.

#### % Collection as at 30th June 2022

Target	Last Years Collection as at 30.06.2021	Actual Collection as at 30.06.2022
30.25	28.93	33.51

Staff question from **Mr Harper**

What is the actual costs this year for agency staff?

#### **David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)**

The Agency budget for 2022/23 is £362k (mostly in the Operations areas Refuse, Street Cleansing etc)...the spend to-date is £157k (as of 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022).

Note that budget for year on recruitment has already been used, is there a breakdown regarding the number of vacancies and level?

#### **David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)**

I assume you are referring to vacancy target of £400k; where after making assumptions about when current post will be filled, the Council is projecting to realise £400k of vacancy savings.

There are vacancies across a range of areas, the vacancies (non-operational frontline) at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 were

- Economic Development Special Projects Officer
- Solicitor
- Estates Contract support officer
- Cleaner x 3 (part time)
- Estates Manager
- CCTV x 2 (Part Time)
- Operations Admin assistant
- Building Control Manager

- Building Control Surveyor
- Development Manager
- Planning Support Team Leader
- Principal Planner
- Graduate Planning Policy Officer x 2
- Revenues & Benefit Officer x 2

Power question from **Mr Harper**

How much do the pv units contribute to any saving, is there any other plans to reduce costs?

**David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)**

In 2021/22 the solar panels on Council Buildings contributed revenue of £3.8k  
There are no current plans for expansion.

Section 215 question from **Mr Harper**

Once again, a budget of £110k is shown, not spent in previous years, will it be spent this year?

**David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)**

For the avoidance of doubt this is a one off reserve, not a recurrent annual budget, it is unlikely there will be any significant expenditure funded from this reserve in 2022/23.

Financial year 2022 – 23 question from **Mr Harper**

A deficit of £1.454M is forecast for the year, what would the costs to TDC be if it purely provided statutory services that are required?

**David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)**

This would require is a very detailed piece of work to be undertaken, as not all expenditure (or employee duties) are strictly statutory or non-statutory in nature. The following are the most easily identifiable areas and significant areas of non-statutory spend.

- Leisure £677k
- Grants £186k - members grants, CAB, Torridge Voluntary Services etc.
- Burton Art Gallery support £140k
- Economic regeneration £138k
- RNLI £100k
- Development of Recreational Services £69k

The Council does not have a statutory obligation for Parks and Open Spaces, but it would take some considerable officer resource to separately identify this expenditure from within the Grounds Maintenance budget.

## Finance questions from Steve Dengate

1. As a percentage of the Council's total annual expenditure in 2022/23, what proportion of spend will relate specifically to its core statutory obligations. How does this compare to the planned budget element for core statutory spending in 2022/23?

### David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)

This would require a substantial amount of officer time to quantify as not all spend can be readily split between statutory and non statutory. For example the majority of the Council's Grounds Maintenance expenditure would be connected with Parks and Open Spaces (not statutory) but a reasonable proportion of it would be connected with cemeteries which is a statutory responsibility of the Council.

The budgeted gross spend of the Council (ignoring Housing Benefit) is circa £15m, the items listed below are the major areas of easily identifiable budgeted discretionary spend in 2022/23

Leisure	£677k
Grants	£186k
Burton Art Gallery	£140k
Economic Regeneration	£138k
Public Conveniences	£138k
RNLI	£100k
Development of Recreation	£69k
Subtotal	£1,448k

2. Of the discretionary spend in 2022/23 what element is mixed (statutory and discretionary) and what element is purely discretionary?

### David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)

As above this would require a lot of officer resource to determine and would involve some degree of judgement, see grounds maintenance example above

3. What financial instruments are available to the Council to enable it to maintain a balanced budget should adverse conditions exhaust the Transition in Government Funding Reserve?

### David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)

The Council would have to review all its options, ceasing discretionary expenditure, sale of assets, review of the capital program, repurposing of other reserves, potentially increased borrowing, vacancy freezes etc. For the avoidance of all doubt there isn't another readily identifiable "pot" of money the Council has use to balance the budgets once the transition in Government Funding Reserve is exhausted.

4. What is the estimated timeline for the Members Budget Working Group to report back on their conclusions?

**David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer)**

At the time of formulating this response a report will go to Full Council on the 5<sup>th</sup> September, subject to the agreement of the member budget working group.