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SUPPLEMENT
PART I - (OPEN SESSION)

9.	QBR 3 (Pages 2 - 6) To receive a report from the Service Improvement Officer.
	Meeting Organiser: Dem Services 01237 428768
	Centre for Public Scrutiny – website http://www.cfps.org.uk/

Agenda Item 9

Questions and Answers

From Councillor Hames

Theme 1

Local Economy:

(Page 12)

- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): There is reference regarding the Maritime Centre to "a change in attitude of the respective universities". Please clarify this statement. Does it mean that Exeter and Plymouth Universities are no longer interested in being involved in the project? If so, then what impact will this have on the feasibility of the Centre?

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

We are still discussing what the on site offer with the Higher Educations establishments will be. Whatever the offer, there will be HE activity on the site and we do not envisage that there will be any negative impact on the feasibility of the centre if the universities are not physically located there.

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- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): Regarding seeking future tenants for the Maritime Centre how successful has this been?

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

This has been very successful. A number of interested businesses have been identifies. Discussions will progress as we get closer to having facilities to lease out.

(Page 12)

- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): There is reference to an application to DCC for funding the slipway work by the Maritime Centre. How much funding has been applied for?

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

£1,080,000 has been secured for slipway improvements.

(Page 12)

- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): There is reference to still having to secure an MMO license regarding the Maritime Centre. Are there problems associated with this?

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

No, there are no problems associated with this.

Theme 2

Housing Strategy:

(Page 19)

- QUESTION sent to Helen Smith (Planning Manager): How many people responded to the Housing Strategy consultation?

ANSWER FROM HELEN SMITH:

We received 55 questionnaire responses and a further 22 responses by email, although some of the latter were from public bodies (EA, NE, etc.) who effectively just stated no comment.

Housing:

- QUESTION sent to Harvey Gardner (Estates Manager): I understand a property in the terrace next to Appledore Fish Dock which is owned by TDC has been empty for quite a while. Bearing in mind the shortage of properties to rent locally why is this property still vacant and what are the plans for it?

The property has been assessed as unsuitable for housing and as such there are no plans for it at the present time.

From Mr Ian Harper

Theme 1

Economic Development:

(Page 17)

- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): No of people in employment and claiming Universal Credit has risen both in Torridge and the SW, yet the UK has dropped, any reason for this?

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

We do not have an answer for this.

Theme 2

Active Torridge:

(Page 3)

- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): The new two year contract will be funded, is this by way of:
Loan?
Service Level Agreement?
Note that reporting terms to be negotiated.

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

The management fee for Active Torridge contract extension will be funded from the Torridge Revenue budget as approved by Full Council. Full Council also approved the funding for a further five year contract with Active Torridge. Reporting terms for the contract extension will not change (this is an extension of the existing contract) but Active Torridge have agreed to provide performance information periodically to External Overview and Scrutiny. The KPI's that performance will be measured against were reported to External Overview and Scrutiny in Feb 2025.

Theme 3

Waste Management:

(Pages 28)

- QUESTION sent to Richard Haste (Operational Services Manager): Garden Waste, this shows a drop on the previous year is there any reason for this. The number of garden wheelie bins has this increased / declined over the previous year.

ANSWER FROM JOEL BAKER (Waste and Recycling Projects):

Below are some stats regarding the comparison between this year and last.

23/24 – 12573 stickers sold and between Q1 – Q3 we collected 4043.490 Tonnes.

24/25 – 12620 stickers sold and between Q1 – Q3 we collected 3885.320 Tonnes.

So, what is being said is correct we have collected less despite selling more stickers. I could only put it down to the weather we have had in 2024 causing less green waste being presented. There does not appear to be any other reason that would cause the drop.

Theme 4

Planning Enforcement:

(Page 36)

- QUESTION sent to Helen Smith (Planning Manager): Note the comments, EF2, surely if the figures shown are unrealistic then this should have been identified at the beginning of the year.

ANSWER FROM HELEN SMITH:

The updates to the Enforcement Plan (to be verbally presented at the meeting) seek to introduce more appropriate target timescales for visiting sites once a complaint is received. Illegal works to listed buildings and to protected trees will continue take priority.

- Secondly EF 4, if this is irrelevant and not meaningful then alternatives should be agreed.

ANSWER FROM HELEN SMITH:

Measures and statistics to demonstrate action taken and cases resolved would better represent performance and the Council is already compared with other South West Councils on numbers of enforcement notices and planning contravention notices served – such measures could be introduced into the QBR.

From Councillor Elliott

Theme 4

(Page 33)

- QUESTION sent to Martin Setheron (Building Control Manager): (LE155) huge drop from QBR 2 and significantly down on target with no explanation.

ANSWER FROM MARTIN SETHERTON

Apologies, this figure was mis-calculated and now stands at 95.8% Q3 at 99%.

Theme 4

Human Resources:

(Page 33)

- QUESTION sent to Sarah Ayres (HR & Comms Manager): (BV012) Understandably can't discuss individuals issues, but is or what is being done to try to get this employee back into work, i.e. ease/reduction of workload, part days, more rest breaks.

ANSWER FROM SARAH AYRES:

This employee had a major operation and experienced issues during recovery. Now returned to work on a phased basis. On return to work, they had daily informal meetings with their manager to review the situation and they take regular allocated breaks. This was managed with advice from our occupational health providers.

Planning Enforcement:

(Page 35/ 36)

- QUESTION sent to Helen Smith (Planning Manager): Our acknowledgement record is consistent which is good. However, planning enforcement is nowhere near targets. Do we need to revisit the discussions of a 3rd enforcement officer. We are clearly struggling again in this area, I know one of my parishes have a few issues in their area and they have been ongoing for some time with officer availability being an issue. We have a large rural area yes, so do we need to consider a 3rd full time position to help get back on top and keep on top of issues, or even a multi role position where the member of staff does enforcement and another role split by so many days a week for example 2 days in one role and 3 days in enforcement and adjust those days according to the enforcement cases backlog?

ANSWER FROM HELEN SMITH:

The proposed updates to the Enforcement Plan seek to introduce more appropriate targets, which are still considered reasonable. There is additional officer resource involved in Planning Enforcement beyond the two full-time officers, with the Development Manager overseeing this function, discussing cases with the team, and providing input on enforcement appeals. A dedicated administration resource has also recently been introduced, with flexibility between the Planning Support Team and Planning Enforcement, to add further capacity and the impact of this will be seen in future QBR reports. Given the high level of enforcement action taken recently through the serving of enforcement notices, the Service has seen a number of these notices appealed which leads to additional workload.

From Mr Stephen Dengate

Theme 1

Local Economy:

P3: Torrridge District Council has supported Small Business Saturday by offering free parking, which aims to highlight small business success and encourage consumers to 'shop local' and support local shops, restaurants and other Torrridge business.

(Page 3)

- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): Encouraging to hear about the Small Business Saturday. How do we measure (if we do) foot-fall and what is the current trend for local shops, restaurants and other businesses in Torrridge?

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

There is a footfall counter on Mill Street and we are looking at the possibility of installing another in Bideford Pannier Market.

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- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): Number of businesses in Torrridge – how many businesses do we currently have in Torrridge compared to last year? (2023/24 – 4100)

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

The latest NOMIS report shows 4,075 businesses in Torrridge (Source: ONS)

P17: The yearly increase in the number of people claiming Universal Credit in Torridge whether not in employment and claiming or in employment and claiming have increased significantly by approx. 25% & 17% respectively in the last twelve months.

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- QUESTION sent to Sean Kearney (Head of Communities and Place): Do we have visibility if this increase is from one specific sector or generally across all sectors or due to some other factor(s)?

ANSWER FROM SEAN KEARNEY:

We will need to interrogate the data and do further analysis to be able to comment on this with any accuracy.