

Mr S Hearse
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Torrige District Council
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Tel : Bideford (01237) 428700

Date: 7 March 2025
Quorum: 18

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

On:	Monday 17 March 2025	At:	6.30 pm
Venue:	Caddsdwn Business Support Centre - Caddsdwn Bideford EX39 3BE		

The meeting will be able to watch through the Councils YouTube Channel
<https://tinyurl.com/TorrigeYouTube>

SUPPLEMENT PART I - (OPEN SESSION)

10.	Peer Challenge Action Plan Update (Pages 3 - 21) To receive an update from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.
	Meeting Organiser: Democratic Services

Agenda Item 10

REPORT OF **Leader of the Council and Chief Executive**

To: **Full Council**

Subject: **Torrige Corporate Peer Challenge**

Date: **17 March 2025**

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To present to Full Council an update of progress made on the action plan following the Corporate Peer Challenge that took place at the end of April 2024.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a visible and transparent framework of Local Government review and assurance conducted by the sector for the sector.

Torrige invited the LGA to carry out a CPC at the end of April 2024 the last such review took place in 2017.

The conclusion of the process back in Aril 2024 was a series of recommendations from the Peer Team used to form the basis of an action plan, which was presented to Full Council on 15 July 2024.

The purpose of this report is to provide Full Council with an update on progress against those recommendations.

2. REPORT

LGA CPC is a recognised system of assurance conducted by “Peers” both Councillors and Officers in senior political and officer roles at councils that are broadly similar to Torrige.

The process is intended to provide “critical friend” support and assurance and it is not an inspection. The key areas covered by the CPC were:

- Local priorities and outcomes
- Organisational and place leadership
- Governance and culture
- Financial planning and management
- Capacity for improvement:

The Peer team appointed were::

- Lead Officer Peer: Ian Knowles, Chief Executive at West Lindsey District Council
- Lead Member Peer (Independent): Cllr Hannah Dalton, Leader Epsom and Ewell District Council
- Member Peer (Lib Dem): Cllr Lisa Spivey, Cotswold District Council
- Officer Peer: Dr Alison Knight, Director of Place, Broxbourne Borough Council
- Officer Peer: Kirsten Burnett, Head of Policy and OD, Hyndburn Borough Council
- Officer Peer: David Clark, Service Director, Governance, Democratic and Legal Services, Somerset Council



- Peer Challenge Manager: Kathryn Trant, LGA Regional Adviser for South-West

During their visit to Torridge the peer team met with 85 people, which included councillors, staff and external partners & stakeholders and also held 30 workshops.

It was really pleasing on many fronts that many good points were highlighted and we recognised that there are always things that can be done differently, which would help us improve the way Torridge works and operates that would be beneficial to our residents, businesses, communities and visitors and there are a range of recommendations that were made and captured into an action plan.

The Corporate Peer Challenge action plan was reported to Full Council on 9 September 2024 and the latest position on each of the actions presented is attached as Appendix 1 and a summary of each of the areas is highlighted below.

Levelling Up Fund and Partnership (now known as Torridge Community Regeneration Partnership)

Over the course of 2024 the Torridge Levelling up Partnership that was announced in the Government's Spring Budget 2023 hit a number of barriers that caused delay in the overall process, which included a General Election (called May 2024 and held in July 2024) and Autumn Budget (31 October 2024) being the main causes.

Whilst it has now have been rebranded as the Torridge Community Regeneration Partnership after surviving these significant national events and challenges and was formally announced by Government on 3 March 2025. Due to the significant size and impact of the proposed programme of works would have on operational capacity of the Council it would have been somewhat premature to have implemented a wide range of measures without certainty on whether the partnership would continue.

However, there were still many actions pursued to position the Council in a state of readiness in the event a decision from Government was forthcoming. This was especially the case in light of the forecast deadlines for completing the work programme (originally set at 31 March 2025). The actions would also serve to improve internal governance and reporting over a wider agenda and projects and therefore consider appropriate to continue to work on them. Ultimately the deadline for the partnership has now been extended to 31 March 2027.

Groups Leaders have met and agreed a draft "Governance and Reporting Framework" attached as Appendix 2, which sets out a framework where major projects, initiatives and strategies are reported, governed, managed and monitored appropriately with both Member and Officer oversight in place. This will include measures to ensure that the projects within the programme have in place mechanisms to track performance linked to outputs on a consistent basis.

Capacity to Deliver

We already have in place an external project team (reporting in to the Council via the Major Project Manager and Senior Management Team) for the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre.

We also have an external team ready to be stood up for the Holsworthy Agri Business Centre project, which is subject to reaching agreement on the jointly owned land around the cattle market.



These models of delivery can be replicated across other projects and work in currently underway to plan and schedule resources for all the projects in the programme. There is already in place external resources to support planning, legal and communications.

Member Development, Behaviour and Review of Procedures

A Member Development Working Group (MDWG) was created to empower councillors to drive their own development and review several processes and procedures. The Group is made up of the Group Leaders of each of the Political Parties.

Several areas have been reviewed, which will be reported fully to the Council's AGM in May 2025 when the Council's Constitution is reported.

As reported above and attached as appendix 2 a revised framework for Governance and Reporting of major areas of work and projects has been developed where Group Leaders take a strategic role working with SMT. This in part enables the Leadership Team meetings to be removed from the Constitution with the regular bi-monthly meeting open for all members to attend that will ensure improved briefings and member input into major projects, strategies and areas of work.

The MDWG group has also reviewed the provision of training and development both immediately following District Elections, but also on an ongoing basis.

There are a number of areas that are still to be reviewed, which will be covered at the next MDWG meeting scheduled for 4 April 2025 and these include Lead Members roles following the removal of the Leadership Team, Planning Call in and Notices of Motion. The references made in the action plan and recommended by the Peer team to address instances of poor councillor behaviour also needs further consideration.

Golden Triangle

Statutory officer meetings and a forward work programme around governance issues to include the Annual Governance Statement and the corporate risk register is now in place. Meetings take place on the first Monday of each month.

Financial Sustainability

The Council's Budget 2025-26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved by Full Council in February 2025. Whilst the Budget is balanced and can be balanced for the next couple of years this can only be achieved through the allocation of reserves, which is unsustainable. Attendance at the Member Budget Working Group through 2024 was low and not all political groups were being represented. This will be discussed at the next MDWG on 4 April 2025.

Risk Management

Risk management has now been strengthened and reported more openly and transparently (where possible). The Risk Management group has been reconstituted and now meets regularly and outputs will be reported via the Group Leaders and SMT framework as shown at Appendix 2 .

Partnership Working

There are a range of regular strategic partnership meetings that place, which the Leader and Chief Executive attend. Northern Devon Futures, One Northern Devon, Team Devon,



Devon Districts Forum, Devon and Torbay County Combined Authority. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive also meeting regularly with North Devon Council.

Climate Change

Changes to the service business plan format have been made to ensure that climate change/ carbon reduction measures are now embedded with the document. Operational Managers in partnership with service lead members can agree the individual actions included. This will act as a delivery tracker and provide data for presentation within the QBR. This is, of course, in addition to the annual Carbon Footprint report that is presented to community and resources committee. This document reports the organisations progress towards net carbon neutrality by category, highlights areas of underperformance and suggest priorities areas for intervention.

The specific route to 2030 with service specific actions remains under development. What is becoming clearer is that achieving the carbon neutrality by 2030 target is going to be extremely challenging.

Review of HR Policies

HR policies, terms and conditions and working arrangements have been reviewed and considered by unions, which have been approved and implemented.

Communications

A range of improvements has been made to ensure our external communications are on much better footing with more regular press releases now issued, communications plans in place for major works and fortnightly staff newsletters produced. Improvements and changes made to the Member communications is due to be reviewed at the next MDWG scheduled to meet on 4 April 2025.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None directly related to this report.

Financial Implications

None directly related to this report

Human Resources Implications

None directly related to this report

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

None directly related to this report

Equality/Diversity

None directly related to this report

Risk Management



None directly related to this report

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

The report refers to the Council's Policies and Strategic plans

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

None directly related to this report

Climate Change

None directly related to this report

Ward Member and Lead Member Views

Is a Council-wide report and plan so Ward member views not applicable

Comment from Leader of the Council Cllr Ken James

There has been considerable progress made on most fronts since the action plan was reported to Full Council on 9 September 2024.

Quite clearly some of the significant challenges highlighted by the Peer Team were awaiting a government announcement throughout the year, which as we now know was only made a few weeks ago. However, notwithstanding that progress has been made to improve Member Governance and oversight as well as keeping our members better informed through more regular and diarised briefing sessions.

There is still work to be done over the next couple of months, but I am confident that working with the other Group Leaders and SMT will be able to implement the remaining recommendations and deliver on the Council's ambitions.

Date of Consultation – 10 March 2025

4. CONCLUSIONS

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge is a very well-respected improvement and assurance framework that operates within the Local Government Sector. It is not an inspection process although It does involve a comprehensive review of how the Council operates across key areas.

We welcomed the Peer Team to Torridge as critical friends and we equally welcome the report produced by the team, which is already helping us to provide service and other improvements across the Council.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members:

- Note the report and progress made which is highlighted in the report and in the attached action plan.



SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Date of Consultation – 10 March 2025

 Officers Consulted –
 Staci Dorey, Head of Legal and Governance
 Sean Kearney, Head of Communities and Place

Contact Officer: Steve Hearse, Chief Executive

Background Papers:



Torrige Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan

Recommendation	Actions & Comments	Assigned to: Lead Member(s) SMT Lead (s) Support Officer	Target	Finish	Progress
<p>Levelling up Fund – consider what existing or new governance arrangements should be in place (to include key partners) to ensure governance is robust, the budget is monitored closely and importantly the wider benefits of this investment impact on the locality.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review current arrangements for adequacy 2. Review requirement contained within the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid and subsequent funding agreement 3. Determine who the key partners are 4. Establish / revise / implement arrangements 	<p>Cllr James Cllr Hicks Sean Kearney Staci Dorey</p>	<p>Jan-25 to fit in with start of contract works phase</p>	<p>Status - Amber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing internal structure that exists sees a range of theme led individuals reporting to the project manager who then reports to senior management team. • Group Leaders have approved (subject to formal approval by Full Council at it's AGM) a Governance and Reporting Framework attached at Appendix 2. • The LUF bid included an external project steering group containing representatives from: Universities of Exeter & Plymouth, Harland & Woolf, Petroc, Bideford

					<p>College, Appledore Primary School, Northam TC, Community and private sector representation with TDC officer and Member (Lead Member)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This Board has yet to be established whilst the early procurement and planning work commences and will be revisited in Spring 2025.
<p>Levelling Up Partnership – Address as a matter of urgency the capacity of the economic development team and major projects team to lead this scale of programme.</p>	<p>Notes: External capacity had already been put in place to help the development work and plans were ready to execute further resource at the point of a potential Government announcement.</p> <p>Project costs include the cost of external resource input for implementation and delivery.</p> <p>Actions: Subject to Govt. approval of LUP:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a review of all TDC led project resource requirements Analysis of project resources contained with TDC projects. 	<p>Cllr James Cllr Hicks Sean Kearney</p>	<p>TBD – depends on whether LUP will continue or not and any change to timeframe</p>	<p>Status - Amber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Torrige Community Regeneration Partnership was announced 3 March 2025, with funding approved to March 2027. Full Council approved adding the £20.07m to the Capital Investment Programme the same day. Resource budget(s) included within allocated sums. Resources (external) allocated / secured to date: Legal, Planning, some project management and delivery, Communications (to be recruited) External delivery team already allocated and ready to be deployed for

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Review wider resource requirements to ensure governance, legal and monitoring arrangements for non TDC projects are established and catered for. 4. Develop recruitment proposals and plan. 				<p>Holsworthy Agri Business Centre project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work underway to identify resources requirements for other projects, which will be reported to the Governance Board (see appendix 2). • Overall resources plan being developed.
<p>Levelling Up Partnership – An appraisal process is needed to ensure that the projects recommended not only meet the key metrics, but are deliverable, are sustainable in the long term and will make a real difference to outcomes locally.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and investigate appropriate level programme management systems 2. Determine option that best fits and suits LUP 	<p>Cllr James Cllr Hicks Sean Kearney</p>	<p>TBD – depends on whether LUP will continue or not and any change to timeframe</p>	<p>Status – Amber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appraisal / business case process is developed and led by MHCLG and consideration of whether projects are deliverable will be considered as soon as the portfolio of projects is known. • The project / programme monitoring is currently being stood up by North Devon +, which will include a variety of performance and outcome monitoring data to ensure that the projects approved by MHCLG deliver the intended objectives. • These reports will follow the Governance and reporting framework (appendix 2)

<p>Levelling Up Partnership – A clear governance structure is needed with roles, responsibilities and allocation of risk fully understood.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review models of structures to properly programme manage projects. 2. Investigate those that can be tailored to support the LUP projects in terms of consistency and standardisation. 	<p>Cllr James Cllr Hicks Sean Kearney</p>	<p>TBD – depends on whether LUP will continue or not and any change to timeframe</p>	<p>Status - Amber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and Reporting Framework established (Appendix 2) • Risk register being developed to be reported to next Major Projects Governance Board
<p>Levelling Up Partnership – All projects within the wider LUP programme should follow a standard process, whether internal or external to the council.</p>			<p>Complete</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and Reporting Framework established (Appendix 2) 	
<p>Take stock as to the sufficiency of the council's staff resources to continue to deliver everything that the council is seeking to do through the Strategic Plan as well as the resources needed to support delivery of major project programmes.</p>	<p>Notes: Significant capacity concerns were raised specifically in the context of a potential funding award via the Levelling up Partnership (LUP) of £20m and the deadline for delivery (31st March 2025).</p> <p>External capacity had already been put in place to help the development work and plans were ready to execute further resource at the point of a potential Government announcement.</p> <p>Capacity concerns have been further raised in relation to the existing programme of major projects and delivery of the Strategic Plan priorities – “capacity will be a significant challenge”</p>	<p>Cllr James Steve Hearse Sarah Ayres</p>	<p>Oct-24</p>	<p>Status - Amber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torridge Community Regeneration Partnership was announced 3 March 2025, with funding approved to March 2027. • Full Council approved adding the £20.07m to the Capital Investment Programme the same day. • External project delivery team already in place for Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre • External project delivery team ready to be deployed for Holsworthy Agri Business Centre Project • Resource / procurement plans under development for other internal projects • Resources currently in place for Legal, Planning

	<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and map current / future levels of activity across major projects already in progress alongside the associated deadlines where applicable. 2. Identify programmes & projects approved yet to commence and without resource plans. 3. Develop resource requirements for (3.) and identify resource gaps 4. Determine to either input extra resource or review scheduling / priority of projects and programmes. 				<p>and approval in place to recruit additional Communications support.</p>
Recommendation	Comments	Assigned to	Target	Finish	Progress

<p>Create a Member Development Working Group to empower councillors to drive their own development and address low attendance at councillor learning and development sessions. Invest in an ongoing programme of councillor development and political awareness training for staff, to ensure wider understanding of the roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers respectively. Include training using the resources available to promote Civility in Public Life to address instances of poor councillor behaviour.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Determine and agree make up of MDWG working group Agree a set of terms of reference for MDWG Identify areas of training required Identify resources & support requirements – internal & external MDWG agree a set of actions Review Member induction process / schedule of training Identify and consider areas of concern of poor Councillor behaviour and determine options / actions to improve this area. 	<p>Cllr Newton Staci Dorey Tom Vanstone</p>	<p>Dec-24</p>	<p>Status – Amber</p> <p>Red action 7 and Green action 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison with LGA to provide support to the group. Kathryn Trant (Lead from LGA on CPC) assigned. MDWG approved by Full Council – Group Leaders Terms of reference agreed by MDWG. MDWG supported by Chief Executive, Head of Legal & Governance and Senior Elections and Democratic Services Officer. Agreed work programme Member induction process and training review commenced Item / action 7 – no specific work has been developed on this subject
<p>Page 13</p>	<p>This is separate to the MDWG</p>	<p>Cllr James Steve Hearse Sarah Ayres</p>		<p>Completed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training took place Wednesday 22 January 2025

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 14</p> <p>Undertake a review of process and procedures such as the Leadership Team meetings, Lead Member roles, use of Full Council Motions, Call In, Scheme of Delegation and appropriate use of Part Two to ensure effective decision-making processes and governance that is widely understood across the council.</p>	<p>Notes: In constitution Leadership appears to a much more powerful “Committee” than it is as has no delegated responsibilities – so what is its’ purpose needs reviewing and redefining as necessary</p> <p>Is it “Leadership” as all Councillors can attend and participate?</p> <p>Lack of clarity and purpose of Lead Members – from reports to Committees, championing role and policy input</p> <p>Review of other parts of Constitution and their role in developing policy and governance purpose – Motions, Call ins and Part 2</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine and agree make up of working group – should there be just one group covering this and Member Development? 2. Consider the need and whether external support (LGA) would provide 	<p>Cllr James Cllr Newton Steve Hearse Staci Dorey Tom Vanstone</p>	<p>May-25 This will fit in with annual reporting of Constitution to Councils AGM</p>	<p>Status - Amber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with LGA to provide support to the group. Kathryn Trant (Lead from LGA on CPC) assigned. • Working Group approved by Full Council – MDWG is all Group Leaders. • No direct support / required / requested by MDWG • Scope of review agreed at initial meeting. • Terms of reference for MDWG approved. • Timetable developed and meetings scheduled • To date MDWG has reviewed: <p>The MDWG has approved (subject to approval by Full Council) to be reported as update to Constitution in May 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove Leadership Team • Implement a Group Leaders / SMT Governance Board for major project works • Implement Member Briefings and diarised bi-monthly
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	<p>added value and assurance to the project.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Agree the scope of the review to be conducted. 4. Approve the terms of reference for the group and the review. 5. Develop a timetable / plan for the areas to be reviewed. 6. Schedule the working group meetings. 7. Report recommendations to Full Council for changes to constitution. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented new programme of training • Member development programme <p>Outstanding areas to be discussed at MDWG on 4 April 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notices of motion • Planning call ins • Roles of Lead Members in absence of Leadership Team
Recommendation	Comments	Assigned to	Target	Finish	Progress
Formalise statutory officer meetings and develop a forward work programme around governance issues to include the Annual Governance Statement and the corporate risk register. Meeting regularly would allow for sharing of information and development of a 'united' approach to governance issues.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree format and timing of meetings 2. Agree areas of work that should make up the work programme 3. Schedule meetings 4. Continued review of actions and mechanisms highlighting work completed 	Cllr James Steve Hearse	Sep-24	Complete	<p>First two meetings already taken place – 3rd June & 8th July.</p> <p>Meet 1st Monday of every month.</p> <p>Notes held in secure corporate folder</p> <p>Will cover:</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 15</p>	<p>5. Relocate Finance Manager / s151 Officer to 1st Floor RBH with other statutory officers / SMT</p>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Governance Statement • Corporate Risk Management • Internal Audit reporting – recommendations and action plan monitoring • External Audit reporting – recommendations and action plan monitoring • Constitution reviews and updates • Other Governance matters as arise • Head of Finance relocated to 1st Floor RBH
<p>Develop a transparent mechanism for seeking efficiencies and income generation to replace the use of Reserves in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Action the improvement recommendations set out in the external auditor’s annual report.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Member Budget working group – encourage greater attendance 2. Finding of MBWG to be communicated more widely 3. MTFS update report to Full Council - November 2024 to identify current gap. 4. Consider role and purpose of MBWG to plug the gap identified. 5. Prepare action and options for consideration. 	<p>Cllr Bushby Gordon Bryant</p>	<p>Feb-25 This will meet the date for the next MTFS to be reported to Full Council as part of the annual budget process</p>	<p>Status - Red</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBWG – last meeting (02 August 2024) only 2 of the 6 political groups were represented. • Full Member Budget briefing took place to discuss TDC’s financial position and to consider options for savings, efficiencies and, of income generation on 19 December 2024 – only 10 of 36 Members attended • Raised with Group Leaders (07 March) to discuss at next meeting on 4 April 2025.

<p>Strengthen how management of corporate risks is reviewed and reported to ensure it is transparent and implications linked to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>	<p>Notes: To ensure that there is greater oversight and reporting of corporate risks.</p>	<p>Cllr Bushby Gordon Bryant</p>		<p>Complete</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Corporate Risk Register is now reported to Leadership. <i>(subject to change as role of Leadership may change)</i> • The Corporate Risk Group has been reconstituted. • A summarised version of the CRR is now presented in Part 1 of the A & G meetings for public perusal. • Corporate risks around revenue and capital budgets has been strengthened.
<p>Proactively engage with partners to ensure that TDC is in a position to maximise the opportunities that may arise from the various partnerships that the council is involved in.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify key strategic partnerships 2. Confirm who attends and ensure substitute is available if main attendee not available 	<p>Cllr James Steve Hearse</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings scheduled with North Devon Council – Leader, Deputy Leader and CEX • Leader & CEX attend Northern Devon Futures and One Northern Devon Strategic Partnership Boards • Leader & CEX attend Team Devon and Devon Districts Forum • Leader and Deputy Leader hold positions on the Devon & Torbay County Combined Authority & CEX

Recommendation	Comments	Assigned to	Target	Finish	Progress
<p style="text-align: center;">Page 18</p> <p>Embed clear performance measurements and milestones into service plans to meet the council's carbon neutral operational target of 2030, to demonstrate on track delivery.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify all the projects and work programmes that incorporate carbon reduction ambitions and actions. 2. Map the performance measurements and milestones attributable to each and the service area. 3. Update Business Plan template to capture and identify projects and work programmes that contribute to carbon reduction. 4. Include projects identified in the production of the 2025 Business Plans 	<p>Cllr Hames Sean Kearney</p>	<p>Feb-25 This will fit with the production of the 2025-26 Business Plans</p>	<p style="background-color: yellow;">Status - Amber</p>	<p>represents on the Employment & Skills Advisory Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Carbon Footprint reported to C&R 20 Jan 2025 – confirmed off target for 2030. • Changes to the service business plan format have been made to ensure that climate change/ carbon reduction measures are now embedded with the document. Operational Managers in partnership with service lead members can agree the individual actions included. This will act as a delivery tracker and provide data for presentation within the QBR. • Overview & Scrutiny reviewing Project Initiation Document to improve the climate section and consider weightings for scoring

<p>Review HR policies, terms and conditions and working arrangements, to address actual or perceived inconsistencies in their application across different council services and to ensure that the council is seen as an attractive place to work.</p>	<p>The process of reviewing the Council’s HR policies was already underway prior to the Corporate Peer Challenge taking place.</p> <p>The exercise had been delayed due to an absence of union representation both within Torridge DC and regionally, which has now been partially resolved.</p> <p>The HR Strategy is also under review, which sets out the framework within which we will make employment related decisions over the next 3 years.</p>	<p>Cllr James Steve Hearse Sarah Ayres</p>	<p>-Oct-24</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Human Resources Team have reviewed and updated as necessary 26 HR Policies and introduced 2 new policies (Menopause and Secondary Employment) • The team met with union representatives from Unison and GMB to discuss and agree any amendments • 27 of the 28 HR Policies were approved at the Staff Forum on Tuesday 23rd July 2024. • Only the Menopause Policy is outstanding as it is still being updated. • The refreshed policies will now be implemented on 1 September following their introduction at the People Managers Meetings scheduled in August. • The HR Strategy is currently being worked on, which is due to be presented at Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2024.
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<p>Improve external communications so that the council can proactively celebrate its success. Continue to develop a Strategic Communications Plan to ensure consistent messaging through internal and external communications at the same time.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review external communications strategy and plans 2. Focus on gathering positive / success stories and publicise 3. Review staff internal communications through staff focus group 4. Review Councillors internal communications through Member Development Working Group 	<p>Cllr James Steve Hearse Sarah Ayres</p>	<p>Dec-24</p>	<p>Status – Amber.</p> <p>Actions 1 to 3 Complete</p> <p>Action 4 - outstanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication plans for major projects are now developed • Annual Report for 2023-24 developed and reported to Full Council on 3 March 2025 • Communications lead officer now attends major project meetings and Place Board • Staff newsletter now published on a fortnightly basis instead of monthly • Communications lead meets regularly with the Leader of the Council • Communications is a standing agenda item on Senior Management Team agenda and Communications and HR Manager attends each week. • Various Communications channels in place following a review and refresh of member communications – Group Leaders to review at meeting 4 April 2025
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