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



Tel : Bideford (01237) 428700

Date: 14 July 2025  
Quorum: 6

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

<b>On:</b>	Tuesday 22 July 2025	<b>At:</b>	6.00 pm
<b>Venue:</b>	Greenhouse - Riverbank House		

### **NOTICE OF MEETING**

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 Agenda PART I - (OPEN SESSION)**

8.	<b>QBR4 Q&amp;A Supplement</b> To receive a report from the Service Improvement Officer.
	Meeting Organiser: Dem Services 01237 428768

# Agenda Item 8 QBR 4 – end of March.

## Advance Q&A.

### Performance Highlights – page 3

#### **Question from Mr Harper:**

Theme 1:

[Capital projects, what is our role and responsibility?](#)

£20m of capital investment awarded from government (Community Regeneration Partnership) - Our role and responsibilities are to deliver these projects, including the appropriate governance, monitoring, and reporting arrangements.

These projects were suggested by Torridge Place Board and selected by Central Government.

*Peter Hudson, Finance Manager and Section 151 officer.*

Theme 2:

[How do we achieve Government target and how do we provide for the infrastructure to meet that target?](#)

The main way the Council works to meet the Government target in terms of housing requirements is to plan for the delivery of development across the area by preparing and adopting a local plan. The North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2018) sought to plan, through allocations for development and other policy approaches, for a scale of development to meet the Government housing requirements that were in place at that point in time (17,220 dwellings across northern Devon over 20 years). The Council has committed to prepare a new local plan for northern Devon with North Devon Council. This will, amongst other things, look to plan for the delivery of housing that the Councils are required to plan for by the Government. At the present time, this is anticipated to be in the region of 1,330 dwellings per annum across North Devon and Torridge. The Council also seeks to work proactively with the development industry through its Development Management service to ensure that housing can be delivered, whilst working with other partners and stakeholders to leverage investment and support for delivery where possible and appropriate.

In terms of infrastructure, in preparing the local plan, the Council will work closely with partners and stakeholders to understand existing infrastructure, service and facility capacities, any deficits, challenges and opportunities and to plan for future needs. This will help inform the best locations for development alongside consideration of other matters. The Council will work with these partners to plan for the necessary infrastructure improvements required to support any planned development and growth. This may involve developers providing infrastructure as part of development, providing financial contributions towards improvements or new provision elsewhere, or may involve stakeholders seeking investment and planning for future improvements through their own strategies and investment plans. At a meeting of the Joint Planning Policy Committee on 18 July 2025, Members resolved that Officers should commence early engagement work with partners and stakeholders on this very matter in support of preparing the local plan. They also endorsed that work is undertaken to understand the success, or otherwise, in delivering infrastructure alongside the development planned through the existing local plan, so as to ensure that any lessons are learned and can be applied going forward.

*Ian Rowland, Planning Policy Team Leader.*

### Performance reporting – page 4

#### **Question from Mr Harper:**

[Professional fees over budget by £85k, how will this be addressed?](#)

[Audit fees over budget by £80k, is this a one off?](#)

#### **Professional Fees**

The overspend is mainly due to two areas

- Legal - £27k, which is a result of external legal advice obtained from council fees to planning cases, being higher than planned.
- Fees incurred to deliver the outcomes of grant income received, predominately economic regeneration projects. The professional fees have been offset against grants received, overall having a zero effect on the overall budget.

### **Audit Costs**

We budget based on the proposed fees provided by our auditors. However, additional charges may arise due to factors such as changes in accounting standards, new disclosure requirements, delays, or errors.

For instance, while our 2022/23 accounts have been audited, they have not yet been fully signed off. This is due to the ongoing audit of the Devon Pension Fund. Any issues arising from that audit could result in additional fees.

Of the total audit fees overspend, £20k relates to the 2024/25 financial year, while £60k pertains to previous years. Audit fees are negotiated and agreed upon by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) and are therefore outside of our direct control.

*Sally Piper, Principal Accountant.*

### **Key Income Streams – page 6**

Encouraging to see the Harbour income increased significantly. Well done. Is there confidence around this uptick in trend continuing?

We are working on an agreement with Navantia for this financial year, which will generate income for both parties. I am unsure of a long-term agreement being put in place as this is not Navantia's core business.

That said this partnership has shown that Torridge is still an option for cargo ships and there have been a number of enquires. Hopefully ships will return to Bideford Quay but cannot be animal feed due to the dust.

*Richard Haste, Operational Services Manager.*

## **Theme 1 Local Economy**

### **Questions from Cllr Hodson**

Given the two major projects in Torrington and the relevance of raising the invest ability opportunities, has the Great Torrington Brand and website been launched?

### **Great Torrington Community Website**

The Great Torrington Regeneration Board has participated in a collaborative brand workshop to explore and refine Great Torrington's digital identity.

Key deliverables included:

- New Brand Assets - A refreshed colour palette, updated imagery, and comprehensive brand guidelines that reflect the town's unique character.
- Enhanced Digital Platforms - The new visual identity was applied to the existing, [onegreattorrington.uk](https://www.great-torrington.uk/), along with a domain name update (<https://www.great-torrington.uk/>). —enhancing the digital presence without replacing existing work. The redirection of OGT.uk to G-T.uk is now in place. There is a lot of content which will need migrating across.
- Additional Documentation:
  - A Web Audit & Digital Revamp outlining improved navigation and content strategies.
  - Web Design Visual Mockups for desktop, tablet, and mobile views of the homepage.

Significant challenges with backend access to the One Great Torrington website have slowed progress. The limitations of the current platform and ongoing access issues have now led to a review of whether an entirely new website platform might prove beneficial, with funding options currently being explored.

[Has any progress been achieved regarding transport services in Torridge?](#)

No progress to report at this stage, apart from pushing Devon Highways and Devon and Torbay CCA (with new transport powers) to ensure that we are considered in their development plans, lobbying for improved public transport support.

*Chris Fuller, Economic Development Manager.*

[Can you provide any information regarding the 17 supported technology firms, funded through the Rural Prosperity Fund as to whether any further jobs have been created?](#)

There were 18 projects supported through the North Devon+ administered REPF scheme in 2024-25. That led to 17 technologies being implemented that were new to that firm, rather than that there were 17 technology firms supported. Within those 18 projects a total of 4.0 FTE roles were created as a result of the support.

*Chris Fuller, Economic Development Manager.*

## **Theme 2** **Communities, Health and Housing**

### **Questions from Mr Dengate**

[Page 20. Theme 2 – Utilise Active Torridge to promote and deliver health and wellbeing activities across the district. In the February draft minutes it was stated KPI reporting to External Overview and Scrutiny was agreed in February. Question – Please could you confirm the KPIs specifically in relationship to health and wellbeing activities.](#)

Due to the previous management company ceasing trading, this is on hold but new KPIs will be produced and presented to External Overview & Scrutiny.

## **Theme 3** **Our Environment, Our Future**

### **Question from Mr Harper**

[Recycling down against last year, even with the increase in new houses, could part of this issue be that holiday homes can no longer recycle their waste?](#)

There is an error on the Trend analysis and QBR 4. The total recycling rate Q4 is 48.2% and for the year is 52.6% which is down on last year. This may be because when residents move into a new development there is a period of time that only refuse is collected from collection points until the roads are adopted. The waste team continue to work with the comms team to push the message of waste minimalization and increasing what household waste can be recycled.

*Richard Haste, Operational Manager.*

### **Question from Cllr Hodson**

[Is it possible to update regarding the negotiations with the Police regarding the workshop space at OSC?](#)

It is unlikely this will go ahead but negotiations are ongoing.

*Sean Kearney, Head of Communities and Place.*

### **Question from Mr Dengate**

Page 28. Theme 3 – Monitor and manage coastal and flood defences taking appropriate action in partnerships with relevant bodies: EA Funding for works to the Linear Defence Scheme are now on hold subject to Government review. Option study progressing in the background in anticipation that EA funding will still be available in the future. Questions – What is the Plan B if funding is not available.

We fully expect that funding will be available, the scheme is still on the EA active list of projects, we are just not certain on the new grant funding models and application process that will be introduced following the change in government.

The long-term Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) to Westward Ho! is a priority to Torridge District Council and the appraisal has moved forward. We will soon be progressing the works to the 'Outline Business Case' stage which includes the development of the larger funding bid which is submitted to the Environment Agency. Further funding has been made available to Torridge DC for the development of this project.

*Chris Willson, Coastal Engineer.*

## **Theme 4 Our Council**

### **Question from Cllr Hodson**

When can we expect to receive the revised private Sector Enforcement Policy and the Food Safety Service Plan?

- The Food Safety Service Plan is in final draft. This should be ready to publish in the next few weeks.
- The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy update is now being drafted to be consistent with other updates happening across Devon. We are keeping one eye on the Renters Reform Bill, which is likely to become legislation later this year. That will require updates to the policy. The discussion between the district Environmental Health Managers is that we will continue to draft consistent policies and keep a watching eye on the RRB, with the hope that these can be incorporated before policy approval is sought. This may delay the policy until later this year, or early 2026.

*Phil Gilbert, Public Health and Community Safety Manager.*

### **Question from Mr Dengate**

P34. Theme 4 – update out HR and Workforce plan to enable the council to adapt to a changing employment. HR & Communication Manager review and update workforce strategy and HR strategy. Draft presented to O&S in September 2024. No finalised. Question – Please could the final version be circulated/provided to O&S for information.

HR strategy is attached.

## **Performance Trend Analysis**

### **Question from Cllr Huw Thomas:**

I'm particularly struck from the performance trends table by how bad performance is in the area of Planning Enforcement:

EF2 - continued decline from last year in response to high priority cases

EF3 - major decline (from 71-40%) in response to other cases

EF4 - improvement on last year but still well below acceptable level/performance target

I would like to see an explanation for this. It would help to have the percentages quantified with actual numbers of cases - and of the number of staff employed on planning enforcement.

I note that among other items this council has recently agreed funding for The Globe Hotel and the overall budget appear to show TDC about £51,000 in surplus.

Do we need to employ more staff in planning enforcement?

The Planning Enforcement Service has been subject to ongoing review and consideration of ways to improve performance, and this has been reported to the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee. New measures have been introduced to improve efficiencies.

The Enforcement Plan is being updated to introduce a more appropriate triage system for new cases and to set reasonable timescales for first visits to happen. It has been reported to Overview & Scrutiny that the expectation for cases (other than high priority cases) to be visited within 14 days is unrealistic and not necessary for many case types. There is clearly an importance that should be placed on Planning Enforcement to ensure our environment is protected from inappropriate development and to uphold the work that is being done by the Planning Policy and Development Management Teams, however, it is considered that the measures within the QBR are not necessarily appropriate to evidence good performance and these will be updated on adoption of a new Enforcement Plan. The Enforcement Team performs well compared to other Southwest Councils in terms of numbers of PCNs and Notices served, and success on enforcement appeals is high.

The Service employs two full-time enforcement officers who are supported by the Planning Support Team in terms of case set-up, by senior planning officers in terms of case reviews and signoffs, and one of the Planning Apprentices carries a small caseload of Section 215 cases. On average, the Service receives 4 new cases per week with 4 cases being closed each week. The two Enforcement Officers carry an ongoing caseload of 130 cases; however, this includes cases subject to a notice and / or appeal.

There could be merit in greater administration support or a hybrid enforcement / planning apprentice to support with case work, however any growth of the team would require a GWAF to be submitted to SMT setting out the case for the new post and budget implications. The investment in planning enforcement resource needs to be balanced against the statutory functions of determining planning applications and plan-making.

*Helen Smith, Planning Manager.*

### **Question from Mr Harper**

LE160 Active Torridge Membership.

LE163 Active Torridge Number of visitors

There are still no figures which I would have thought was fundamental to the business.

These have historically been in the trend analysis and will be taken out now as the KPIs are to be reported to External O & S.

LE350 Employee Accidents significant increase on previous years.

This is due to more diligent reporting and easier access to statistics. There has been training to raise awareness of the importance of reporting accidents so lessons can be learned. Staff are encouraged to report accidents, and the process to do so has been made easier.

*Sarah Ayres, HR Manager.*

LE 215 and LE216 Figure is the same for both, is this the same debt? How is a debt pursued?

This was an error. LE216 should read £39,734 and has now been changed.

## Revenues & Benefits

Measure	Description	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Target	Trend
LE215	Debtor Collection - Outstanding debt £ over 1 year old	£44,358	£47,836	£129,615	£139,613	£130,885	£136,058	£85,645	£53,326	n/a	
LE216	Debtor Collection - Outstanding debt £ over 2 years old	£22,054	£19,393	£27,787	£107,897	£65,761	£98,036	£70,664	£39,734	n/a	

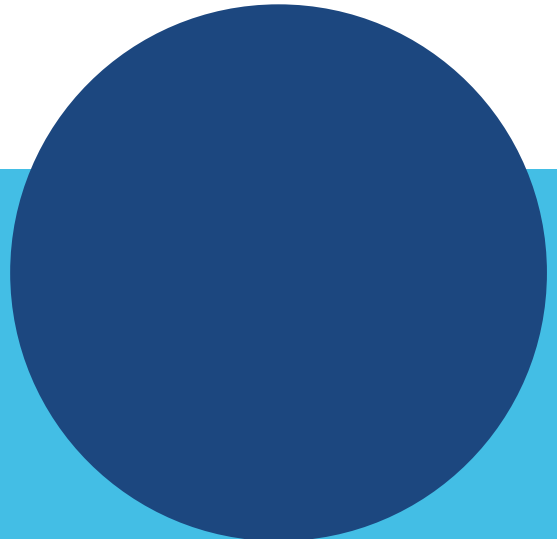
The debt is pursued by issuing reminders, final notices, referring the debt to a collection agency and involving legal if required.

*Karina Baird, Revenue and Benefits Team Leader, NNDR & Income.*



# HR STRATEGY

2024-2027



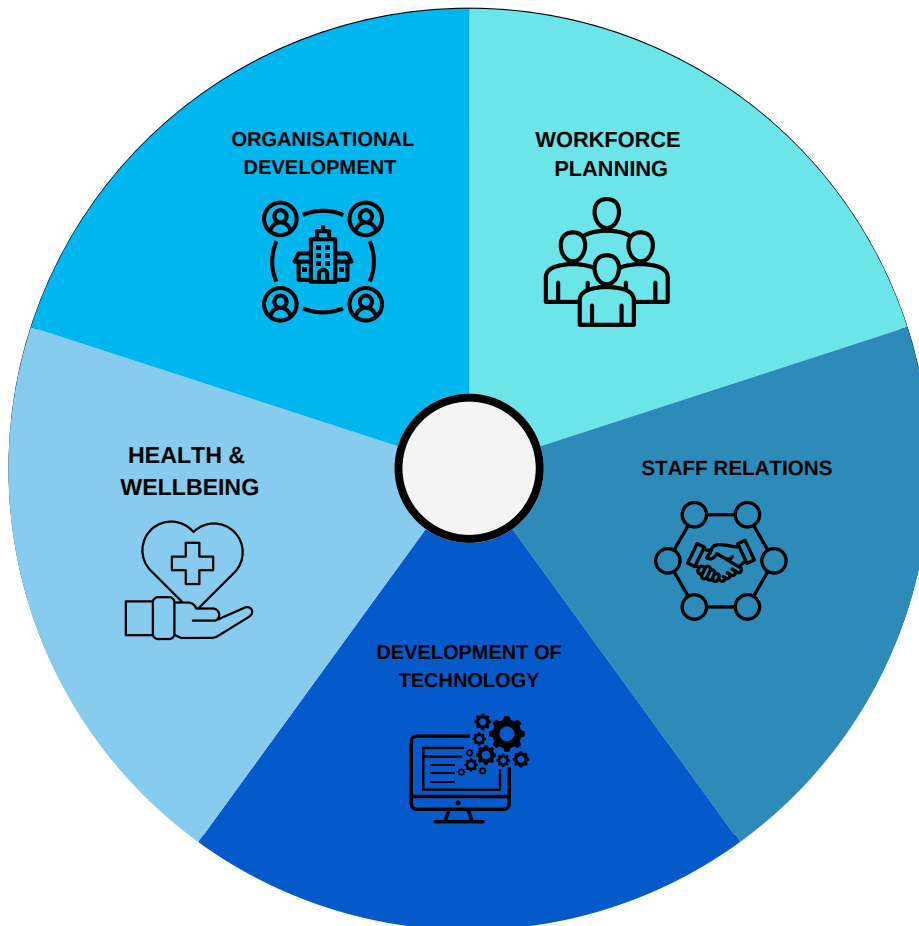
# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We continue to work against a backdrop of funding cuts to local government by central government. This creates a number of changes but, also, opportunities:

Challenges	Opportunities
An expectation to deliver more with less funding	Continuing to operate more flexibly and working smarter where possible
Skills shortages in certain areas of the business	Growing our own, offering opportunities to existing employees
Competing with other businesses who offer more attractive employment T&C's	Investing in TDC staff
Other businesses, and Local Authorities offering market supplements or 'golden hellos'	Being open minded about new possibilities
	Engaging with our staff

# OUR PEOPLE PLAN

We are committed to putting those who work with us, and for us, at the heart of all we do. The following pages detail the work we have completed over the last 3 years and what we plan for the future. These are broken down into the following 5 themes:



**Organisational Development:** Building our capacity to develop and adapt to changing work environments, both internally and externally

**Workforce Planning:** Working to ensure staff are trained to fulfil their roles, to ensure an effective succession plan is in place



**Staff Relations:** Working to develop excellent working relationships with staff across the organisation

**Development of Technology:** Developing the use of technology to increase employee experience across the organisation, including E-Learning and Performance Management



**Health & Wellbeing:** Providing a safe, stable and sustainable working environment with wellbeing at the heart of everything we do

# OUR STRATEGY THEMES



## ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Looking Back:

- Corporate Induction (via E-Learning)
- Management Development Programme
  - Level 2 & 5 ILM courses delivered on site
  - People Manager Meetings
  - 121 Meetings with new managers and HR
- New Appraisal Process - via iTrent
- Higher Level Apprenticeships in hard to fill areas of the business
- Regular Staff Briefings
- Staff Focus Group
- New staff newsletter
- Visible HR Team, working on site

### Looking Forward:

- Continue to develop new ways to communicate with all staff
- Continue to upskill our managers, in order that they have the management skills to deliver organisational priorities
- Launch new HR policies
- Values and Behaviours - Revisit and relaunch for both members and staff
- Promote, wherever possible, joint officer and member development
- Support continuing professional development consistent with a wider aim of broadening individual skills/multi-skilling
- To develop a coaching and mentoring scheme for new and existing staff



## WORKFORCE PLANNING

### Looking Back:

- Providing training and skills development for a number of staff, enabling them to progress within TDC
- Developed work experience programme for year 10 students from local schools, both public and private
- Higher Level Apprentices recruited in Planning, Building Control and Environmental Health
- Maintaining strict vacancy management with any requests considered at SMT

### Looking Forward:

- Continue to engage with local schools and colleges, with a view to increasing our offer regarding job related skills (interview practice and CV writing)
- Participate in the Talented Me programme
- Deliver an on site, hands on day for local schools
- Sign up to the Careers Hub 'Start Small, Dream Big' project to work within Primary Schools
- Recruiting to our Values & Behaviours
- Taking action to address specific recruitment challenges



## STAFF RELATIONS

### Looking Back:

- Continued to undertake staff survey and acting on results
- Continued engagement with staff through staff briefings
- Launched Staff Focus Group
- Relunched staff newsletter with Communications Team
- HR drop in sessions at Depots for Waste Team
- Virtual Staff Whiteboard on intranet for staff to raise ideas

### Looking Forward:

- Improve working relations with Unison & GMB and ensure there is a formal mechanism through staff and their representatives are consulted
- Continue to respond to employee relation issues swiftly and informally wherever possible
- Build on social committee activities to forge links across all teams
- Build on progress of the staff focus group and update staff on improvements/changes made
- Providing working environments that meet the needs of the workforce



## DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY

### Looking Back:

- Regular reporting to SMT on key data
- Rolled out performance management module on iTrent and reviewed the appraisal process following feedback
- E-Learning for all staff including mandatory training and induction programme

### Looking Forward:

- Continue to develop E-Learning modules
- Launch iTrent People Manager Dashboards to provide key data at a glance
- To launch new performance module to simplify the appraisal process
- Time Recording - New 'clock card' system for all office based staff
- Develop recruitment module and onboarding process



## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### **Looking Back:**

- Launched the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- Promoted awareness of H&W through staff events, such as Know Your Numbers events
- In house Yoga sessions for staff
- Staff run Social Committee to develop activities for staff

### **Looking Forward:**

- Prioritising the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce
- Equip managers with the skills to support H&W of their team members
- Promote awareness of H&W issues within the workplace
- Launch 'lunchtime awareness' sessions to enhance wellbeing offering to staff
- Develop the offering of the EAP to ensure staff are aware of the support options available
- Volunteering - to offer staff up to 1 day per year to take part in a variety of volunteering opportunities