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Date: 8 November 2021

MEETING OF INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On:	Tuesday 16 November 2021	At:	10.00 am
Venue:	Caddsdwn Business Support Centre, Bideford, EX39 3BE		

To:	Councillor P Watson (Chair) Councillor T Inch (Vice-Chair) Councillors: R Boughton, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Gubb, P Hames, S Harding, S Langford and S Newton Non elected Members: Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper
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Members are requested to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the meeting

SUPPLEMENT

10.	QBR 2 (Pages 2 - 5) To receive the responses to questions on the QBR2 21/22
	Meeting Organiser: Dem.Services - 01237 428705
	Centre for Public Scrutiny – website http://www.cfps.org.uk/

Highlights – Agenda Page 11

Burrows Centre Question from **Ian Harper**

Note the opening of the new Burrows Visitor Centre, visitor numbers and additional staff, is there any income generated and if so how much?

Sean Kearney, Head of Communities and Place

The new Burrows Centre was only open for part of this summer, and last years' visitor numbers were impacted by the initial national lockdown, so we do not have direct comparable information. What we do know is that the Northam Burrows income was £272K this year, compared to £116k in 2020/21, which represents a 130% increase, and this is partly attributable to the new centre.

New Discover App Questions from **Ian Harper & Cllr Langford**

With regards to the app how has this been promoted particularly to visitors and what is the uptake? **Ian Harper**

How is the discover app being advertised and updated? At a meeting of Bideford Town Centre Partnership 10/11/21 most people had not heard of it. A business owner who had used it said it was already out of date as businesses on it were no longer in existence. **Cllr Langford**

Sean Kearney, Head of Communities and Place

The DSCVR app only launched 2/3 weeks ago. The app developer has provided a few early stats to give a feel of take up and also some details of how they are pushing for promotion as we move towards Christmas.

Number of participating businesses across North Devon and Torrridge - 1,014

Number of downloads to date: 2,327

Biggest access content of so far has been the half term activities.

Full stats including usage (ie what are people accessing) will be provided on a monthly basis.

The profile of signup was good during half term (on the back of publicity), some days were up at 128 but averaging around 85 per day. This has tailed off now to around 25 per day. The developers believe that this is perfectly normal and takes around 6 months of publicity to get consistent traction (the old adage that you need to hear something 7 times is absolutely correct). They expect these numbers will rise again in the run up to Xmas.

Promotion has been concentrated on social media and will be stepping that up in the run up to Xmas. They will be providing 'smart' window stickers and we're expecting to roll those out early December. This will give the ability to drive footfall based activities and promotions in the early New Year when things are traditionally quieter.

In terms of local promotion:

Both Torrridge and North Devon have shared across all our platforms, from the Website (in fact it has been regularly updated over the months during development to launch) and on Social media. The Project Officer has done 2 radio interviews on BBC radio Devon and Heart FM, and it has been in the local newspapers too. We are also have posters planned

to go in all the car parks on the space by all the pay points. North Devon are also doing other promotion on their own sites.

In response to the question about updates and corrections of out of date material. The team have spent a significant amount of time checking the businesses are still operating, over a 1000 have been directly contacted and the details checked. The list of businesses that are incorrect is pretty small and the hope is through feedback (so if there our businesses that people see then its good to let us know the name) these will be taken down. The app developer initially had to go via google businesses, then physical visits and then between the 2 council teams we have continued to offer feedback on a regular basis. The team meets once a week (Thursdays) and discusses areas such as downloads, incorrect businesses and also what next. A very positive collaborative effort between the 2 town councils.

The app will significantly develop over the 3 years we have initially funded it. There are lots of really positive 'bolt on's' planned including live feed links with the Biosphere's work for the area in terms of traffic, weather, promoting nature tourism and links to support groups.

Recycling Question from Ian Harper

Weekly recycling stand, what are the numbers visiting and has there been an increase in recycling?

Richard Haste, Operations Service Manager

A total of 136 people attended the roadshows and a total of 387 items have been issued. While tonnage is lower than last year, due to the pandemic, having locations where residents can collect receptacles can only help to increase material diverted from landfill.

Harbours Question from Ian Harper

Harbour and pilotage, note that the actual income is down against last year?

Richard Haste, Operations Service Manager

The Deo Gloria was running a sand campaign in this time period last year which has not been continued this year. The captain of the Deo Gloria operates on a Pilot Exemption Certificate where the Statutory Harbour Authority charges 25% of the total tonnage. We have had the same number of commercial clay ships as last year.

Budget Monitoring – Agenda Page 13

Revenue Question from Ian Harper

Community and Places - there seems to be a large difference between profiled budget and actual spend, even end of year projections shows a significant difference.

David Heyes, Finance Manager

The projected underspend on Communities and Place of £791k is almost wholly explained by the projected surplus income on Planning and Car Parking at the Burrows

With regards to the profile to date variance (the £2m vs £256k) is also partly explained by the excess planning and burrows income, circa £700k received ahead/ in excess of the budget profile.

The other big factor is that the expenditure of £256k is reduced by the receipt of discretionary business support grant funding of circa £700K, expenditure against this budget

only just beginning towards the end of Qtr 2, the majority of this grant funds being-unspent as at 30th September 2021.

Garden Waste income is also showing as being in excess of budget profile, garden waste income is paid for 12 months from June to June; a prepayment journal is completed at year end to reduce the income to match the financial periods to which it pertains

Budget Overspend Question from Cllr Langford

'Expenditure on dangerous structures'. Please could I have a couple of examples of what that might be.

David Heyes, Finance Manager

These are costs associated with making a property in Cooper Street safe.

Budget Monitoring – Agenda Page 16

Earmarked Reserves Question from Ian Harper

Note that on a number of lines there is no movement, Sec 215 and Homelessness.

Janet Williams, Public Health & Housing Manager

With regards to the homelessness reserve, it previously funded two fixed term contracts, this posts have now been funded from the recurrent establishment. We're looking at options for the use of this reserve having regard to wider considerations of pressures on our homelessness function at the present time.

Shaun Harrington, Planning Manager

With regard Sec 215 reserve our Enforcement team have recently commenced targeted action on various sites which are negatively impacting the visual amenity of the area. Given the current stage of action, there has not been a requirement to utilise the reserve. However, as action progresses, it is likely that S215 funds will be utilised in terms of survey work, prosecution, and legal fees.

Local Economy – Agenda Page 19

Northam Burrows Jobs Question from Cllr Langford

Are the jobs at the cafe on the Burrows seasonal?

Chris Dobbs, Service Improvement Office

The cafe is a private enterprise and we do not have details of staff terms and conditions. The staffing levels are likely to fluctuate with seasonal demands and the 14 staff quoted was for the peak summer season.

Local Economy – Agenda Page 21

Wages Question from Cllr Langford

LE236b 4% reduction on low wage levels. Presumably then the wage inflation due to labour shortages, described a couple of points above, has not affected those on low wage levels.

Chris Dobbs, Service Improvement Office

This is derived from an annual survey of income and earnings and was conducted in 2020 and therefore does not reflect the impact of recent labour market shortages. We should have an update on local earnings in the next QBR.

Local Economy – Agenda Pages 18-21

Quality Jobs Question from **Ian Harper**

Quality Jobs, coupled with the figures from Universal Credit, the issue of Housing and TDC position in the ONS ASHE figures, noting the comments in LE 236b, how many new quality jobs have been generated?

Sean Kearney, Head of Communities and Place

Unfortunately, we do not have access to this data as we have no way of monitoring all individual jobs created in all sectors.

Our Environment, Our Future – Agenda Page 26

Carbon Reduction Question from **Cllr Langford**

Forgive my ignorance - what is an ice machine?

Sean Kearney, Head of Communities and Place

This is at the Fishdock and is used for producing ice for the local fishing trade.

Our Environment, Our Future – Agenda Page 27

Play Area Question from **Cllr Langford**

27 sites (down from 36). I have had a very specific enquiry about Cliveden Road at E-T-W where there used to be play equipment. Is this one of the sites which has been removed?

Adrian Avery, Community Project Officer

The Council has 3 sites at ETW:

1 – Ayers Close

2 – Alverdiscott Rd

3 – Polyfield

I notice that Clivedon Rd is just off of Alverdiscott Rd. I'm not sure about a play area in Clivedon Rd but if there is, it's not one of our sites. Adrian Avery is happy to discuss directly if further details are required.