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Date: 5 July 2019

MEETING OF COMMUNITY & RESOURCES

On: Monday 15 July 2019 **At:** 6.00 pm

Venue: Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39
2HS

NOTICE OF MEETING

To: Councillor R Hicks (Chair)
Councillor D McGeough (Vice-Chair)
Councillors: D Brenton, C Bright, D Bushby, P Christie, A Dart, J Hutchings,
K James, N Laws, R Lock and R Wiseman

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

AGENDA PART I - (OPEN SESSION)

1.	Apologies for Absence To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.
2.	Minutes of the Community & Resources Committee meeting held on 10 June 2019 (Pages 3 - 8)
3.	Public Contributions Public contributions in accordance with the current scheme
4.	Forward Plan (Page 9)
5.	Declarations of Interest Members with interests to declare should refer to the Agenda item and describe the nature of their interest when the item is being considered.
6.	Agreement of Agenda between Parts I and II

7.	Urgent Matters of information to be brought forward with the permission of the Chair and the Committee
8.	Any recommendations from Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee To receive a verbal update from the Head of Paid Service.
9.	Draft Statement of Accounts (Pages 10 - 12) To receive the report of the Strategic Manager (Resources).
10.	PART II (CLOSED SESSION) There are no Part II items
	Meeting Organiser: Sandra Cawsey

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Monday, 10 June 2019 - 10.00 am

PRESENT Councillor R Hicks (Chair)
Councillors D McGeough, D Brenton, C Bright, D Bushby,
P Christie, A Dart, J Hutchings, K James, N Laws, R Lock and
R Wiseman

ALSO PRESENT J Wallace - Head of Paid Service
S Dorey - Senior Solicitor
S Hearse - Strategic Manager (Resources)
A Redwood - Property and Procurement Manager
J Williams - Environmental Health & Community Safety
Manager
C Norman - Solicitor
S Cawsey - Democratic Services Officer
Councillors P Pennington, D Hurley, S Langford and P Hames

MEMBERS OF THE 11
PUBLIC

The Chair, Councillor Hicks, welcomed everyone to the first Community & Resources Committee meeting of the new Council.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2019

It was proposed, seconded and -

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2019 be signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 6, Abstentions 4) - two Members arrived late at the meeting

3. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr Shaun Barnes, Ms R Winstone on behalf of the Friends of Bideford Starlings, Ms F Balfour and Mr R Durrant all spoke in support of the Petition previously presented to the Council, opposing to the firework displays that take place close to

Bideford Long Bridge, and the alleged harm and distress caused to the starlings which roost under the Bridge. They raised the following points:

- Mr Barnes advised he had found dead starlings in the town and had a video/photos showing this.
- The distress the fireworks had caused, not only to the starlings, but also to dogs, domestic pets and to vulnerable people.
- A Council leaflet which states it is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to animals - dogs are terrified by the fireworks.
- The changes to be made by Torridge District Council – alternative location, quieter fireworks etc.
- The number of signatures to the Petition, which it was stated had increased since it had been presented.
- Reference was made to the remedial actions requested on the Petition.

Mr Steve Barnes addressed the Committee as one of the organisers of the fireworks. He stated that the organisers were willing to compromise on the fireworks as much as possible, and were keen to work with those opposing the displays.

4. FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Brenton enquired as to why “Amendments to the Constitution” had not been included on the Forward Plan. The following update was given by the Head of Paid Service and Leader, Councillor Dart:

- A meeting had taken place with Andy Bates from the Local Government Association who will ask that the relevant specialist make contact with the Council.
- A Working Group to be set up as a matter of urgency to take this forward.
- The Working Group will present all changes to Full Council, therefore this item to be added to the Council Forward Plan. At the request of Councillor Dart, this item will also be added to this Committee’s Forward Plan.

The Head of Paid Service addressed the following enquiries raised by Councillor Laws:

- Avon Lane –the normal procedure is for an item to be brought to this Committee from Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Members will be consulted on the Covenants to the Hotel Site in Westward Ho! prior to a report being presented to this Committee

The Forward Plan was noted.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made when the specific agenda items to which they related were under discussion.

6. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

It was proposed, seconded and –

Resolved: That the Agenda as circulated be agreed.

(Vote: For - Unanimous)

7. URGENT MATTERS OF INFORMATION TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR AND THE COMMITTEE

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

8. FIREWORK DISPLAYS/STARLINGS ROOSTING UNDER BIDEFORD BRIDGE (PETITION)

Councillor C Bright declared a personal interest – involved with the Gt Torrington Cavaliers.

The Head of Paid Service presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider the Petition and to make recommendations on how to proceed.

Councillors were advised that as this is a matter that covered both Councils, the Head of Paid Service had been in contact with the Bideford Town Clerk.

Councillor Christie, who is also a Town Councillor, updated the Committee on the alternative options to the present arrangements evaluated by the Town Council. A display of silent fireworks that had taken place at Westward Ho! proved to be uninspiring, not particularly quiet and there had also been an issue with height.

The Town Council had then considered the following alternative locations for the fireworks:

- A river barge moving down stream
- The new Bridge was suggested due to the height issue with silent fireworks. Councillor Christie had emailed Mr Julian Rosskill, Highways Officer at Devon County Council who had responded saying no to this option.

Councillor Christie asked that this Committee write to Councillor John Hart, Leader at Devon County Council, seeking clarification as to why this option had been refused.

It was proposed by Councillor Brenton, seconded by Councillor Christie that the first remedial action on the Petition be accepted, namely –

“That the Council put policies in place to prohibit any further firework displays close to Bideford Long Bridge (too close is anything that causes the starlings to be disturbed from their roost by such displays)”.

It became evident during the ensuing discussions that there was a need for compromise, and although supportive of retaining the fireworks, displays must take place on an alternative location away from the Bideford Long Bridge.

The points raised included:

- Pollyfield Centre to be included as an alternative location. This was a location also suggested by the Petition Organiser.
- To close the new Bridge and to keep Bideford Long Bridge open for emergency vehicles
- Members of the public would expect to see the fireworks
- Signatures on the petition – very few were residents of Torridge.
- Wording on petition too ambiguous – no clarity on what is considered “too close”.

During the discussions the Senior Solicitor clarified to the Committee they are only considering events on Council land and not on private land.

The Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager advised on the legislation with regard to the noise levels of fireworks, and stated it would be difficult to enforce any restrictions made.

Following a discussion on what is considered to be “too close” to the bridge, it was agreed that an amendment to the proposal be included excluding firework displays taking place on East-the-Water Wharves. Also to delete the following wording from the proposal “too close is anything that causes the starlings to be disturbed from their roost by such displays”.

Councillor Brenton who proposed the motion and Councillor Christie who seconded the motion agreed that the amendment as stated above be included. It was therefore -

Resolved:

That Torridge District Council prohibit any further firework displays close to Bideford Long Bridge ie East-the-Water Wharves, and that Pollyfield Centre, a barge and the new Bridge be considered as alternatives.

(Vote: For 10, Against 1, Abstentions 1)

9. BURIAL FACILITIES FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WITH AN ISLAMIC FAITH

The purpose of the report, presented by the Property and Procurement Manager, was for Members to consider and approve the provision of a dedicated area of Bideford Higher cemetery for use by the families from across the District who have an Islamic or other faith.

The Property and Procurement Manager informed the Committee of an update to the report, namely that the original proposal to “fence” off the area as a dedicated space was now considered to be unsympathetic. It was felt that hedging would be a more sympathetic separation.

All concerns and issues raised by Members were addressed by the Property and Procurement Manager. These included:

- Double grave – having a separate area of Echelon graves facing Mecca would not be taking up so much room, and therefore double graves would not be needed. This would reduce the costs to the families.
- Segregation – this is preferred by this particular faith group and other faiths.
- Hedging – it was agreed was more sympathetic.

Following a discussion it was proposed by Councillor Brenton, seconded by Councillor Christie that the recommendations detailed in the report be agreed.

Councillor Brenton left the meeting at 11.35 am.

Councillor Pennington raised a concern with regard to the future expansion of the graveyard. He suggested that an additional recommendation be included to ensure that the rights of the Council to extend the cemetery in the future are not restricted.

As Councillor Brenton had left the meeting, this amendment to his original proposal could not be agreed.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Laws and –

Resolved:

1. That the current cemetery procedures be reviewed and updated to reflect the current needs of the community.
2. That the procedures are re-drafted to reduce the potential for mourner participation and remove the option to utilise shrouds (all burials should be in caskets).

3. That the burial of members of other faith groups to be accommodated and the principle to allocate and segregate an area of the Higher Cemetery in Bideford for specific use by the Islamic community be approved.
4. That such provision be limited to residents of the District and be extended to other faith groups as may be necessary in the future.
5. That all graves be traditional lawn graves; mound graves will not be accommodated. Over-sized tributes and headstones will not be permitted.
6. That the full detail of the specific requirements should be developed following consultation and more detailed discussions with the local leaders of the respective faith groups.
7. That it does not restrict the rights of the Council from extending the cemetery in the future.

(Vote: For 9, Against 2) – One Member having left the meeting

The meeting commenced at 10 am and closed at 11.45 am

Chair:

Date:

COMMUNITY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN – 2019/20

Leadership	21 May 2019 2pm	25 June 2019 2pm	30 July 2019 2pm	24 Sept 2019 2pm	12 Nov. 2019 2pm	7 January 2020 2pm	18 February 2020 2pm	7 April 2020 2pm
Community & Resources (Mondays)	10 June 2019 10am	15 July 2019 6pm	TUESDAY 27 August 2019 10am	14 October 2019 6pm	25 November 2019 10am	20 January 2020 6pm	16 March 2020 6pm	TUESDAY 27 April 2020 10am
Finance		Draft Outturn Report (DH)						
Performance				QBR Q1	QBR Q2 (Any recommendations from Internal Scrutiny)			QBR Q3 (Any recommendations from Internal Scrutiny)
Other	Petition Stirlings/Fireworks (SK) Policies - Muslim Burials (SH)	Any Recommendations from Internal Scrutiny	Changes to the Constitution – rec. from Working Group (update) Call In – Avon Lane (SK) Leisure contract - options appraisal (JJ) Proposed alteration to Covenant - Hotel Site Westward Ho! (AW)				<u>3 February 2020 – 10am Budget Special</u>	

Agenda Item 9

REPORT OF Strategic Manager Resources
To: Community & Resources Committee
Subject: Draft Statement of Accounts
Date: 15th July 2019

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

For members to decide how to allocate the surplus generated during 2018-19 and note the draft statement of accounts for 2018/19.

1. INTRODUCTION

The financial period 2018-19 ended as at 31st March 2019. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2018 set out the requirements for the general completion and publication of the Statement of Accounts and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK (the code) defines how they will be completed.

2. REPORT

The Statement of Accounts (SOA) 2018-19 has now been completed in draft stage in accordance with the provision set out in the Regulations above and were submitted to external auditors on the 31st May 2019. The deadline for completion of the SOAs 2018-19 is the 31st May 2019.

On submission for audit the SOAs are not required to be approved by Council only certified by the Council's Section 151 officer, which was actioned on the 31st May 2019.

Grant Thornton's audit team were scheduled to commence their onsite audit work on the 8th July 2019. However as at the time this report was written the audit has been postponed due to resourcing issues at Grant Thornton; the onsite audit work is expected to commence in August 2019. This delay has impacted upon other local authorities within Devon, who have also had their audits delayed. Upon completion of the audit Grant Thornton will report to the Audit and Governance Committee at a date yet to be determined. It is at this point that the members consider the formal approval of the 2018-19 SOAs. (A further update will be provided at the meeting regarding the timescale for the external audit of the SOAs).

The purpose of the Draft Statement of Accounts 2018/19 report is, to enable Members to consider and approve how the surplus of £364k generated during the year should be set aside to reserves for future allocation. Members should note that the surplus of £364k assumes that the Grant Thornton audit of the SOA does not uncover any material misstatements of income or expenditure.

Planned Maintenance - £100k

The Council sets aside £80k on annual basis towards planned maintenance, however it has been recognised that there are significant pressures on this budget in 2019-20 namely; replacement filter and pumps at the Council's swimming pools in Holsworthy and Bideford. In addition significant investment is required to upgrade the lifts at Torrington Pannier Market and Holsworthy Manor Offices.

Contingency Reserves - £50k

The Council has an annual general contingency budget of £70k; which is prudently used to meet unexpected, unforeseen costs that have not been budgeted for. For example the resources have been used to meet costs such as relocating house boats, additional work on GDPR, marketing Bridge Buildings, IT Cyber security work and fencing at Riverbank House.

It is proposed to transfer the 2018/19 under utilisation of this budget into the Contingency Reserve to ensure sufficient resources are available to meet cost pressures that arise during 2019-20, where no budget has been allocated.

Apprentices / Corporate Training - £48k

With effect from 6th April 2017, the Government introduced the Apprenticeship Levy applicable to all organisations, public and private, with an annual wage bill over £3 million requiring them to pay 0.5% of their monthly payroll into the organisation's Apprenticeship Levy Fund, collected by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). The Council's payroll is circa £5.3m.

Torrige District Council has previously supported the employment of apprentices, and consequently monies have been set aside from the 2018/19 surplus to facilitate the recruitment of new apprentices.

May 2019 saw the election of a new council at Torrige, with 18 new members elected. It is recognised that additional training resource is required to support both new and existing members.

Play Strategy - £11k

In March of 2019 the Council received funding from Central Government to support Play Provision. This grant funding is to be set aside to fund the production of a play strategy which will determine the provision of play needs within the District and assessment of current play provision.

Bideford Work Hub - £35k

The Council has secured funding from Devon County Council to convert part of Bideford Town Hall into a business hub available to businesses on an ad-hoc basis. In addition to the external funding already secured the Council is required to provide additional resources to undertake the necessary conversion works to the Town Hall.

Digitisation of Cemetery Records - £40k

The Council's current system for the maintenance of its cemetery records is inefficient and is paper based involving significant officer time to maintain, the digitisation of the Council's cemetery records and the purchase of a new cemetery record system is required.

IT – Development - £80k

The last refresh of the Council's IT Desktop Infrastructure was undertaken in 2011, several components of the current desktop infrastructure are approaching their end of life. In addition there are elements of the current desktop environment will shortly (March 2020) no longer be Public Services Network (PSN) compliant.

Approval for the new desktop environment for inclusion within the Council's capital program was agreed at Full Council on the 25th February 2019. However it is recognised that development is also required in other IT supported areas such as the website. There £80k is set aside to support these developments

Overview and Scrutiny Internal

The recommendations were also presented and considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (internal) on the 9th July 2019.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

n/a

Financial Implications

The Financial Implications are covered in the report

Human Resources Implications

As set out in the report – identification of funding for apprentices

Sustainability / Biodiversity Implications

n/a

Equality / Diversity

n/a

Lead Member Comments

Date of Consultation – 3rd July 2019

Councillor C Hodson - “the draft accounts for 2018/19 represent a fair snapshot of the Council’s position as at 31st March 2019 The Council has made a modest surplus during 2018/19 which as the report details has been set aside to meet future pressures and investment. Taken in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy I am satisfied the Council is in a strong financial position which will allow it to deliver its corporate objectives”.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The Council has enjoyed a successful year which has allowed it allocate resources to areas of future demand, such as replacement filters and pumps at the Council’s swimming pools planned maintenance (upgrade to lifts at Torrington Pannier Market and Holsworthy Manor Office). The 2018/19 surplus has allowed the Council to set further funds aside to support ICT related developments whilst continuing to support apprentices. Members should note that the surplus of £364k assumes that the Grant Thornton audit of the SOA does not uncover any material misstatements of income or expenditure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For members to consider:

- 1: Allocating the resources to the various reserves identified within the report

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Date of Consultation – 3rd July 2019
Officers Consulted –
Head of Paid Service
Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer Steve Hearse – Strategic Manager Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Background Papers MTFs and Capital Programme 2019/20 – 2025/26
Draft Statement of Accounts 2018/19