

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILINTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Virtual Meeting via Zoom with Public Access via YouTube
<https://tinyurl.com/TorrigeYouTube>

Tuesday, 15 December 2020 - 2.00 pm

- PRESENT**
- Councillor P Watson (Chair)
- Councillor P Hames (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors C Cottle-Hunkin, J Gubb, S Langford, J Manley, T Inch and D Hurley (Substitute for Councillor Newton)
- Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper
- ALSO PRESENT**
- S Hearse - Chief Executive
D Heyes - Finance Manager (Section 151 Officer)
S Ayres - HR & Comms Manager
J Walter - Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager
T Vanstone - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
M Richards - Democratic Services Officer
- Councillors P Christie, K James and P Pennington

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Boughton and Councillor Newton (Councillor Hurley substituted).

47. MINUTES

It was proposed, seconded and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September and 10 November be agreed and signed as a correct record.

A recorded vote was taken.

	29 September			10 November		
COMMITTEE MEMBER	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
CLLR BOUGHTON, R						
CLLR COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X			X		

MR S DENGATE	X			X		
CLLR GUBB, J	X			X		
CLLR HAMES, P	X			X		
MR I HARPER	X			X		
COUNCILLOR HURLEY			X			X
CLLR INCH, A	X					X
CLLR LANGFORD, S	X			X		
CLLR MANLEY, J	X			X		
CLLR NEWTON, S						
CLLR WATSON, P	X			X		

Vote: Minutes 29 September 9 For, 1 Abstention
Minutes 10 November 8 For, 2 Abstentions

48. ACTION LIST

The action list was reviewed and updated.

49. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

50. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded that declarations of interest should be made as and when the specific agenda item to which they related was under discussion.

51. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

The Chair advised that Item 9, Capital Programme, was to be deferred until the February meeting when more information would be available.

The Chief Executive explained that the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee was to have scrutinised this following the review by Community & Resources. At their meeting on 7 December, Community & Resources had requested more detailed information around some of the projects and funding. The capital programme will be brought back to the next Community & Resources meeting and the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee will then scrutinise this, alongside the rest of the budget, in February.

52. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

53. COVID-19 - HOME WORKING AND ZOOM MEETINGS

The HR & Comms Manager gave a brief summary of the impact of Covid in relation to home working, Zoom meetings, work/life balance and potential savings.

- Most staff, with the exception of the Waste & Recycling teams, had been working from home for some of the time. Attendance in the office, if required, was on a rota basis.
- Overall financial savings against budget were 88%, the largest component being councillor mileage payments
- Additional costs of approximately £4,000 had been incurred for Zoom licences – there are 83 registered users with TDC e-mail addresses and 23 hosts.
- All staff and councillors have access to Microsoft Teams.
- 809 virtual meetings had taken place via Zoom between March and October 2020 with almost 5,000 participants – accuracy of the figures to be checked
- Prior to Christmas 2 – 3% of staff worked from home. Since 23 March this figure had increased to 80%.
- Additional laptops, monitors, and mobile phones had been provided to facilitate home working.

A staff survey had recently been carried out with a specific focus on home working. The primary concerns were around feelings of social isolation, difficulties communicating with colleagues and dedicated working spaces.

Further analysis of the survey will be undertaken and the details shared.

During the ensuing discussions, the following observations/requests were made:

- It was requested that a similar survey to the staff survey be rolled out to councillors.
- When looking at how future meetings will be held once Covid has passed, consideration should be given to the impact of reduced travel on the carbon footprint. Figures relating to the carbon cost, both of reduced travel and holding Zoom meetings were requested.
- Mental health was a concern, and guidance had been issued to managers about keeping in touch with staff. Occupational health support was also available.
- Exclusion due to poor broadband – Overall connectivity and internet speeds had been better than anticipated
- Legislation surrounding remote meetings extends until May. The LGA is lobbying the government for an extension or changes to the legislation. There are also some discussions on hybrid meetings.
- Recruitment – There had been a number of new starters. Interviews had been both virtual and face to face.
- The HR & Comms Manager will come back with more detailed information about the level of savings in relation to reduced travel.

54. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Item deferred to February meeting.

55. TREASURY INVESTMENT OPTIONS

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report which summarised actions taken in relation to investing in “Green” Treasury Deposits and the outcomes of the Income generation Task & Finish Group’s discussions.

Having considered the options for ethical investment within the framework of TDC’s Treasury Management Policy and the 3 criteria for investment (security, liquidity and yield), the Income Generation Task & Finish Group had reached the conclusion they would like the council to undertake short-term treasury deposits, where possible, in an ethical and green manner. The following criteria had been set:

- Green Treasury Deposits are made with UK Banks (or Building Societies) that are F1 rated (Fitch)
- The interest rate is within 0.20% of standard treasury deposits.

Any changes to the Treasury Management Policy would have to be approved by Full Council, so all members would have an opportunity to voice their opinion.

It was noted that there was currently no difference between the interest rate for standard treasury deposits and “green” deposits.

Clarification was provided that, should there be a future divergence between the rates for standard and “green” treasury deposits, TDC would seek the better return.

The Chief Executive suggested that investment is reported through the quarterly business report and an item should be included which identifies the notional cost of investing in these types of funds as opposed to the rate which could have been achieved from other types of funds. If members no longer wished to invest in this way, the Treasury Management Policy could then be updated at a later stage.

It was proposed by Councillor Hames, seconded by Councillor Watson and –

Resolved:

That a recommendation be made to Full Council that the Treasury Management Policy be updated to prioritise “Green” Treasury Deposits where they meet the following criteria:

- That monies are deposited with UK Banks (or Building Societies) that have a Fitch F1 rating and
- That the interest rate is within 0.20% of standard treasury deposits.

A recorded vote was taken.

COMMITTEE MEMBER	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
CLLR BOUGHTON, R			
CLLR COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X		
MR S DENGATE	X		
CLLR GUBB, J	X		
CLLR HAMES, P	X		
MR I HARPER	X		
CLLR D HURLEY	X		
CLLR INCH, A	X		
CLLR LANGFORD, S	X		
CLLR MANLEY, J	X		
CLLR NEWTON, S			
CLLR WATSON, P	X		

(Vote: For – unanimous)

56. REVIEW OF QBR

The Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager explained that members had approved the Strategic Plan and he now sought to align the actions and measures of the QBR with the Strategic Plan. A Zoom meeting in early January was being proposed. The QBR Review Group will consider, over a few meetings, what they would like to see in the QBR.

The group will comprise, Cllrs Watson, Hames, Newton, Langford and Mr Dengate.

57. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was reviewed.

The Capital Programme to be added to the February meeting.

It was hoped that the carbon plan will be ready before the May meeting and an extraordinary may be convened.

Future review – Conservation areas, listed buildings and the resource available for enforcing. To include a review of the listings.

Grounds maintenance and update on homeworking and Zoom to be included within one of the next 2 meetings.

It was noted that county elections take place on 2 May, 2 days before the May meeting.

An explanation was requested on the criteria, scoring and weighting of Capital PIDs. The Chief Executive advised that an informal Capital PID event was to be set up to look at the detail, prior to the review of the Capital PID programme by Community & Resources and Internal Overview & Scrutiny. The proposed date is 13 or 14 January and it is hoped the format will be interactive.

The Chief Executive explained the PID process and criteria. Currently, PIDs are being added to the programme whether or not they meet the criteria.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 3.00 pm

Chair:

Date: