

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILINTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

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

Tuesday, 9 February 2021 - 10.00 am

PRESENT

Councillor P Watson (Chair)

Councillor P Hames (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Boughton, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Gubb, S Langford, J Manley, S Newton and D Hurley (substituting for Councillor Inch)

Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper

ALSO PRESENT

S Hearse	- Chief Executive
S Dorey	- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
S Kearney	- Head of Communities & Place
D Heyes	- Finance Manager (Section 151 Officer)
D Hunter	- Legal Services Manager
J Walter	- Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager
T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
M Richards	- Democratic Services Officer

Councillors P Hackett, C Hawkins, C Hodson, K James and C Leather

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Inch.

59. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Langford, seconded by Councillor Gubb and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

A recorded vote was taken.

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

(Vote: For 8, Abstentions 2)

Matters Arising

Minute 57 – Consideration of the Forward Plan

Mr Harper sought an update in relation to the criteria, scoring and weighting of Capital PIDs. The Chief Executive advised that a review was required to ensure the Capital Programme links into the recently approved Strategic Plan. This was currently work in progress but the current PID document will be circulated.

Minute 53 – Homeworking and Zoom Meetings

The Chief Executive referred to the questionnaire circulated by the HR & Comms Manager, urging members to respond. Member views were valuable to the exercise. Questionnaire to be resent.

60. ACTION LIST

The action list was noted with the following observations:

Minute 55 – Treasury Management Options

In response to a question on ethical investments, the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) provided clarification that the recommendation from the last meeting to

amend the Treasury Management Policy will go to Full Council on 22 February, after which date “Green” Treasury Deposits can be considered as and when the opportunity to invest arises.

Councillor Manley joined the meeting.

A concern was raised about potential negative interest rates. The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) assured the meeting that the best interest rates were always sought. He acknowledged that if interest rates were to become negative this would have a financial impact the Council. There were mechanisms in place, such as quarterly Business Reports and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, to capture any decline in interest rates.

61. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) read out correspondence from Great Torrington Town Council and Mr David Gibbons, Chair of Trustees Great Torrington Museum, in relation to repairs to the lift in the Museum.

Reference was made to funding reserved by Torridge District Council for these repairs and the suggestion that improvements to the Market House/Panier Market were to be removed from the Capital Programme.

Mr Gibbons acknowledged Councillor Bright’s Notice of Motion, which contained a more comprehensive list of works to be carried out to the museum building and the pannier market but emphasised the urgency for the lift repairs.

It was noted that the museum building is grade II listed and is of great significance to Great Torrington’s heritage.

The Chief Executive explained the technicalities of the defect and the measures which had been undertaken to reinstate the lift shaft. These works were completed just before Christmas. The Major Projects & Estates Manager was now looking to address the other works necessary to bring the lift back into full working order. The Chief Executive assured the committee that funding was available for the full repair and the project was still on the works programme.

Councillor Cottle-Hunkin asked that an action be raised to advise when the works to the lift will be finished.

The Head of Legal & Governance reminded members that neither Councillor Bright’s Notice of Motion nor the lift repairs were an agenda item and therefore should not be discussed.

62. 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.

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

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

64. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

65. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020/21 - 2024/25

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the 2021/22 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021/22 – 2025/26. He highlighted the fall in income; expenditure pressures; revenue sources and the impact of declining Government grants. He spoke about the decline in the share of Council Tax received and explained the affects of not increasing Council Tax in previous years. MTFS deficits were presented and the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) warned that, without corrective action, the Transition in Government Funding reserve will be exhausted early in 2023/24. Having shown the shortfall in the Capital Programme, he went on to illustrate how the gap could be bridged.

Community & Resources' approval of the proposed increases to fees and charges (Garden Waste and Car Parking) means that, on the current projections:

- Revenue budgets come into balance by 2024-25
- The Council doesn't exhaust its Transition in Government Funding reserve, which is needed to manage the uncertainties of the funding environment going forward.

Councillor Hodson, Deputy Leader, addressed the meeting, recognising the necessity to maintain service provisions and the need to raise additional funding through fees and an increase in Council Tax. Councillor Hodson endorsed the recommendations in the report.

Councillor James, Leader, re-enforced the comments made by Councillor Hodson.

Both Councillor Hodson and Councillor James acknowledged the excellent presentation given by the Finance Manager (S151 Officer).

Questions/concerns raised by Members and addressed by Officers included:

- Capital Income – sale of 2 assets, Westcombe and Brunswick Wharf did not appear to be included. The Chief Executive explained that the disposal of Westcombe had been built into the Capital Programme in 2017 when the decision to pursue options for a new depot had been taken by Members. Brunswick Wharf will be included in the capital income should the development progress as approved by Full Council.

- Loss of car parking at Brunswick Wharf, had this been built into car parking income? It is anticipated that car parking will be re allocated to other sites in and around Bideford. The Head of Communities & Place confirmed there will be capacity in other car parks and it is envisaged that discussions will take place with the Developer for a residents parking scheme.
- 3-weekly refuse collections was not something which Members had brought forward for inclusion in the Strategic Plan.
- Council Tax increase – the reasoning for the recommendation stated in the report was explained.
- Maintenance/repairs to Town Hall buildings - Information was given in relation to the district council's obligations, under the Local Government Act 1974, to provide office space for town councils. Town Councils were not required to contribute towards the upkeep of the buildings; this was the responsibility of the landlord.
- Sensitivity checks around the increased charges for garden waste and car parking – The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) confirmed that this would be easy to quantify in terms of garden waste but less so for parking, perhaps easier in the town centres but not at tourist locations. It was noted that both Torrington car parks are short and long term and attract the 30p for 30 minutes tariff.

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) clarified that the recommendations to Internal Overview & Scrutiny were in fact a – d in the report and e – h were for noting.

It was proposed by Councillor Cottle-Hunkin, seconded by Councillor Langford and –

Recommended:

That a recommendation be added that the Notices of Motion, as detailed in the report, that is the Pannier Market, the Market and the pool cover, be properly reported, considered and debated, following the proper procedures and not just through the informal workshop.

A recorded vote was taken.

COMMITTEE MEMBER	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
CLLR BOUGHTON, R	X		
CLLR COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X		
MR S DENGATE	X		
CLLR GUBB, J	X		
CLLR HAMES, P	X		

MR I HARPER	X		
CLLR HURLEY, D	X		
CLLR INCH, A			
CLLR LANGFORD, S	X		
CLLR MANLEY, J	X		
CLLR NEWTON, S	X		
CLLR WATSON, P	X		

(Vote: For - unanimous)

It was proposed by Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Manley and -

Recommended:

That the recommendations by Community and Resources to Full Council on the 25th January 2021 be approved, subject to an amendment to d):

- a) Torridge's Band D Council Tax for 2021/22 be increased by £5 (2.96%) from £168.66 to £173.66 per year.
- b) Torridge's Net Revenue Budget 2021/22 is £6.956m
- c) The contributions to the Council's reserves as outlined in paragraph 12.4 are approved.
- d) The new PiDs detailed in Appendix 1 – Capital Report are added to the Council's approved capital programme and the recommendations that the Notices of Motion, as detailed in the report, that is the Pannier Market, the Market and the pool cover, be properly reported, considered and debated, following the proper procedures and not just through the informal workshop.

A recorded vote was taken.

COMMITTEE MEMBER	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
CLLR BOUGHTON, R	X		
CLLR COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X		
MR S DENGATE	X		
CLLR GUBB, J	X		
CLLR HAMES, P	X		
MR I HARPER	X		

CLLR HURLEY, D	X		
CLLR INCH, A			
CLLR LANGFORD, S	X		
CLLR MANLEY, J	X		
CLLR NEWTON, S	X		
CLLR WATSON, P	X		

(Vote: For - unanimous)

The decisions made by Community & Resources were noted:

- a) That the garden waste collection charges currently £35 per annum; is increased by £5 per annum for 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24 at which point the charge will be £50 per annum, as detailed in Appendix 1 Capital Report section 3.7.3
- b) Increase car parking charges within Westward Ho! and Appeldore as detailed in Appendix 1 Capital Report section 3.7.4 (increase phased in over 3 years)
- c) Increase car parking charges within the Towns of Bideford, Holsworthy and Torrington as detailed in Appendix 1 Capital Report section 3.7.4 (increase phased in over 3 years)
- d) Increase other car parking permits charges as detailed in the Appendix 1 Capital Report section 3.7.4

The assurance of the Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer) in relation to the robustness of the budget 2021/22 set out in section 14 of the report was noted.

The assumptions and forecast applied to develop the MTFS outlined in section 9 were noted.

The risks associated with the Budget 2021/22 and MTFS outlined in section 13 were noted.

66. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was reviewed.

It was noted that the March 23 will be brought forward to March 16 at 10.00am.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.48 am

Chair:

Date: