

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Caddsdow Business Support Centre, Bideford, EX39 3BE

Tuesday, 28 September 2021 - 10.00 am

PRESENT	Councillor P Watson (Chair)	
	Councillors J Gubb, P Hames, S Harding, S Langford and S Newton	
	Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper	
ALSO PRESENT	S Hearse	- Chief Executive
	S Dorey	- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
	D Heyes	- Finance Manager (Section 151 Officer)
	J Walter	- Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager
	J Williams	- Public Health & Housing Manager
	P Hudson	- Senior Capital Accountant
	T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
	C Dobbs	- Service Improvement Officer
	K Brown	- Democratic Services Officer

113. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors C Cottle-Hunkin and T Inch.

114. MINUTES

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th August be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For - unanimous)

115. ACTION LIST

The action list was noted with all actions now complete.

Councillor Newton joined the meeting at 10:03am.

116. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

117. 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.

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

No urgent matters were brought forward.

119. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

120. HOUSING SITUATION

The Chair explained why this item had appeared on the agenda and why the Public Health & Housing Manager had been invited.

The Public Health & Housing Manager provided a detailed overview of the service the Housing Options Team provides and the pressures they face.

Statutory duties include re-housing, preventing and relieving homelessness. The Team also administer the Council's application to the Devon Home Choice process. Methods of intervention for re-housing include grants or loan funds for tenants to secure accommodation, typically for deposits and rents in advance. Loan or grant funds are administered to clear rent and/or mortgage arrears to prevent homelessness. Placing people in temporary accommodation is a method to help prevent homelessness.

The Public Health & Housing Manager listed the current types of accommodation TDC use to house people which include hostels owned by the Council, properties rented from private Landlords and Bed & Breakfasts, how these properties are currently occupied was explained and that the Housing Options Team rely heavily on a local holiday park in Westward Ho!

It was advised that the changing housing market during the COVID-19 pandemic had accelerated challenges and led to an increase in homelessness.

The Housing Business Plan includes a review of temporary accommodation strategy and empty properties.

Currently there is a planning application in for a change of use on a TDC property to change from commercial use to residential use to add to the accommodation on offer.

The Public Health & Housing Manager advised she was happy to take questions and gave the following answers:

- there is no blanket approach to people if they have become homeless due to rent arrears and how they are supported by TDC is down to individual circumstances;
- TDC do have an Empty Homes Policy however it is not fit for purpose. The empty homes process is very slow and officer intensive;
- if Members have a resident in need of help, then encourage them to contact the Housing Options Team as soon as possible as advice and support can be given to help prevent homelessness;
- modular housing had been discounted previously due to issues surrounding this topic, however any ideas or suggestions could be put forward to investigate. Talks had taken place with Mid Devon however they have their own housing stock. A suitable site would need to be looked into for modular housing
- the 1st draft of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy would be ready by the end of the year. Workshops had already taken place to discuss this. The Chief Executive advised that legislation at Central Government level would need to change before ideas from the workshop could be implemented however, another option would be through a Devon wide devolution deal;
- pressures do ease slightly in the winter season and it is hard to predict how the situation would be next year;
- the Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) provided advice stating people are entitled to have second properties and if there are in a good state TDC cannot enforce to deprive the owner of the property, however TDC do have some power with properties which are run down;

The Chair thanked the Public Health & Housing Manager for attending.

121. CAPITAL PID PROCESS

The Senior Capital Accountant & Deputy S151 Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to recommend updates to the PID form and process.

At the task & finish group the new Burrows Centre was used to compare the old and the new versions of the form and process.

A short discussion followed and it was agreed that the Climate Statement title on the form include Biodiversity and state Climate and Biodiversity Statement.

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

Resolved: That a 4th box be added to Section 4, Climate & Biodiversity statement, to include the question – How does this project conserve and increase Biodiversity?

(Vote: For - unanimous)

It was proposed by Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Harding and –

Resolved: That the use of the updated PID form and process be approved.

(Vote: For - unanimous)

122. ESTUARY STRATEGY UPDATE FROM T&F GROUP

The Chair presented this item and asked for any comments from Members.

Following queries from Councillor Hames the Strategy, Performance & ICT confirmed the following:

- the Head of Communities & Place had previously advised that Marina development would be looked at in the full review;
- dredging would also be considered during the full review next year;
- by-laws had not been dropped from the Strategy and need to go through the process.

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

Resolved: That a review of the Estuary Strategy is added to the Economic Development Team's Business Plan for 2022/23 using the information from the Internal Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

123. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was discussed and updated.

It was confirmed that the Temporary Home Strategy would be presented to the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2022 before going to Full Council for adoption.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.06 am

Chair:

Date: