

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILINTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETINGTown Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HSWednesday, 2 November 2022 - 10.00 am

- PRESENT
- Councillor P Watson (Chair)
Councillor T Inch (Vice-Chair)
Councillors R Boughton, R Clarke, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Gubb,
P Hames, S Harding and S Langford
- 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 |
| R Haste | - Operational Services Manager |
| T Vanstone | - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer |
| K Brown | - Democratic Services Officer |
- Councillors C Hodson and N Laws

202. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

203. MINUTES

Matters Arising

The ICT, Strategy and Performance Manager confirmed that further information on the Census was due out today and would be brought forward to the next meeting.

Following queries raised, the Chief Executive confirmed there was nothing in place for a review on the Local Housing Allowance or the re-assessment of Council Tax Banding.

It was proposed by Councillor R Clarke, seconded by Councillor S Harding and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th July 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 9, Against – 0, Abstentions - 2)

204. ACTION LIST

There are no outstanding actions.

205. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

206. 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.

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

No matters were brought forward.

208. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

209. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Operational Services Manager attended the meeting to provide an update to Members on the first 6 months of the Grounds Maintenance being back in house.

The first 6 months had been an interesting and successful time and a lot had been learnt.

Details of staff TUPED over were provided and the work involved to ensure a smooth transition. Staff were now happier and with a few changes' standards had improved. Work was now about quality and work was not rushed. With the summer coming to an end the seasonal staff had finished although one had remained in a different team.

Complaints had reduced significantly.

Regular staff meetings had taken place to engage staff which had benefited everyone and the focus was to continually improve the service.

Unfortunately, a break in had occurred at the compound and greenhouses so further security had been implemented. Replacement of the stolen equipment had been sought through the insurance.

The Operational Services Manager was still waiting for one more big machine and had purchased second hand equipment at a reasonable price.

Grass cutting had gone well and under the old contract would have stopped by now.

Positive comments had been received regarding work carried out across the district as a whole and not just in Bideford. Complimentary remarks had been made concerning the flowers following the Queens Jubilee celebrations and work would continue to improve the ongoing maintenance of plants.

Moving forward TDC now had the flexibility to adapt to suit seasons and maintenance routines were not so rigid.

Biodiversity would be looked at in the future.

A shredder mulcher had been purchased and costings already showed its worth.

A discussion followed.

Councillor Inch wanted to thank the Operational Services Manager and team on behalf of the Bideford Rotary Club for the work carried out regarding the planting of 500 bulbs for the PolioPlus Partners Program.

Following a query, it was confirmed that the stolen equipment was replaced like for like.

The Operational Services Manager explained how the shredder mulcher would work and advised he would enquire with Sam Oliver, the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor on leaf collecting in parks.

In response to a query the Operational Services Manager advised he had not received any complaints from the residents of Torrington regarding the standard of maintenance. Torrington is a large area with 12 sites to maintain and when they were inherited, they were in poor condition. These were a priority to bring up to standard with the resources TDC have. He hoped the residents of Torrington had seen improvements like the rest of the district. If Rack Park was not to a satisfactory standard, he was happy to discuss further with any Members.

A request for funding from the volunteers of Rack Park had been received. Advice was given to approach their local Councillor for possible grant money for bulbs.

Members commented that improvement had been seen across the district.

The Operational Services Manager left the meeting at 10.30am.

210. QBR 2

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to receive the quarterly business report for the period ending 30th September 2022. Salient points of the report were highlighted to Members with an

emphasis that the financial pressures of the Council were expenditure led not income led.

Following the presentation of the report questions were asked with the below responses:

It was advised that all options to secure further hostel accommodation were being investigated and that housing crisis was a constant agenda item at Senior Management meetings.

In the event of an increase in Planning appeals, the affect to TDC would be an increase to the overspend.

The remodelling of Barton House hostel would take place once new hostel accommodation had been secured which would then free space in Barton House hostel to enable the work. Until such time remodelling was not viable.

The Chief Executive explained the purpose of the QBR and advised any specific questions in relation to services would need to be directed to the relevant department.

Performance targets within the QBR were set by Members.

Questions on the QBR need to be asked in advance so that a detailed answer can be provided.

The QBR was noted.

QBR Questions and Answers.

Questions regarding the QBR were asked for in writing prior to the meeting to allow Officers time to formulate a response.

The Chair presented the Q&A supplement during which the following additional comments/questions were raised:

- as the Levelling Up bid had yet to been announced alternatives for the development of Middledock had not been investigated;
- to investigate non-statutory activities as a cost centre would require a separate exercise;
- the Senior Accountant (Deputy S151 Officer) is aware of the need for green and ethical investments however is constrained by the Treasury Management policy. The Council cannot afford any loss at present;
- further information was provided regarding the Northern Devon recovery plan and how it had escalated into the set up Northern Devon Futures board. Work was ongoing with agent and partners on producing something tangible that could be reported back to this committee;
- the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report is scheduled to be presented at Full Council on 12th December;

- the Community Project Officer had made contact with Parish Councils regarding the takeover of parks and play areas that TDC own;
- details of new Enforcement staff were given and a company that may investigate older cases. TDC are not obliged to carry out enforcement. When undertaking the review of the QBR Members asked for % to be shown. Powers of prosecution are restricted and progress on Enforcement issues can be made by negotiating;

211. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was discussed and updated.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.30 am

Chair:

Date: