

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILFULL COUNCIL MEETINGCaddsdow Business Support Centre - BidefordMonday, 30 January 2023 - 6.30 pm

PRESENT

Councillor D Bushby (Chair)
 Councillor P Christie (Vice-Chair)
 Councillors R Boughton, D Brenton, C Bright, M Brown, R Clarke,
 C Cottle-Hunkin, R Craigie, A Dart, J Gubb, P Hackett, P Hames,
 C Hawkins, K Hepple, R Hicks, C Hodson, D Hurley, T Inch,
 K James, S Langford, N Laws, C Leather, R Lock, J Manley,
 D McGeough, J McKenzie, S Newton, P Pennington and
 C Woodhouse

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)
K Brown	- Democratic Services Officer
S Cawsey	- Democratic Services Officer
S Ayres	- HR & Comms Manager
C Fuller	- Economic Development Officer
H Smith	- Planning Manager

Mr L Bach – Independent Person

102. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: R Wiseman, L Ford, S Harding, D Jones and P Watson.

103. COUNCIL MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Leather, seconded by Councillor Clarke and -

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Vote: For 22, Abstentions 8)

104. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

106. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

Although there were no Part II items, the Chair advised the meeting may need to go into Part II to discuss confidential matters.

107. TO CONSIDER CORRESPONDENCE OR OTHER BUSINESS ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE DIRECTION OF THE CHAIR

There was no other correspondence or business brought forward by the Chair.

108. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

A Question had been submitted by Councillor Hames under Procedural Rule A9.

In accordance with the Constitution a written answer to the question had been circulated to Members.

Question from Councillor Hames

Regarding the new voter ID requirements for elections please answer the following questions:

1. What work is the Council doing with the groups most affected by the introduction of photo voter ID (young people, older people and people with disabilities), to raise awareness of this new requirement?
2. Has a communication been sent to all households alerting them to this new requirement?
3. How many applications so far have there been locally for the new Voter Authority Certificate (for people who don't have an approved Photo ID)?
4. What progress is being made in recruiting and training polling staff for May's elections?

Councillor Hames

ANSWER

1. The council has a full communication campaign which started this month with social media posts and newspaper articles. We will continue to promote voter id up until election day via newspaper adverts, social media posts and

press releases. All election press releases are distributed to 40 newspaper and media outlets, TDC councillors, 52 parish clerks, 8 village magazines and social media posts reach 8500 users following our Torridge District Council channels. On top of this leaflets will be distributed to libraries and the library van across the District via Libraries Unlimited. We are also looking at distributing leaflets via doctor surgeries. The Electoral Commission has launched a public awareness campaign which includes adverts on TV, radio, billboards and buses, on social feeds and website banners, and in local newspapers across England.

2. Within the council tax bills which will be sent to households at the beginning of March a A5 double sided leaflet will be included informing residents of the voter id requirements. On 22nd March approximately 53,000 Torridge residents who are currently registered to vote will receive a poll card informing them of the additional requirements of id to vote in a polling station.
3. As of Friday 27th January, 14 applications had been received.
4. The Elections team have written to staff who have worked at previous elections asking if they are available to work for the May 2023 elections. So far 250 staff have confirmed that they are available. If we require additional staff once positions have been allocated, then we will advertise locally for this. Once staff have been appointed all polling station staff will receive training prior to working in the polling station.

Councillor Hames asked the following supplementary question:

“Whether a record will be kept of any non-compliance of electors, those failing to produce ID”.

The Chief Executive said the records will show those who have not turned up and provided the above information, but guidance and details are still being reviewed.

109. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

110. LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

The Planning Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to resolve the appropriate way forward with the update of the development plan (the Local Plan).

An update to the report was given by the Planning Manager. Members were informed that a detailed and comprehensive report, which included a series of options, had been considered by the Joint Planning Policy Committee on 27 January 2023. The Committee approved a recommendation to move to a partial review.

Councillor James expressed his concerns regarding the recommendation of a partial review. He stated that there is no clear guide as to what will be included and there are a lot of matters in the policy you cannot do under a partial review, including looking at the Rural Strategy. The Authority has been advised that as part of the levelling up document there will be more additional planning guidance and, in the Autumn, the Environmental Bill is expected which will give more clarity about biodiversity.

Councillor James recommended not carrying out a full review at present, but to go back and ask the Joint Planning Policy Committee at the next meeting what exactly they will be looking at under a partial review.

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

Resolved:

That a decision be deferred until a response is received from the Joint Planning Policy Committee and to be brought back to the April Full Council meeting with full recommendations on the way forward.

(Vote: For 27, Against 3)

111. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND SUBMISSION FOR TORRIDGE

The Economic Development Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to report the details of the approved UK SPF Investment Plan for Torridge.

A detailed and informative slide presentation was given which outlined the salient points within the report.

A brief discussion followed.

Members noted the report.

112. STRATEGIC ASSET PLAN 2023 - 2028

The purpose of the report, presented by the Head of Communities & Place, was to present to Members the draft Strategic Asset Plan for adoption.

Councillor Cottle-Hunkin recommended play areas be listed under recreational. The Head of Communities & Place agreed to this amendment.

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Hackett, seconded by Councillor Inch and –

Resolved:

That the Strategic Asset Plan be adopted as a guiding document subject to the amendment as stated above.

(For – Unanimous)

113. BRUNSWICK WHARF LAND RELEASE FUND

The purpose of the report, presented by the Head of Communities & Place, was to inform Members of the details of conditionality that Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) require in relation to the spend of the Land Release Fund award to Torridge District Council for Quay wall works at Brunswick Wharf and to agree the basis on which the funding should be released to Red Earth.

Following the presentation, it was recommended the meeting move into Part II to discuss confidential matters and proposed recommendations. The meeting to then move back into Part I for further discussion and decision making.

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

Resolved:

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 and Paragraph 10 of Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(Vote: For 26, Against 4)

Mr L Bach, Independent Person left the room and took no part in the debate and decision making.

Councillor James gave an update on discussions that had taken place with the developer in relation to the Grant monies and the associated risks to the Authority.

Members discussed an additional recommendation proposed by Councillor James and seconded by Councillor Inch.

Advice was given by the Head of Legal & Governance.

Following further discussion, it was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Newton that the meeting move back into Part I.

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

The Chief Executive gave clarification on each of the options recommended in the report and the additional recommendation as follows:

“To transfer to the Developer £400k on satisfactory completion of the Quay Wall works to the required standard and the second payment of £400k to be released when the housing development of the site has commenced and a contract in place with a developer for the Housing”.

It was proposed by Councillor Brenton, seconded by Councillor Hepple that a recorded vote be taken, and this was supported by more than five Members as required by the Constitution.

It was proposed by Councillor McKenzie that recommendation a) as set out in the report be accepted. There was no seconder to this motion.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Newton that the additional recommendation as set out above be accepted.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
BOUGHTON, R	X		
BRENTON, D G		X	
BRIGHT, C		X	
BROWN, M	X		
BUSHBY, D	X		
CHRISTIE, PS		X	
CLARKE, R	X		
COTTLE-HUNKIN C	X		
CRAIGIE, R		X	
DART, A L	X		
FORD, L			
GUBB, J	X		
HACKETT, P J W	X		
HAMES, P		X	
HARDING, S			
HAWKINS, C		X	
HEPPLE, K	X		
HICKS, R H		X	
HODSON, C	X		
HURLEY, D	X		
INCH, A T	X		
JAMES, K J	X		
JONES, D			
LANGFORD, S		X	

LAWS, N	X		
LEATHER, C	X		
LOCK, R A	X		
McGEOUGH, D A D	X		
McKENZIE, J		X	
MANLEY, J	X		
NEWTON, S	X		
PENNINGTON, P W		X	
WATSON, P			
WISEMAN, R			
WOODHOUSE, C		X	

(Vote: For 19, Against 11)

Resolved:

That the Council would like a Primary Charge for the release of the £797k on the Land/Property.

If not accepted then the following proposals be put to the Developer:

That TDC would either offer -

That a grant award of £400k be made to Red Earth on satisfactory completion of the Quay Wall works to the required standard to be secured by a subordinate charge. The second grant award of £397k to be released on either the substantive development of the housing on site or the production of a site development contract between Red Earth and a developer for the completion of the housing on the site.

That if none of the above were acceptable to Red Earth then the offer of the funding would be withdrawn and TDC would make contact with OPE to discuss whether the funding could be relocated to another site and if this is not possible then grant funding will be returned.

114. PAY POLICY REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCALISM ACT

Councillor Hames left the meeting at 8.15pm prior to the presentation of the following item.

The Human Resources & Communications Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to invite Members to agree to a Pay Policy statement, in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act.

The report does not ask Members to agree to any changes to the Pay Policy or the remuneration of Senior Officers.

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

Resolved:

That the Pay Policy be approved.

(Vote: For 28, Abstentions 1)

115. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion, but the Chair clarified the reason as to why Councillor Cotte-Hunkins notice of motion had not been included on the Agenda. He explained that in line with the constitution Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility, or which affect the District.

The Chair recommended that if unsure of terminology or wording of a Motion then advice should be taken from Officers prior to putting a Motion forward.

116. PART II - (CLOSED SESSION)

There were no Part II items.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.20 pm