

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Wednesday, 7 December 2022 - 2.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor J Manley (Chair)

Councillors S Harding, C Hawkins, T Inch (substituting for C Leather), S Langford and P Pennington

Independent Person L Bach

ALSO PRESENT

T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
K Hewlett	- Electoral and Democratic Services Officer
T Ireson	- Chair, The Burton
W Collum	- Collections and Exhibition Manager
S Lawrence	- Trustee
R Millard	- Vice Chair, The Burton

166. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cottle-Hunkin, Leather (Councillor Inch substituted), Woodhouse, Independent Person Kenton Baker and Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) Staci Dorey.

167. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Harding, seconded by Councillor Hawkins and—

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on be agreed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 5, Abstentions 2)

168. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests for public participation were received.

169. ACTION LIST

Members reviewed the action list, there was no update in relation to action 137.

In relation to action 154 Chair noted papers circulated between meetings and informed that an email had been sent to Councillor Hellyer.

Although missed as an action at the last CSP meeting members noted that the Public Health and Housing Manager made contact in relation to a question about Anti-Social Behaviour and Houses of Multiple Occupancy in Bideford and provided a detailed response.

170. 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.

171. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

There were no urgent matters.

173. BURTON ART GALLERY

Chair passed over to speakers from Burton Art Gallery and members introduced themselves.

Attending from the Burton were Robert Millard – Vice Chair of Trustees, Warren Collum - Collections and Exhibition Manager, Tim Ireson – Chairman Board of Trustees and Sarah Lawrence - Trustee

Chair of Trustees addressed the committee and provided members with a detailed overview of The Burton at Bideford.

This included how Torridge District Council (TDC) funding is used in the running of the Gallery and the maintenance of the TDC collection. The Art Council funding and National Portfolio Organisation status were explained. It was confirmed that their Art Council grant for 2023-2026 was successful, though it was stated that in real terms it did represent a cut in funding.

The Chair of Trustees went on to highlighted some of the work of the gallery, including the value of some of the exhibitions including the touring exhibitions. The cost of caring for these works was explained and the use and cost of the air conditioning system was highlighted.

The increasing cost pressures were noted and it was confirmed that this financial year The Burton broke even, it was stated they were in a stable financial position.

Community Engagement work was then highlighted, along with some of the strategic drivers for the gallery.

The Collections and Exhibition Manager then provided members with a detailed review of the work of the Burton and highlighted the team and 50 volunteers that support this work.

More detail was provided on all the engagement work with the community and schools and it was confirmed that the Gallery reaches around 200,000 visitors a year, with 15 exhibitions a year.

The variety of collections in the gallery and museum were highlighted for members, along with their role as tourist information point.

It was confirmed that all this was provided to all visitors for free.

Some of the high profile exhibitions partners that the Gallery have worked with were highlighted for members. The Collections and Exhibitions Manager also explained the work that takes place commissioning local artists and touring the Gallery's own collection. The digital access to displays was also highlighted.

Partnership work with organisations was also highlighted along with the support available to vulnerable groups as a result. Work with teachers and schools and a mentoring programme for students were also highlighted.

A slide to demonstrate where funding for the Burton was shared with members. Members were emailed a copy of the presentation slides.

The Trustee Sarah Lawrence then addressed Committee. She explained some of the collaborative work taking place, specifically mentioning Appledore Book Festival and work with the Regeneration Board. As well as partnership work with North Devon Plus to make use of the Burton Art Box as a 'pop up' in Bideford Town.

Finally the Vice Chair summarised some of the work taking place going forward to diversify the Burton's income further through sponsorship and patronage. The role of Friends of Burton was mentioned .

Following the presentation from representatives of the Burton members raised the following questions.

Members asked if there had been any consideration regarding charging for access. Representatives from the Burton went on to explain that, although this had been considered, the aim was to continue to ensure free entry and maintain the community access. Charging would only be considered if the

Burton reached a critical point. The reasons for maintaining donations were explained to members, along with examples of how this was being encouraged and made easier – the introduction of card donations was highlighted.

Members recognised the benefit of having free access to the Burton and how this helped to maintain a broad access from the Community. The importance of being accessible to all was restated by the Chair of the Trustees and an example of positive community engagement work was shared with members.

Members asked about the support to emerging artists within the area and how their works are used. The Collection and Exhibition Manager confirmed that the Burton offer a range of opportunity. It was confirmed that there are 2 open exhibitions where people have the opportunity to show their work – via Bideford and Westward Ho! Art Society - along with a Christmas exhibitions. Their work with schools and the school exhibition was also highlighted, along with the craft gallery, which sells a variety of local artists work. Members were also advised of a project planned with a local developer, which was in the early stages of development and would showcase local artists work.

Members recognised the impact the work of the Burton for the local community and the wider district, alongside the changes in funding allocation.

In response the Chair of Trustees highlighted the recent work to adapt to funding changes and recognised the role of the staff at the Burton in achieving this.

Members highlighted the continued budgetary pressures that the Council are experiencing and the elections in May for a new term for District Councillors. It was asked how the Burton were preparing for more challenge regarding funding from Torridge District Council.

The Chair of Trustees recognised the current financial challenges and explained that strategies were being explored to manage this, however the challenge this presented for the Burton were noted.

Members recognised the number of visitors the gallery were bringing to the area, the community work that takes place and the impact this is having for the communities mental health and wellbeing, especially at the current time with the cost-of-living crisis.

There was a discussion in relation to energy cost increases and work to offset energy costs and the Chair of Trustees explained how the Board were approaching this.

Discussion then moved to how to engage more of the groups who use the town and parks. Improvement of the sign-posting to the gallery from the Town was explored with the Town Council. It was explained that the team were doing their own outreach programme in the park and investigating the use of some of the empty shop fronts in the town to promote the art from the Gallery.

Members asked if membership cards had been explored, given the number of visitors. It was explained that this is the role of the Friends group, but it was noted that the group does need to be rejuvenated. The challenges of this were highlighted as the group is independent of the Burton. This led onto to a discussion around membership as a means of income generation and possible schemes.

Members continued to discuss assess to the Burton and accessibility, along with the issues associated with the tree debris.

Finally members asked about the Long term dream for the Burton, and possible expansion. It was queried if this could be within Bideford or inclusive of other towns. It was recognised that this could be explored and the interest is there, but it was subject to capacity and budget.

174. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

Member's reviewed the forward plan and noted the addition of Active Torridge for the February meeting.

The meeting commenced at 2.14 pm and closed at 3.24 pm