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MEETING OF EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On:	Wednesday 1 February 2023	At:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Town Hall – Bridge Street, Bideford. EX39 2HS		

NOTICE OF MEETING

The meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the YouTube channel - <https://tinyurl.com/TorrigeYouTube>

To:	Councillor J Manley (Chair) Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin (Vice-Chair) Councillors: S Harding, C Hawkins, S Langford, C Leather, P Pennington, R Wiseman and C Woodhouse Non elected Members: K Baker and L Bach
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Members are requested to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the meeting

AGENDA PART I - (OPEN SESSION)

1.	Apologies For Absence To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.
2.	Minutes (Pages 3 - 7) Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 7 December.
3.	Public Participation 15 minute period for public contributions. The deadline for registering to speak is by 5pm on Monday 30 January 2023.
4.	Action List (Page 8) To review the action list with members.

5.	Declaration Of Interests Members with interests should refer to the agenda item and describe the nature of their interest when the item is considered.
6.	Agreement Of Agenda Items Part I and II
7.	Urgent Matters Brought Forward With the Permission Of The Chair
8.	Active Torridge To receive an update from the Active Torridge Head of Leisure Operations, M Wright.
9.	Play Strategy (Pages 9 - 13) To receive an update on the Play Strategy from the Community Project Officer, A Avery.
10.	Consideration Of The Forward Plan (Page 14) To review the Forward Plan.
11.	Exclusion Of The Public The Chair to move:- That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
	Meeting Organiser: Democratic Services
	Centre for Public Scrutiny – website http://www.cfps.org.uk/

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

ACTION LIST

Overview & Scrutiny (External) Committee – 07 December 2022

Minute No.	Raised by	Action	Allocated To	Progress Update	Status
137.	Members	South West Water to provide a copy of the presentation slides and written responses to questions submitted before the meeting, along with a response to questions that were not answered in the meeting.	Alan Burrows, South West Water	Update provided on 20 th July and agreement to keep this action open.	Ongoing
154.	Cllr Cottle-Hunkin	A copy of the report from Dentistry Commissioning Team be chased up.	Democratic Services	Both contacts have been chased, but no report has been received as of 24-10-22. Chair has emailed Cllr Hellyer, awaiting response as of 7 Dec 2023.	Ongoing

REPORT OF

To: External O & S

Subject: Play Area strategy update

Date: 1st February 2023

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update External O & S committee on the progress of actions from the adopted play area strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

In November 2020 proposals were put forward to develop a single Play Area Strategy to help TDC manage and improve sites that had been deteriorating for many years with little improvements or approach for the management of these assets.

The target was to have all TDC play areas up to a 'good' rating by January 2023. In June 2021, TDC adopted the strategy and work began to bring the improvements to life. This report aims to provide an update on progress towards the delivery of that strategy.

2. REPORT

What has moved forward?

Work began immediately to improve communications between teams within TDC to make sure we have a clear plan to make progress. The Community Engagement Officer and members from the property and maintenance team have since met every 2 months to develop an action plan for improving the state of play areas across Torridge where possible and where funding allowed.

It was recognised that not all play areas that were originally listed are truly suitable for play areas due to their size so these have now been classed as social spaces and taken off the play area list. These will be maintained for simple social spaces which we know are as important for members of the public to enjoy. These sites are listed in the attached reports.

One decision that was quickly made is that anything that was broken or needed replacing should be classed as maintenance and therefore the TDC maintenance budget should be used to fix and replace such items. This immediately meant that sites could stay operational rather than equipment just being taken away and not replaced. Adding an item to a site would require separate funding.

Below is a table that highlights the rating of a set number of sites in May 2021



This table shows that our sites were in a worse condition than suggested in the condition report undertaken by Tivoli contractors in 2019, as reported in the strategy.

Excellent	X 4
Good	X 6
Requires Improvement	X 10
Poor	X 13
Total sites	33

Below is the same table but up to date as of December 2022. This includes the fact that the three elements of Victoria Park in Bideford have been split into three reportable sections. Bidford Skate Park has also been added, in line with the maintenance schedule.

Excellent	X 5	Now including Bideford Skate Park
Good	X 17	
Requires Improvement	X 6	+1 since separating Victoria Park sites
Poor	X 1	+1 since separating Victoria Park sites
Total sites	29	

There has been significant progress made in improving TDC play areas. Where sites need improving, work has either started or engagement with communities has taken place.

As things stand we are 4 play area sites away from achieving the January target, however, 3 of these sites have already begun and the other 2 are ongoing projects in Victoria Park which will require further external funding. This will be explained separately.

When all works have been completed, we will again try to offer play areas to local Parish or Town Councils for them to consider managing. This has already been tried but unfortunately no council has offered to take a site on. Probably not surprising considering the condition of some of them. If we can reduce the number of sites we have, this will enable us to save money.

Costs: Since the adoption of the Play Area Strategy, TDC has spent £69,126.16 (as of 18/1/2023) on maintenance and improvements to our play areas. A large amount of this was spent on improving the safety surfaces in many sites.

Spend on "PLAY" job codes on CC 333

2010	REPAIRS AND MTCE RESPONSIVE	56,110.97
2210	PLANNED MAINTENANCE	3,882.00
2318	PLAY EQUIPMENT INSPECTION	1,400.00
2880	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS	7,733.19
	Spend Apr21 to Jan 23	<u>69,126.16</u>



Separately, there is £20,000 S106 funding going into Short Close Play area along with an additional £15,000 contribution from Bideford Town Council towards Short Close (and possibly Chestnut Drive), as agreed by Bideford TC.

Victoria Park:

This site has been largely kept separate from the rest of the strategy improvements other than continued maintenance.

The aim is still to take down the old wooden 'Bidefort' structure and replace that with a new, modern, large-scale item that will attract many local families and will also attract many visitors to the area.

As part of the Rural Prosperity Fund, RDC has applied for £150,347 to use for this improvement.

The junior area is in good condition other than one missing item, which we are looking to replace as soon as possible.

The infant's area will be the next stage to improve, and we will be looking to gain funding through the set up community group to help improve this area.

The community group have had resistance from local organisations to contribute due to TDC not committing any of their own funding. We will continue to work closely together to achieve these goals.

Next steps:

- The aim of the TDC working group is to continue to meet every 2 months to enable us to keep improving our play areas to make sure that all sites achieve the required 'good' rating as soon as possible. At this point it will be essential to then keep on top of future maintenance to make sure they are safe and enjoyable for our families and visitors.
- Have an annual independent inspection of all sites
- Keep raising funds where required for Victoria Park improvements.
- To include a 5 year maintenance plan into the strategy to make sure finances are available to keep on top of these improvements.
- Continue to engage with Parish and Town Councils to establish if there is a desire for them to take on the maintenance of sites within their location.
- Promote and celebrate our play areas where possible to maintain their usage.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

If sites are not in safe condition.

Asset transfer, if any become a possibility for this approach

Financial Implications

Cost of maintaining sites and lack of capital funding available

Human Resources Implications

N/A



Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

Making sure sustainable products are used where possible where funds allow

Equality/Diversity

Making sure sites are available for all users

Risk Management

Making sure all risks are eliminated by having suitable assessments in place

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

Keeping in line with play area strategy and policy DM09 within the local plan (protecting sites from development)

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

N/A

Climate Change

Making sure sustainable products are used where possible where funds allow.

Ward Member and Lead Member Views

Date of Consultation -

4. CONCLUSIONS

A great amount of work has gone into improving our play areas and a lot of funds spent to get us where we are. A good team effort so far. There is more work to be done but we have made a very good start over the last 18 months and look forward to keeping on top of these improvements and seeing how developments at Victoria Park progress, especially if Rural Prosperity funding is forthcoming.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

For Members to keep supporting the work of TDC officers towards delivery of the strategy.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Date of Consultation –

Officers Consulted -

Contact Officer:

Background Papers:





EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – FORWARD PLAN 2022/2023

Cycle 1 01 June 2022 2pm	Cycle 2 20 July 2022 6pm	Cycle 3 14 September 2022 6pm	Cycle 4 01 November 2022 1pm	Cycle 5 7 December 2022 2pm	Cycle 6 01 February 2023 6pm	Cycle 7 15 March 2023 2pm	Cycle 8
<p>Natural Devon – speak to their letter to Torridge District Council.</p> <p>Annual Report</p>	<p>Link Centres & Mental Health service provision</p>	<p>Dentistry – Invite Clinical Commissioning Lead</p> <p>Link Centres & Mental Health service provision</p>	<p>Joint Meeting with North Devon – Community Safety Partnership Update</p>	<p>Burton Art Gallery</p>	<p>Play Strategy Update – Adrian Avery</p> <p>Active Torridge</p>	<p>Healthcare Trust – Update on the merger of the local Health Boards</p>	

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to be invited 2022-23 cycle:

- South West Ambulance Service and First Responders service.
- Alabare North Devon
- Biosphere funding update – Rob Passmore (following TDC award of £18k to progress projects)