

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILFULL COUNCIL MEETINGCaddsdow Business Support Centre - Caddsdow Bideford EX39 3BEMonday, 19 June 2023 - 6.30 pm

PRESENT Councillor D Bushby (Chair)
 Councillor P Christie (Vice-Chair)
 Councillors S Andrews, L Bach, A Brenton, D Brenton, C Bright,
 L Bright, J Craigie, A Dart, T Elliott, L Ford, S Gibson, J Gubb,
 P Hackett, P Hames, S Harding, C Hawkins, K Hepple, R Hicks,
 C Hodson, S Inch, K James, T Johns, C Leather, W Lo-Vel,
 R Lock, S Newton, P Pennington, L Piper, P Shepherd, D Smith
 and C Wheatley

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)
 T Vanstone - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services
 Officer
 K Brown - Democratic Services Officer

Four members of the public.

Three Members from Devon & Cornwall Police – Toby Davies, Ewan Seear and Glyn Clarke

130. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: C Cottle-Hunkin, H Thomas & J Whittaker.

131. COUNCIL MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor R Lock, seconded by Councillor K James and -

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 16, Against – 0, Abstentions - 17)

Newly elected Members voted to abstain as they were not present at the previous meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor S Newton, seconded by Councillor K James and -

Resolved: That the minutes of the AGM meeting held on 22nd May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

132. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There was one Public Speaker.

Mrs Connie Coleman addressed the Council expressing her concern to the potential closure of the mobile library service. She emphasised the positive impact the mobile library service has on the local community, especially in the Countryside. Residents would gather to use the service which would also be a social event for many, however, due to cutbacks and lack of funds the service has slowly diminished. She ended by suggesting that the service be advertised more widely to give more people the opportunity to use the service.

133. 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.

134. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

The Chair advised David Heyes, Finance Manager (S151 Officer) would shortly be retiring. The Chair also advised if any Members would like to contribute to a leaving gift, then to see him after the meeting. A round of applause was given

136. UPDATE FROM THE POLICE

Superintendent Toby Davies attended the meeting to meet the newly elected Members and provide an update on the service. He confirmed his job role as Local Policing Area Commander and covers the area from the North of Devon to West Devon which is broken into four different sectors.

Attending with Toby were two of his colleagues, Ewan Seear, sector inspector for Torridge area and Glyn Clarke, neighbourhood team leader who covers the whole of the Bideford and surrounding area.

Toby explained there are numerous departments and functions in the area however the bulk of the resources were either in control which meant responding to calls and investigating lower-level crime, with investigation teams dealing with higher graded

crime and neighbour teams who are more visible, engaging and preventative. It was offered that if Members wanted more information to speak to either Ewan or Glynn following the meeting to possibly arrange a ride along or visit to the station.

Toby continued to advise that Torridge is one of the safest areas in the country and even in Devon & Cornwall. He articulated how they receive high levels of support from local communities. Emphasis was put on the fact that the output rate for the region was high however there are always challenges. Toby explained how recording of crime had now altered and was now being managed better.

The use of the 101 service was briefly mentioned with Toby advising to engage with the single online homepage for reporting.

He explained increases in resources and that they are still recruiting.

One area that they are particularly aware of is antisocial behaviour (ASB) and the problems this causes. Reassurance was given that this is a priority area for the Police and numerous other agencies are also involved in tackling this. It was confirmed how the new Chief Constable; Will Kerr wants to push visibility and engagement into the policing style and investment would be made here. The importance of reporting any crime, especially ASB was stressed.

The Safer Street scheme was mentioned and the significant impact this had in Barnstaple, reducing ASB by approximately 30/40%. Toby thought that further funding might become available and urged TDC to apply.

Toby explained a new operation called Loki, which involved pulling together resources for a couple of days and flooding a particular location. The lasting effect goes beyond the initial two days with crime and ASB reducing for months because of the lasting memory.

Toby expressed the importance of building a relationship between the Police and the local community which involved the assistance and engagement from Members.

A brief discussion followed.

Following a query, it was confirmed that the PCC are looking to open front desk across the districts. Regarding Safer Street funding, Toby was unsure of any definite details but advised he would approach the PCC and try to find out any further information. He did advise it is match funding.

In response to a further query, Toby advised of the positive work that was ongoing with Bideford College and Cadets to engage more with the younger generation and to build a relationship.

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to approve the appointment of Lead Members, which was deferred at the Annual General meeting.

The Leader spoke in support of what the Chief Executive had reported.

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

Resolved:

That the amendments to the Lead Member titles as included in section 2 of the report be approved.

That the inclusion of one further Lead Member role be approved.

That the Members appointed to each of the Lead Member roles as shown in the table in the report be approved.

(Vote: For – 32, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0)

138. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO ACTIVE TORRIDGE BOARD

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to approve the appointment of Members to Active Torridge Board.

The Leader took the stand and added that both Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin and Councillor L Piper would be an asset to the Board with their specialised areas of expertise.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor P Hackett and –

Resolved:

That the make-up of the Active Torridge Board to replace the Lead Member for Community, Culture and Leisure with the Lead Member for Leisure be approved.

That Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin be appointed as the fourth Member of Active Torridge.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

139. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO WORKING GROUPS

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to approve the appointment of Members to Working Groups for Property & Major Projects, Climate Change and Harbour Board.

The Leader advised the following –

Councillors P Hames, W Lo-Vel, D Smith and C Wheatley to be appointed to make up the Climate Change Working Group, adding that any other Councillors could join the Working Group if they wished.

That Councillor D Bushby in his role as Lead Member for Finance make up the fourth Member of Property & Major Projects Working Group.

As well as Councillor R Hicks in his role as Chair of Community & Resources, Councillors D Bushby, P Christie, C Leather & J Whittaker be appointed to make up the Harbour Board Working Group.

In a response to a query, the Leader advised that the Member Budget Working group would commence again once the new Finance Manager (S151 Officer) was in post.

Councillor P Christie encouraged all Members to attend the Property & Major Projects meetings.

It was confirmed that all these Working Group meetings are held virtually.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor R Lock and –

Resolved:

That the terms of reference for the Climate Change Working Group as highlighted in section 2.1 of the report be approved.

That 3 Members be appointed to the Working Group and the 3 Members approved were Councillors W Lo-Vel, D Smith and C Wheatley.

That the fourth Member to be appointed to the Property and Major Projects Working Group as highlighted in section 2.2 of the report is Councillor D Bushby.

That the four Members to be appointed to the Harbour Board as highlighted in section 2.3 of the report be Councillors D Bushby, P Christie, C Leather and J Whittaker.

(Vote: For – 31, Against – 0, Abstentions – 2)

For Councillor Brenton to be appointed a Member of Harbour Board an additional report would need to be presented at a future Full Council meeting to be approved.

140. CALL IN FROM INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY RE THE PLOUGH

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was to resolve whether to support the decision of Community and Resources Committee, in January 2023, to agree to an unbudgeted contribution of £10,000 per year for three years towards the running costs of the Plough Arts Centre and if so, how that commitment is funded.

The Leader added to the presentation and moved the recommendations in the report.

A discussion took place.

Councillor L Bright declared an interest as a Torrington Town Councillor and visitor to the Plough Arts Centre. She also stood and spoke in support of the Plough detailing all that takes place there and the importance of the Centre to the local and wider communities across the district. She proposed an amendment to the recommendations in the report in that TDC contribute £25,000 per year.

Councillor D Smith supported Councillor L Bright and seconded her proposal.

Councillor C Bright called for a recorded vote to take place.

The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) addressed the Committee advising that as this item had already been to Community & Resources and Internal Overview and Scrutiny no further recommendations could be made. The only reason this item had been brought back to Full Council was for budget implications and only the recommendations in the report would stand.

It was confirmed by the Chief Executive that a further Notice of Motion would be required in the future for any amendments to funding.

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

Resolved:

That Members support the Community and Resources Committee resolution that a contribution of £10k per year for a period of three years be approved and that £30k is ring-fenced and set aside from the draft 2022-23 budget surplus.

A recorded vote took place.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
ANDREWS, S	X		
BACH, L	X		
BRENTON, A	X		
BRENTON, D	X		
BRIGHT, C	X		
BRIGHT, L	X		
BUSHBY, D	X		
CHRISTIE, P	X		
COTTLE-HUNKIN C			

CRAIGIE, J	X		
DART, A	X		
ELLIOTT, T	X		
FORD, L	X		
GIBSON, S	X		
GUBB, J	X		
HACKETT, P	X		
HAMES, P	X		
HARDING, S	X		
HAWKINS, C	X		
HEPPLE, K	X		
HICKS, R	X		
HODSON, C	X		
INCH, S	X		
JAMES, K	X		
JOHNS, T	X		
LEATHER, C	X		
LO-VEL, W	X		
LOCK, R	X		
NEWTON, S	X		
PENNINGTON, P	X		
PIPER, L	X		
SHEPHERD, P	X		
SMITH, D	X		
THOMAS, H			
WHEATLEY, C	X		
WHITTAKER, J			
TOTAL - 36			

(Vote: For – unanimous)

141. PURCHASING ENERGY VIA FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to approve Torridge Membership of the Devon Energy Purchasing Consortium.

During the presentation Councillor Ford left the room at 7.33pm and returned at 7.36pm, therefore could not participate in the vote.

A brief discussion took place.

It was confirmed that TDC would benefit from a reduction if it were to occur.

Following a query, the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) stated that possibly 25% of the Devon councils are in with Laser.

Devon County Council are leading on procurement and this is their recommendation. It would be for a fixed term of one year and the energy price cap is aimed more at domestic use rather than commercial.

Regarding concern about renewable energy the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) advised to send any concerns to him and he would forward to Devon County Council.

It was recommended to defer the item and a further report to be brought back at a future meeting with more information on renewable energy. The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) advised that the deadline for the decision was September 2023 and if the decision was not made in the timeframe specified then the Authority would have to stand alone and as TDC only has one Procurement Officer this would be a big task.

It was proposed by Councillor R Lock, seconded by Councillor A Dart and –

Resolved:

That Torrington Council joining with other members of the Devon Council Energy Group in contracting with Laser Energy Group (part of Kent County Council) to procure gas and electricity for the period 1st October 2024 – 30th September 2028 be approved.

(Vote: For – 27, Against – 1, Abstention – 4)

142. FINANCIAL PROCEDURES - APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AUDIT & GOVERNANCE

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was to report on proposed changes to the Council's Financial and Contract Procedure rules.

It was proposed by Councillor P Hackett, seconded by Councillor S Newton and –

Resolved:

That the revised revisions to the Financial and Contract Procedure rules detailed in the report as recommended by Audit & Governance be approved.

(Vote: For – 32, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0)

143. HOUSING BENEFIT & COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - WAR PENSION & ARMED FORCES COMPENSATION SCHEMES

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to approve the adoption of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Policy for war widows/widowers of members of the armed forces and those receiving a disability related pension arising from their service within the armed forces.

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

Resolved:

That the policy for full disregards for War Widows/(Widowers) and disability related pensions arising from service with the armed forces be approved.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

144. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

Two questions had been submitted, one by Councillor D Brenton and one by Councillor P Pennington, under Procedural Rule A9.

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

Councillor D Brenton's question

Re: 4 May 2023 Local Election

How many Torridge residents failed to produce photo ID and were turned away from voting?

How many returned with the acceptable ID?

What are the numbers rejected at each Polling Station:

- (a) Initial refusal?
- (b) Return acceptance?

What the numbers of citizens convicted of voter fraud in England?

Councillor DG Brenton
Bideford South

15 June 2023

ANSWER

At the 4th May District & Parish election; 50 residents turned up at the polling station without acceptable ID. 17 of these went away and returned later on with acceptable voter ID meaning that 33 voters were unable to vote.

The numbers rejected at each Polling Station are listed on the table below:

Polling Station Number	Polling Place	Number of voters who were not issued with a ballot paper	How many voters came back and were issued with a ballot paper
1	Abbotsham Village Hall	1	1
7	Ethelwynne Brown Close	3	1
9	Bideford Young People`s Centre	2	0
11	Londonderry Mobile Unit	2	1
12	Bideford College	1	0
17	Bradworthy Methodist Chapel	2	0
21	Buckland Filleigh Parish Hall	1	0
24	Clovelly Parish Hall	1	1
25	Dolton & Dowland Village Hall	2	0
26	Frithestock Village Hall	1	0
27	Torrington Methodist Church Hall	4	4
29	Great Torrington Community College	1	1
34	Holsworthy Memorial Hall	2	0
36	Chilsworthy Village Hall	1	1
38	Langtree Parish Hall	1	0
39	Littleham Methodist Schoolroom	1	0
41	Taddiport Village Hall	1	0
44	Monkleigh Village Hall	1	0
46	Windmill Lane - Council Chamber	1	0
47	Windmill Lane - Council Chamber	1	0
48	Westward Ho! - Kingsley Hall School Room	1	0
53	Appledore Community & Sports Hall	2	2
56	Parkham - Allardice Hall	2	1
57	Peters Marland - Moore-Stevens Hall	1	0
58	Petrockstowe - Baxter Hall	4	2
59	Pyworthy Village Hall	1	0
66	Tetcott - The Arscott Hall	1	0
67	Thornbury Holiday Park	1	0
71	Putford - Old School House	1	0
72	Winkleigh Community Centre	5	2
75	East the Water - Pollyfield Centre,	1	0
	Total	50	17

Electoral Commission data for the May 2021 elections state that there were 317 cases of alleged electoral fraud investigated by the police during 2021. There was one conviction and one acquittal. Kent Police issued cautions to two people for the same offence of personation. A woman used her mother's polling card to try to vote in a local government election after her father suggested doing so. The polling station staff suspected that she was not the voter named on the polling card. Father and daughter both accepted a caution after the police had obtained advice from the Crown Prosecution Service.

Councillor D Brenton asked that TDC write to the LGA asking to lobby central government to abolish Voter ID.

Councillor P Pennington's Question

Would like to ask the following questions.

Re Council Tax Support - Exceptional Hardship Fund Year 2022/3

1. How much was in the fund?
2. How many applications were made?
3. What was the total amount of payments made?
4. How many awards were made?
5. What was the average value of an award?
6. Did any applicant appeal the decision of an award?

Councillor P Pennington
14 June 2023

Answer

- 1 £27k in the fund.
- 2 13 applications were made.
- 3 £1633.18 was the total amount of payments made.
- 4 8 awards were made.
- 5 The average value of an award was £204.15.
- 6 1 person asked for a reconsideration where the decision was upheld.

Councillor P Pennington stood to speak about his experience when he was canvassing for the election and the fact that there were residents in his area that were not claiming benefits they were entitled to. He asked Councillor S Newton in his role as Chair of Internal Overview & Scrutiny to be pro-active in making people aware of their benefit entitlement.

145. **PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

146. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

(a) Written Notice of Motion from Councillor Brenton

That TDC set up a Working Group to evaluate and monitor the pollution and water quality of the river Torridge plus tributaries and coastal waters.

The Group will have the remit to invite outside bodies who have an interest in the water environment to contribute.

Each TDC political group would have a representative and report findings to Overview & Scrutiny External for further action.

Councillor D Brenton presented his Notice of Motion.

A brief discussion followed where several Members voiced their support of the Motion.

It was proposed by Councillor D Brenton, seconded by Councillor P Christie and –

Resolved:

That a specific Working Group be established to evaluate and monitor the pollution and water quality of the river Torridge plus tributaries and coastal waters.

(Vote: For – 20, Against – 2, Abstentions – 11)

The motion was carried.

(b) Written Notice of Motion from Councillor Wheatley

We are proposing a notice of motion regarding the potential mobile library service closure to be replaced with a voluntary scheme with no detail from Devon County Council. During our election campaign both Cllr Cottle-Hunkin and myself were approached by many people in the local community who were concerned about mobile library closures and what is to replace it? Mobile libraries have not been promoted well in recent years and many elderly and infirm people, as well as young families, rely on the service often in locations with limited access to transport. Certainly more detailed information about the voluntary scheme needs to be forthcoming and we propose the council writes a letter to Devon County Council highlighting these concerns and asks for more details on the potential closures and future services that would replace it.

Councillor C Wheatley presented his Notice of Motion.

It was proposed by Councillor C Wheatley, seconded by Councillor S Andrews and –

Resolved:

That the council writes a letter to Devon County Council highlighting these concerns and asks for more details on the potential closures and future services that would replace it.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

147. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

148. PART II - (CLOSED SESSION)

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.22 pm

Chair:

Date: