

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILFULL COUNCIL MEETINGCaddsdow Business Support Centre - Caddsdow Bideford EX39 3BEMonday, 30 October 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, L Piper, 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
 P Gilbert - Public Health & Community Safety Manager
 K Brown - Democratic Services Officer
 S Cawsey - Democratic Services Officer

186. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

187. COUNCIL MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor C Leather, seconded by Councillor R Lock and -

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 167 – Public Contribution

Councillor Hames recommended that to make it clearer, the words “car parking” be added before “residential permit options ...”

(Vote: For – 25, Against – 0, Abstentions - 5)

It was proposed by Councillor S Inch, seconded by Councillor S Harding and -

Resolved: That the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 2nd October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 26, Against – 0, Abstentions - 4)

188. ACTION LIST

The Action List was discussed and updated.

189. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no Public Contributions.

190. 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.

191. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

The following matter was brought forward by the Leader, Councillor James:

Councillor James gave a summary of a meeting with the Levelling Up Minister and Sir Geoffrey Cox MP attended by himself and the Chief Executive. A more detailed report will be presented at the December meeting of Full Council.

The update included:

This is the first meeting with the Minister since Torridge was an area designated to work in partnership with the Government on this Policy initiative, which has also been given to 19 other areas with £400m allocated to this area of work.

The Minister made it clear the start of the Partnership will commence in line with the timetable provided to TDC which is March 2024.

The process is as follows:

The official launch in March 2024 will involve a number of officials from the Levelling Up Team (LUT) undertaking a deep dive at Torridge analysing data and information relating to TDC and considering the format of interventions that would level up TDC. The LUT will also be meeting with key stakeholders from various sectors and organisations.

In advance of this phase the LUT with our Officers team will be collating data, evidence and information and constructing a TDC story around what makes Torrington what it is, and that will be the good and the challenging and what the vision is for the area.

TDC Officers will also consolidate with others the strategic based documents that pull together, and we will be working to shape TDC, such as with Northern Devon Economic Strategy and our own Strategy that is being put together recently as a Council.

In terms of more specific project development phases, the Minister made it clear that any specific project must be data led and clearly evidenced to achieve fundamental changes in the challenges faced by our residents in our community.

193. PRESENTATION BY SANDY BROWN - ARTIST

Councillor L Ford arrived at 18.48pm

The Chair welcomed Sandy Brown, Artist in clay, to the meeting who gave a slide presentation showing her works.

She said she had been an artist in clay and colour for over 50 years using Devon clay. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held in USA, Australia, China, Germany and South Africa. She had also been invited to present her work at International Ceramics conferences in USA, Spain, Germany, France, Australia, China and South Africa.

There are over 46 museums worldwide who hold pieces of her work in their collections. Her work is also featured in over 50 books and in numerous magazines and newspapers and has also featured many times on TV.

Sandy Brown made a request to TDC to acquire “the Temple” which is a major artwork. It would, she said, offer a rich and long lasting contribution to the local community and would show the way forward for all District Councils to provide a spiritually uplifting, non-denominational space for rituals, marriages, memorials and ceremonies. The suggested location for the Temple was Victoria Park.

In terms of costs, she had received two individual valuations at £1m, but said she was only looking to recover her costs of £350k.

Sandy invited all Members and Officers to her Studio at Appledore to view the artwork.

The Chair, Councillor Bushby, thanked Sandy Brown for her presentation.

194. HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY FOR BETTER CARE FUND

The Public Health and Community Safety Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to review and update the Authority's Housing Assistance Policy for the Better Care Fund (BCF).

The main concern raised by Members was the underspend. The Public Health & Community Safety Manager stated that the majority of Authorities run on an underspend. He addressed the concerns as follows:

- Have to rely on recommendations from referrals and it starts with Occupations Therapist. If no referral is received then cannot spend the money.
- Communication concerns – Officers do go out to the public to raise awareness including GP Surgeries.
- Councillor D Brenton put forward suggestions to raise awareness and expressed opinion that there is a potential to get information out into the public more than is currently being undertaken. Legal advice and the process involved was given by the Head of Legal & Governance (& Monitoring Officer).

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

Resolved:

That the revised Housing Assistance Policy for the Better Care Fund be adopted and agreed to the publication (introduction) date of 01 December 2023.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

Councillor Ford left the meeting at 7.12 pm and did not take part in the vote.

195. COUNCIL TAX - CARE LEAVERS DISCOUNT POLICY

The Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to approve the adoption of an Exceptional Hardship Policy, Care Leavers Discount.

It was proposed by Councillor S Newton, seconded by Councillor D Bushby and –

Resolved:

That a Council Tax Care Leavers Policy be agreed.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

196. ADOPTION OF CCTV POLICY

The Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was to seek approval for adoption of the CCTV Policy.

The Head of Legal & Governance (& Monitoring Officer) asked that Members allow Officers to make amendments for addition or removal of sites without the need for a report to be brought to Members.

It was proposed by Councillor D Bushby, seconded by Councillor D Smith and –

Resolved:

That the CCTV Policy be adopted.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

197. CYCLE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2024/25

The Chief Executive presented this item, the purpose of which was for Members to approve the programme of committee meetings for 2024/25.

It was proposed by Councillor D Bushby, seconded by Councillor S Harding and –

Resolved:

That the proposed programme of committee dates for 2024/25 be approved.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

198. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

One question was submitted under Procedural Rule A9.

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

Question from Councillor A Brenton

What is the estimated/actual cost of alterations to the Caddsdwn Conference room to accommodate Full Council Meetings? e.g. microphone equipment and communication and display requirements to enable full public participation. Has a risk assessment been carried out on this room and if so, when?

Councillor A Brenton
25 Oct 2023

Answer

Full Council meetings have been accommodated at Caddsdwn Business Support Centre since August 2021. There are currently no additional costs for the Council to hold Full Council at Caddsdwn Business Support Centre. The Caddsdwn Business Support Centre is fully equipped to enable full public participation. We have not received any complaints from Members of the public in relation to holding Full Council meetings at Caddsdwn. A risk assessment was carried out on 17 August 2023.

199. **PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

200. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

There were four notices of motion.

(a) Written Notice of Motion from Councillor Christie

“Over the last decade SWW have, with very few exceptions, answered TDC’s statutory consultation over planning applications with a simple answer of “Has no objection”. Clearly, given the current state of our rivers and coastal waters there is a major problem – and it appears to be overlooked that SWW have a vested interest in more development as it means more customers locked into paying them as water and sewage services are a monopoly service.

I propose that TDC demand to know from SWW how they can justify their bland responses?

Further that TDC contact all other district/unitary councils in Devon asking them to join us in requesting that the Government remove SWW from the list of statutory consultees and appoint an independent organisation to oversee new developments vis-à-vis water availability and sewage capacity”.

Councillor Christie presented his Notice of Motion.

A brief discussion followed during which several Members voiced their support for the Motion.

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

Resolved:

- That a letter be sent to SWW demanding to know how they can justify their bland responses.

- That TDC contact all other district/unitary councils in Devon asking them to join us in requesting that the Government remove SWW from the list of statutory consultees and appoint an independent organisation to oversee new developments vis-à-vis water availability and sewage capacity.

(Vote: For – 29, Against – 0, Abstention – 1)

(b) Written Notice of Motion from Councillor Lo-Vel

“I propose that the excessive parking charges for the use of Bideford Quay for charitable events such as the Rotary Water Festival, should be waived.

The fact that "for some years" it has been Council policy to charge "all events that require exclusive use of the car park a fee equivalent to what the Council 'might' earn from that car park on that day" is not a good enough reason to continue to do so.

I firmly believe that the financial gains of such events to the town are considerable and are of more benefit to the Council than the average local on the day parking receipts would be if they were not to take place.

I think that these events need to be recognised and supported as they often raise money for services which Torridge has cut back funding for. They bring positive benefits to Traders and the Council by increasing the number of visitors to the town (most of whom will utilise and pay for alternative car parking) and are of considerable local community benefit supporting wellbeing and happiness”.

Councillor Lo-Vel presented her Notice of Motion.

Following a brief discussion, it was proposed by Councillor W Lo-Vel, seconded by Councillor D Bushby and –

Resolved:

That the Notice of Motion be referred to the Member Budget Working Group to investigate if parking charges on Bideford Quay could be waived when a charitable event is taking place.

(Vote: For – 28, Against – 0, Abstentions – 2)

(c) Written Notice of Motion from Councillor Craigie

“Torridge District Council recognises that tourism plays a large part of the economic activity of the District and that Heritage tourism adds

£1.9 Billion to the South West economy (£96.6m Northern Devon) every year. As the highest value added form of tourism, heritage tourism offers a strong contribution to the levelling up agenda and will form elements of levelling up to be submitted by the District Council. We therefore call on Torridge to support the consortium of Heritage Charities and voluntary bodies working on 'Bideford Heritage Harbour' designation for the tidal zone of the Torridge adding significantly to crucial levelling up objectives. A significant portion of the £90,000 funding given by central government for the levelling up partnership bid over 2 years, should be made available to the consortium led by Way of the Wharves and The Freshspring Trust for the heritage harbour designation. £15,000 should be ring fenced for the creation of a district wide Heritage Development Trust Business Plan. The Trust is estimated to bring over £2.5 million inward investment into elevating heritage tourism and return of the schooner "Kathleen and May" that a team are working to secure funding for, based on it's valuation of £500,000".

Councillor Craigie presented his Notice of Motion.

Councillor James did not agree to ring fencing £15k of the Levelling Up Fund as this would put other projects at risk.

It was proposed by Councillor J Craigie, seconded by Councillor A Brenton and –

Resolved:

That £15,000, of the £90,000 funding given by central government for the levelling up partnership, should be ring fenced for the creation of a district wide Heritage Development Trust Business Plan

(Vote: For – 7, Against – 15, Abstention – 8)

The motion was lost.

(d) Written Notice of Motion from Councillor Brenton

“That TDC holds its Full Council meeting back in Bideford Town Hall for the following reasons:

- Caddsdwn is too remote, ie it is not on a regular bus route.
- The acoustics are poor.
- There are blind spots in the Chamber where the public cannot see which Councillor is speaking.
- Limited seating for the public compared with the Town Hall”.

Councillor Brenton presented his Notice of Motion.

A brief discussion followed.

It was proposed by Councillor D Brenton, seconded by Councillor C Leather and –

Resolved:

That it be agreed for TDC to hold its Full Council meeting back in Bideford Town Hall.

(Vote: For – 12, Against – 17, Abstention – 1)

The motion was lost.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.03 pm