

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILEXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETINGTown Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HSTuesday, 13 June 2023 - 10.00 am

PRESENT	Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin (Chair)
	Councillor A Brenton (Vice-Chair)
	Councillors D Bushby (present as substitute for Councillor Bach), S Harding, C Hawkins, C Hodson (present as substitute for Councillor Shepherd), D Smith and H Thomas
ALSO PRESENT	S Dorey - Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
	T Vanstone - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
	K Hewlett - Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

187. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bach, Councillor Craigie, Councillor Shepherd and Kenton Baker (Independent Person).

Councillor Bushby was present as a substitute for Councillor Bach and Councillor Hodson was present as a substitute for Councillor Shepherd.

188. MINUTES

Chair reviewed the minutes from 1<sup>st</sup> February and 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and advised that the notes from the 15<sup>th</sup> March were for noting as the meeting was inquorate.

It was proposed by Councillor Cottle-Hunkin, seconded by Councillor Harding and

Resolved:

That the minutes of Wednesday 1 February 2023 be confirmed as a correct record of the meeting.

(Vote: yes 4, abstentions 4)

Members noted the minutes of Wednesday 15 March 2023.

189. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

190. ACTION LIST

Chair reviewed the action list with members and the following updates were agreed:

Action 154 Dentistry Provision – Agreement to follow up this action with the Leader of Devon County Council John Hart and the Cabinet Lead for Health and Social Care requesting the latest position on bidding for contracts and the specific committee that has responsibility for Dentistry.

Action 192 Our Future Hospital - During discussion it was agreed that, as Committee membership had changed since this meeting took place, the meeting notes and presentation would be emailed to members. If there were any further questions, it was agreed these would be emailed to the presenters.

It was also suggested that the letter be forwarded to the MP for North Devon, given that the hospital is in their area.

191. 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.

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

Chair noted that the letter to Geoffrey Cox, which was attached as a supplementary item to this agenda item, had already been discussed whilst reviewing the action list.

Chair advised that she had been contacted by a fellow Councillor regarding the proposed closure of the local Link Centre. Chair asked members for their agreement to write to the Chief Executive for Devon County Council, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care raising concern and asking for someone to attend External and advise what is happening to support mental health outcomes in the area.

It was proposed by Councillor Cottle-Hunkin, seconded by Councillor Smith and

Resolved:

That a letter be sent to Devon County Council Chief Executive, Leader and the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care (Councillor McInnes) raising concerns regarding the proposed closure of the Link Centre.

(Vote: for, unanimous)

Following the vote members advised of a scrutiny meeting taking place today at Devon County Council where the outcome of the consultation process on this proposed closure was an agenda item. There was suggestion that any minutes from the meeting would be circulated if possible.

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) confirmed that TDC had responded to the consultation and raised their concerns regarding the impact of the closure.

193. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

No items.

194. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCRUTINY ROLE

The Head of Legal and Governance provided members with a detailed presentation regarding the role of Scrutiny Committee. It was also confirmed that joint training with the members of Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee was also being arranged.

Training detailed the duty to hold scrutiny meetings as set out in the Local Government Act 2000, along with what this means in terms of the work of TDC and it's statutory responsibilities.

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) explained the role of a 'critical friend' and shared the terms of reference for both scrutiny committees.

The Call in process at TDC, as noted in the Council's constitution, was explained. There was a query in relation to the timeframes for call in and members were advised it was 5 working days, and this did not include Saturday.

More detail was provided regarding petitioning and requesting officer or members to attend Committee. Examples were provided of the previous speakers and the requirements on those funded by TDC to attend and report to External.

A list of organisations that spoke to the previous External Overview & Scrutiny Committee was shared with members. The importance of calling in the organisations that TDC fund was restated.

Finally, the LGA scrutiny handbook was highlighted to members as a useful resources.

Members were asked for their questions:

Members asked about work with the Police and the Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) advised of some of the joint work taking place and stated reports on community safety work could be shared. During discussions it was suggested that more regular meetings with TDC officers and

the Torridge Sector Inspector may help manage current issues being experienced, specific mention was made of the Bideford area.

The Head of Legal & Governance advised that Chief Inspector Toby Davies was due to attend the next Full Council.

Following a question regarding the call in process the Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) explained External O&S were more able to compel organisations to attend committee when TDC provide funding due to contractual obligation. It was explained that outside organisation we don't fund can be invited to attend, but this obligation is not as strong.

#### 195. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

Chair reviewed the forward plan with members and highlighted the list of Organisations received funding from TDC. The following additions were made:

- **19th July** – DCC Mental Health provision and the outcome of the Link Centres consultation. An invitation to be extended to DCC Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care.
- **13th September** – Community Safety Partnership. A joint Committee with North Devon, which is Chaired by Chief Inspector Toby Davies.
- **1st November** – Employment and education. Extending invitations to Harland and Wolf regarding positive work on apprenticeships & growing workforce. Include local education providers.

Members discussed some of the other areas that the Committee wished to explore and the following suggestions were made:

- Environment Agency invite regarding flood defences work and partnership working
- Police services and crime prevention. Workshop day with Police to gain more insight into the different work taking place on neighbourhood policing. ASB, speed watch, modern day slavery and road safety. It was suggested that the bitesize sessions delivered in 2019 maybe beneficial for the wider Council.
- Invitation extended to Pickwell, who work with the refugee community in the area.
- Middle dock and University of Exeter and Plymouth. It was explained that a briefing for new members was already planned and details would be shared once available.
- Health and Social Care within the Torridge area – the extent of child poverty and food poverty rates. Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) advised that TDC are working closely with TTSV, Encompass and Navigate on the household support fund and would be happy to attend.
- Invitation to local Housing Providers regarding the issues being experienced in terms of help for homelessness, housing issues.
- Invitation to DWP and the impact for those who are not in employment or education.

- North Devon Plus.
- Encompass.

During a discussion on Community Land Trust (CLT) it was advised that a report would be going to Full Council shortly and that members could approach Councillor James on this matter. It was further explained that although External are not able to make recommendations such as the one made, they were able to call in decisions.

There was discussion regarding grouping some of the issues into one meeting where several organisations join a panel where questions were provided in advance of the meeting.

It was agreed to keep some meetings for the year free to ensure the Committee could be responsive to local need.

The above list will be added the forward plan for reference.

The meeting commenced at 10.01 am and closed at 11.10 am