

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Tuesday, 12 November 2024 - 10.00 am

PRESENT

Councillor S Newton (Chair)
Councillor C Hodson (Vice-Chair)
Councillors T Elliott, S Inch, W Lo-Vel, D Smith and C Wheatley
(substituting)

Non-elected Members Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper

ALSO PRESENT

S Hearse	- Chief Executive
G Bryant	- Finance Manager (S151 Officer)
J Walter	- Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager
G Batten	- Principal Accountant
T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
K Brown	- Democratic Services Officer

Councillors: P Hames, K James and P Pennington

346. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillor C Bright and Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin.
Councillor C Wheatley substituted for Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin.

347. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor S Inch, seconded by Councillor D Smith and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2024 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 7, Against – 0, Abstentions - 2)

Matters Arising

Minute 343 - Following a query enquiring to an update on the Estuary Strategy, the Chair confirmed he would provide an update at the Action List.

348. ACTION LIST

The Action List was discussed and updated.

349. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

350. 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.

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

No urgent matters were brought forward.

352. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

353. QBR 2

The Strategy, Performance and ICT Manager along with the Principal Accountant presented the QBR 2 highlighting key areas such as local economy, community health & housing, environment, financial variances, key income streams, salaries monitoring, temporary accommodation costs, capital expenditure and reserves and investments.

A discussion took place.

Following a query, the Principal Accountant confirmed that the £212,000 set aside for environment is assigned for Torrington Cemetery and Linear Defence.

The Principal Accountant also confirmed that the banking favourable variance was bank interest received on deposits.

Officers were given recognition for the work conducted to reduce temporary accommodation costs.

Subsequent to the presentation of the QBR 2 the discussion progressed onto the Question and Answer supplement with the following being highlighted.

The Principal Accountant confirmed that the change to the employer NIC for the 2025 budget should read £247k not £274k. The Chief Executive added that the Government had indicated that the Public Sector might be protected however no further information had been released confirming this. He advised that the LGA are campaigning on behalf of Local Authorities to ascertain this level of detail.

The efforts made by Torridge District Council to address Temporary Accommodation were discussed and how the Housing Options Team try to avoid using spot purchases.

Supporting the answer given by the Senior Accountant regarding the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre project exceeding budget, the Chief Executive assured Members, detailing measures in place to manage the budget, however as with any large project there could be unforeseen costs involved.

Following a brief debate surrounding the replacement of the refuse fleet and the budget, Members were informed that a Budget Special Member Briefing session might take place before Christmas where Members would be invited to attend and input on the budget setting process for 2025/26.

In response to further concern regarding the Council's Ethical Investments, the Chief Executive explained in detail the process the Council follows. He also advised that the Council does not have the capacity or expertise to investigate what financial institutions are involved with. The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) supported comments made by the Chief Executive and added that the Council are successfully operating the Ethical Treasury Management Policy however in future budget setting processes other investment companies could be considered.

A further update was given on the Housing Delivery Lead position and the response received succeeding the most recent advertisement.

The Strategy, Performance and ICT Manager confirmed it is possible to amend the progress indicators on the current projects to show in more detail the level of progress.

Questions were raised on the key indicator chart attached to the Question and Answer supplement, to which the Chair responded by confirming that the information contained was historic and was being used, purely as an example.

354. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was discussed and updated.

It was confirmed that an update on the EV Charging Points would be tracked through the action list and not forgotten and brought forward to a future meeting when a more definite update can be provided.

355. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

It was proposed by , seconded by and -

Resolved:

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 and Paragraph 10 of Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

(Vote:)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 12.00 pm

Chair:

Date: