

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILFULL COUNCIL MEETINGCaddsdow Business Support Centre - Caddsdow Bideford EX39 3BEMonday, 24 February 2025 - 6.30 pm

PRESENT Councillor D Bushby (Chair)
 Councillor D Smith (Vice-Chair)
 Councillors S Andrews, L Bach, A Brenton, D Brenton, C Bright,
 C Cottle-Hunkin, A Dart, T Elliott, S Gibson, J Gubb, P Hackett,
 P Hames, S Harding, R Hicks, C Hodson, S Inch, K James,
 T Johns, C Leather, W Lo-Vel, R Lock, S Newton, P Pennington,
 T Tinsley, H Thomas and C Wheatley

ALSO PRESENT	S Hearse	- Chief Executive
	G Bryant	- Finance Manager (S151 Officer)
	S Dorey	- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
	S Kearney	- Head of Communities & Place
	S Ayres	- HR & Comms Manager
	P Hudson	- Deputy S151 Officer
	G Batten	- Principal Accountant
	S Piper	- Senior Accountant
	C Davies	- Trainee Accountant
	T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
	K Brown	- Democratic Services Officer

380. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: L Bright, L Ford, C Hawkins, K Hepple, L Piper, P Shepherd and J Whittaker.

381. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no Public Contributions.

382. 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.

383. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

The Chair announced that Friday, 28th February, will be the final working day for the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) at Torridge District Council. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair extended best wishes to him for success in his new role

385. BUDGET 2025/26, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 - 2029/30

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider the recommendations from Community & Resources Committee on the 27th January 2025 as scrutinised by Internal Overview & Scrutiny on the 4th February in relation to the draft budget 2025/26 and to approve a budget and Council Tax level for 2025/26.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) indicates the possible extent of the budget and funding shortfall that the Council will face in the future. It is an aid in identifying the extent of service changes that the Council will need to make to achieve a balanced budget in each financial year up to 2029/30.

A slide presentation was given which highlighted the salient points in the report and the challenges faced by the Council. Members were also provided with reasons and rationale to support the recommendations in the report.

Members considered the report presented and a discussion commenced.

Councillor H Thomas proposed a Council Tax freeze for the coming year due to uncertainties and potential financial impacts from the government and future council reorganisation.

Following Councillor H Thomas' proposal, the Leader, Councillor K James addressed the committee, informing Members of the potential impact the freeze could have on future government grants. He then proceeded to move the recommendations in the report.

Councillor R Lock seconded the Leader's proposal.

Councillor D Brenton seconded Councillor H Thomas' proposal.

The implications of freezing the Council Tax were highlighted by the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) and clarification was given on the Council's reserves following questions from Members.

Other points addressed by the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) included:

- The revenue generated from the second home council tax premium was not highlighted in the current budget as it had been accounted for in previous budgets;
- The future of the council's reserves would be dependent on decision made with the Local Government Reorganisation.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor R Lock that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
ANDREWS, S	X		
BACH, L	X		
BRENTON, A		X	
BRENTON, D		X	
BRIGHT, C	X		
BRIGHT, L			
BUSHBY, D	X		
COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X		
CRAIGIE, J			
DART, A		X	
ELLIOTT, T	X		
FORD, L			
GIBSON, S	X		
GUBB, J	X		
HACKETT, P	X		
HAMES, P	X		
HARDING, S	X		
HAWKINS, C			
HEPPLE, K			
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			
SHEPHERD, P			
SMITH, D	X		
THOMAS, H		X	

TINSLEY, T	X		
WHEATLEY, C	X		
WHITTAKER, J			

Resolved:

That Members consider the recommendations of Community & Resources on the 27th January 2025 and Internal Overview & Scrutiny on the 4th February 2025 to Full Council that:

- a) Torridge's Band D Council Tax for 2025/26 be increased by (2.99%) from £189.50 to £195.17 per year
- b) Torridge's Net Revenue Budget 2025/26 is £12.109m
- c) The contributions to the Council's reserves as outlined in paragraph 11.4 are approved.
- d) That in light of the risks to the Council's finances identified within the report that the Member Working Group continue its work to bring the Council's budgets back into balance.

(Vote: For – 24, Against – 4, Abstentions – 0)

In addition to the above, Members noted the following:

The Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer) assurance of the robustness of the budget 2025/26 set out in section 13 of the report.

Note the assumptions and forecast applied to develop the MTFs outlined in section 9.

Note the risks associated with the Budget 2025/26 and MTFs outlined in section 10.

As the above motion was carried a vote was not taken on Councillor H Thomas' proposal.

386. COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2025/26

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was to enable the Council to calculate and approve the Council Tax requirement for 2025/26.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor C Hodson that the recommendation as set out in the report be approved.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
ANDREWS, S	X		
BACH, L	X		
BRENTON, A			X
BRENTON, D			X
BRIGHT, C	X		
BRIGHT, L			
BUSHBY, D	X		
COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X		
CRAIGIE, J			
DART, A	X		
ELLIOTT, T	X		
FORD, L			
GIBSON, S	X		
GUBB, J	X		
HACKETT, P	X		
HAMES, P	X		
HARDING, S	X		
HAWKINS, C			
HEPPLE, K			
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			
SHEPHERD, P			
SMITH, D	X		
THOMAS, H			X
TINSLEY, T	X		
WHEATLEY, C	X		

WHITTAKER, J			
--------------	--	--	--

Resolved:

That Council approve the formal Council Tax Resolution for 2025/26 set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

(Vote: For – 25, Against – 0, Abstentions – 3)

387. TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT & CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Deputy S151 Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider the Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2025/26.

It was proposed by Councillor C Hodson, seconded by Councillor P Hackett and –

Resolved:

- That the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy and Counterparty List, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy be approved.
- The Capital Strategy be approved.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

388. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2025/26 TO 2029/30

The Deputy S151 Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to update the Capital Programme 2025/26.

The Capital Programme includes new PIDs (Project Initiation Documents) which require authorisation from Members before inclusion.

A slide presentation was delivered.

Next, a brief discussion took place where the following was clarified:

- The recommendation from Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be determined at the meeting;
- Financial implications of the parking machines – solar panels are integrated as a standard component within the machines. The placement of the machines is more important as they have to be positioned accurately to maximise efficiency. The associated costs are reasonably marginal;
- The audio visual equipment is required for improvements to the conference rooms at Caddstown;
- Research had been carried out, by the Parking Services Team, to ensure new parking machines are modern, user friendly and accept cash.

Following discussion it was proposed by Councillor S Newton, seconded by Councillor K James and –

Resolved:

That the Capital Programme be updated to include:

- Sound Level Meters (Noise monitoring equipment) - £30K
- Audio Visual equipment for Caddsdwn - £30K
- Replacement Electric Van for the Burrows - £9K
- Parking Ticket Machines - £142K

Additional Recommendation from Internal Overview & Scrutiny

- That where operationally viable solar powered technology should be included.

(Vote: For - unanimous)

389. UPDATED CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES AND PROCUREMENT THRESHOLDS

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider the recommendations from the Audit & Governance Committee on the 21st January 2025 to agree to the re-write of the Contract Procedure Rules including the amendment of the procurement internal thresholds to facilitate the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

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

Resolved:

That the revisions to the Contract Procedure Rules detailed in the report be approved.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

390. APPOINTMENT OF NON-ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to approve a non-elected appointment to the Council's Audit & Governance Committee.

As the Chair of Audit and Governance and having been involved in the recruitment process, Councillor P Hackett addressed the Committee and moved the recommendation in the report.

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

Resolved:

That Mr Mark Poppy be appointed to the role of independent non-elected representative on the Council's Audit & Governance Committee for a term of 4 years.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

391. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF OFFICER

Prior to this item being presented, the Finance Manager (S151 Officer), Deputy S151 Officer and the Principal Accountant vacated the room.

The Chief Executive presented this item, the purpose of which was to confirm the permanent appointment of the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) and the Deputy S151 Officer.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor D Smith and –

Resolved:

That it be approved for Peter Hudson to become the Councils Finance Manager (S151 Officer) subject to his acceptance of the offer of employment which will include a salary determined in accordance with the Councils agreed Pay Policy, with other terms and conditions according with those determined by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Officers of Local Authorities, as modified by the Council and that Gwydion Batten will become the Councils Deputy S151 Officer.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

392. PAY POLICY REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCALISM ACT

Prior to the commencement of this item, the Chief Executive, the Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Head of Communities & Place and the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) vacated the room.

The Leader of the Council presented the report, the purpose of which was to invite Members to agree to a Pay Policy Statement, in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act however the report does not ask Members to agree to any changes to the Pay Policy or the remuneration of senior officers.

Following the presentation of the report, the Leader moved the recommendation in the report.

The HR and Communications Manager was present to assist with any questions Members had.

Councillor S Newton seconded Councillor K James' proposal.

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

Resolved:

That the Pay Policy be approved.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

393. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

There were no questions submitted under Procedural Rule A9.

394. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

395. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

396. PART II - (CLOSED SESSION)

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.29 pm

Chair:

Date: