

**Mr S Hearse**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Torrige District Council**  
Riverbank House  
Bideford  
Devon  
EX39 2QG



Tel : Bideford (01237) 428700

Date: 4 February 2025  
Quorum: 6

## **MEETING OF EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

<b>On:</b>	Wednesday 12 February 2025	<b>At:</b>	10.00 am
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS		

### **NOTICE OF MEETING**

The meeting will be able to watch through the Councils YouTube Channel  
<https://tinyurl.com/TorrigeYouTube>

<b>To:</b>	Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin (Chair) Councillor A Brenton (Vice-Chair) Councillors: L Bach, J Craigie, S Harding, T Johns, P Shepherd, D Smith and H Thomas  Non elected Members:
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**Members are requested to turn off their mobile phones for the duration of the meeting**

## **AGENDA**

### **PART I - (OPEN SESSION)**

1.	<b>Apologies For Absence</b> To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.
2.	<b>Minutes</b> (Pages 3 - 8) Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 08 January 2025.
3.	<b>Public Participation</b> 15 minute period for public contributions. The deadline for registering to speak is by 2pm on Monday 10 February 2025.

4.	<b>Declaration Of Interests</b> Members with interests should refer to the agenda item and describe the nature of their interest when the item is considered.
5.	<b>Agreement Of Agenda Items Part I and II</b>
6.	<b>Urgent Matters Brought Forward With the Permission Of The Chair</b>
7.	<b>Arts in Torridge</b> An opportunity to hear from The Burton, The Plough and Art Makers on their work in the District.
8.	<b>Active Torridge KPIs</b>
9.	<b>Action List</b> (Pages 9 - 10) To review the action list.
10.	<b>Consideration Of The Forward Plan</b> (Page 11) To review the forward plan.
11.	<b>Exclusion Of The Public</b> The Chair to move:- That the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
	Meeting Organiser: Democratic Services
	<b>Centre for Public Scrutiny – website</b> <a href="http://www.cfps.org.uk/">http://www.cfps.org.uk/</a>

## TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Wednesday, 8 January 2025 - 6.00 pm

#### PRESENT

Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin (Chair)

Councillor A Brenton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors L Bach, S Harding, P Shepherd, H Thomas and C Wheatley

#### ALSO PRESENT

A Bell

- UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve  
Co-ordinator, North Devon Biosphere

S Dorey

- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring  
Officer)

T Vanstone

- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services  
Officer

K Hewlett

- Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

S May

- Corporate Support Officer

Councillors P Pennington

#### 282. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Smith, Councillor Wheatley attended as substitute.

#### 283. MINUTES

Wednesday 16 October

It was proposed by Councillor Harding, seconded by Councillor Bach and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 October 2024 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 5, Abstentions 2)

Wednesday 13 November

During review members noted the vandalism in Victoria Park, which had been discussed, and it was asked that an update on the request for improved CCTV which targets the playground be provided. The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) advised that the Public Health & Community Safety Manager had this work in progress and advised an update could be provided at the next Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Harding, seconded by Councillor Brenton and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 November 2024 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 5, Abstentions 2)

284. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

285. 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.

Councillor Cottle-Hunkin declared an interest as a farmer, this was in reference to the main agenda item for the meeting – North Devon Biosphere.

286. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

None.

288. NORTH DEVON BIOSPHERE

Chair introduced Andy Bell, UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve Co-ordinator for North Devon Biosphere, who provided members with a detailed presentation updating on the work of North Devon Biosphere.

Detail was provided on the area covered and the diversity of the landscape, the governance and makeup of the biosphere and the work they're involved in. The presentation went on to detail funding arrangements in terms of the programme delivery, and the benefits of this work for the community, landscape and economy.

The key areas of work (below) were then highlighted and examples of some of the work taking place under these themes were explained;

- sustainable economies
- climate change adaptation and mitigation
- improving rivers and seas
- pioneer policy for natural capital growth
- linking people and biodiversity.

Work to grow tourism within the biosphere area, without environmental harm was detailed, as well as the North Devon Biosphere Business Partner network and the Green Economy Group. Work on Climate Change was explained in detail alongside the funding and set up of Biosphere Communities project and their work.

The presentation moved on to how the North Devon Biosphere were working to reduce risks and the Reserve Co-ordinator noted specific work in terms of natural flood management and reducing pollution risks. During the presentation a number of projects were highlighted along with how the North Devon biosphere engaged with partners - local farmers, and other key partners like DEFRA, Environment Agency and South West Water were noted.

During discussion on the technology and data that the biosphere share and the impact of these projects and the data, members asked about the monitoring of water quality planned for the River Torridge. It was asked if this would use existing water treatment plants. The Reserve Co-ordinator confirmed it would be existing treatment works and the aim was to reduce the amount of surface water going to these.

Members then asked if there was the potential or need for an upgrade to these treatment works. The Reserve Co-ordinator felt this would be needed, given the scale of development taking place locally and in the future.

Projects linked to CRITTER – coastal natural flood management – were highlighted in detail for members. Specific work with the salt marsh at Weare Gifford was explained, along with the work with land owners at East the Water to create a fresh water wetland area at Manteo Way. The benefits of salt marshes and mud flats for flood prevention now and in the future was explained.

The Reserve Co-ordinator went on to highlight Marine work that North Devon Biosphere were involved with, recognising the potential of off shore wind, and the possible impact and benefits that may come as a result. The possibilities that come from the marine environment as a whole and conservation work in the area were also highlighted.

Work to engage and connect with people through art and culture was highlighted, specifically work with Beaford Arts and The Shared Outcome Project.

Finally, the Reserve Co-ordinator highlighted how North Devon Biosphere work to share their knowledge and findings through influencing the Joint Local Plan, national policy, local economy, working with landowners and engaging with communities. The Reserve Co-ordinator also highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities on the horizon for North Devon Biosphere.

Members then had the opportunity to ask questions and the following was discussed.

Members asked about youth engagement and work within schools. The Reserve Co-ordinator advised that although work in schools had taken place in the past there wasn't the capacity within North Devon Biosphere to facilitate this. As a result, the focus had moved to teacher training.

A pilot programme to reintroduce climate change back into the school curriculum was highlighted. The aim of the programme was explained and it was confirmed this would be for primary and secondary schools.

The Reserve Co-ordinator also went onto explain how they were working with partners to improve and add to the education offer locally, and support Petroc plans for University status.

Members asked about the North Devon Biosphere's input in terms of the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre. The Reserve Co-ordinator advised how they supported the work to date, and how they planned to continue to offer that support moving forward.

Members asked how Torridge District Council could help to enhance the work of North Devon Biosphere and the Reserve Co-ordinator recognised the funding that Torridge District Council (TDC) already provide and the positive working relationships with officers in Planning and Economic Development.

The Reserve Co-ordinator reflected on the introduction of targets for Biodiversity Net Gain and the buy in of developers. During discussion on the complexity of the issue The Reserve Co-ordinator explained that North Devon Biosphere could offer support, through training, to officers in the scrutinising the applications from developers.

Members asked whether North Devon Biosphere were consulted regarding any of the development that is taking place and planned locally. The Reserve Co-ordinator advised that TDC Planning Team do seek their views and advised that they also aimed to influence the development of the new Local Plan.

Members noted the work North Devon Biosphere do with South West Water (SWW) and asked how much influence they felt they had, noting the pollution rates for South West Water locally.

The Reserve Co-ordinator recognised North Devon Biosphere were not a regulator for South West Water and explained their aim was to influence change through positive engagement. He went on to explain the reasoning for working

with SWW and others who were polluting the rivers. Work to support enforcement was noted, but it was confirmed that regulation was the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

Members asked about woodland management and asked if there was a programme of leaving woodland too. The Reserve Co-ordinator went on to explain the aim of woodland management and the importance of considering the condition of the woodlands and the landscapes in these matters.

Members asked if North Devon Biosphere were involved in maintaining the coast path, given their work on wellbeing. The Reserve Co-ordinator advised of the King Charles Coast Path and how this may help improve access, as well as work with landowners to improve the surrounding areas.

Members asked if North Devon Biosphere were able to make direct applications for Section 106 monies. The Reserve Co-ordinator advised that this was the aim of Biodiversity Net Gain and went on to provide some context of the issues and explain the challenges of influencing developers. It was confirmed that one success had been in Abbotsham where trees had been planted.

Members asked about the proposed Tourist Tax. The Reserve Co-ordinator recognised this was already in place in other countries of the world and the potential benefits of extra funds for the local area.

Members asked if there were any projects focused on Regenerative Farming and the Reserve Co-ordinator advised there was a project in the early stages of development. The Farm to Fork shop idea was explained – where a shop uses only local suppliers of organic food. A plan to explore this idea in terms of regenerative farming was then explained.

Following a question about the planned 10 year review, the Reserve Co-ordinator advised of the planned consultation process in time for September 2025 and confirmed TDC would be a consultee.

Members thanked The Reserve Co-ordinator for a detailed presentation.

Cllr Pennington left the meeting at 19:26

## 289. ACTION LIST

Action 199 – Chair advised of work taking place in North Devon following the joint committee on Dentistry. It was noted that a petition has been taken to government Reform of the Dental Contract.

During discussion it was agreed that Democratic Services would email out the notes for the first meeting of the new task group set up by the MP for North Devon.

Action 220 –Members were advised that Councillor David Brenton was continuing to attempt arranging a meeting with Bideford Family Centre.

Action 273 – It was confirmed a letter had been sent to Devon Council Council and this had been acknowledged.

Action 283 – An update on CCTV at Victoria Park play area to be provided at the next Committee.

290. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

Chair reviewed the Forward Plan with members and the following was agreed:

2 April 2025 – Committee to hear from the TDC Domestic Abuse Officer.

The meeting commenced at 6.10 pm and closed at 7.33 pm

Chair:

Date:



## ACTION LIST

Overview & Scrutiny (External) Committee – 08 January 2025

Minute No.	Raised by	Action	Allocated To	Progress Update	Status
212.	Cllr Hodson	To speak with the Leader for TDC regarding what provision is in place following the closure of the Link Centre in Holsworthy and what options are being considered for the building where the Link Centre was housed.	Cllr Shepherd	<p>Update requested at 01 Nov meeting.</p> <p>31-01-24 – Update provided from Cllr James regarding use of building and provision for Link Centre in Holsworthy.</p> <p>16-04-24 - email sent to Cllr James and Cllr Morrish for further info on use of link centre building in Holsworthy. Email also sent to Cllr McInnes requesting info re future use of Bideford Link Centre building</p> <p>24-04-24 – Cllr Hodson to continue to report back to Committee</p> <p>16-10-24 – Members advised decision is now subject to Judicial Review.</p>	Ongoing
220.	Cllr Brenton	Contact Bideford Children’s Centre and request feedback in relation to childcare provision and the impact of reported childcare crisis locally.	<p>Cllr Brenton</p> <p>Dem Services</p>	<p>31-01-24 – Councillor D Brenton to follow this up.</p> <p>13/03/24 – Local childcare provision to be added to the forward plan list for 2024-25 and Children’s Centre to be invited along with other providers.</p>	Ongoing

				24-04-24 – Family Hub model to be investigated.  16-10-24 – To remain ongoing whilst move to Family Hub and DCC provision is underway.	
272.	Cllr Cottle-Hunkin	Chair requested a Breakdown of funding from Citizen's Advice and what would be required to provide a face-to-face service in Holsworthy.	Chief Executive, Citizen's Advice		
273.	Cllr Cottle-Hunkin	That Committee would contact Devon County Council about the concerns raised regarding the Help at Home Service.	Dem Services	20-12-24 Letter sent to DCC, email response received from Cllr Bullivant (DCC) acknowledging receipt of the letter.	Complete
283.	Cllr Brenton	Provide an update on improvements to the CCTV for Victoria Park following vandalism of the new park.	Public Health & Community Safety Manager.	08/01/25 To be provide at the next Committee Meeting.	

**EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – FORWARD PLAN 2024/2025**

<b>Cycle 1</b> <b>5 June 2024</b> <b>10am</b>	<b>Cycle 2</b> <b>18 July 2024</b> <b>6pm</b>	<b>Cycle 3</b> <b>4 September 2024</b> <b>10am</b>	<b>Cycle 4</b> <b>16 October 2024</b> <b>6pm</b>	<b>Joint Community</b> <b>Safety Partnership</b> <b>Update</b> <b>13 November 2024</b> <b>10am</b>	<b>Cycle 5</b> <b>27 November 2024</b> <b>10am</b> <b>Cancelled</b>	<b>Cycle 6</b> <b>08 January 2025</b> <b>6pm</b>	<b>Cycle 7</b> <b>12 February</b> <b>2025</b> <b>10am</b>	<b>Cycle 8</b> <b>02 Apr 2025</b> <b>6pm</b>
<p>Cancelled – Joint Agriculture Meeting with NDDC on 23 May 2024</p>	<p>Joint Committee with NDDC – Dentistry Provision</p>	<p>One Northern Devon</p>	<p>Citizen’s Advice - Torridge, North, Mid and West Devon</p> <p>Taw &amp; Torridge Voluntary Service (TTVS)</p> <p>Draft External O&amp;S Annual Report</p> <p>OND (discuss recording)</p>		<p>Arts in Torridge – the Burton, The Plough, Art Matters.</p>	<p>North Devon Biosphere</p>	<p>Arts in Torridge – the Burton, The Plough, Art Makers</p> <p>Active Torridge</p>	<p>Update from TDC Officer supporting those experiencing Domestic Violence and Abuse</p>

<p>Page 11</p>	<p><b>To be invited 2024-25</b>                  South West Water                  Westward Housing &amp; residents group                  TTVS - Carers                  Post Office / Royal Mail                  Devon Highways – Full Council Notice of Motion, invitation sent to DCC, awaiting response.                  Foodbank Provision                  Provision Domestic Violence and Abuse</p> <p><b>Funded by TDC &amp; date last attended External O&amp;S:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Torridge 13 March 2024</li> <li>• Burton Art Gallery 7 December 2022</li> <li>• Citizens Advice Bureau 16 October 2024</li> <li>• North Devon + 31 July 2023</li> <li>• North Devon Biosphere</li> <li>• One Northern Devon 04 September 2024</li> <li>• TTVS 16 October 2024</li> </ul> <p><b>Suggestions from Committee dated 13-06-23:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment Agency invite regarding flood defences work and partnership working</li> <li>• Health and Social Care within the Torridge area – the extent of child poverty and food poverty rates. Head of Legal and Governance (&amp; Monitoring Officer) advised that TDC are working closely with TTSV, Encompass and Navigate on the household support fund and would be happy to attend.</li> <li>• Invitation to local Housing Providers regarding the issues being experienced in terms of help for homelessness, housing issues.</li> <li>• Invitation to DWP and the impact for those who are not in employment or education.</li> <li>• North Devon Plus.</li> <li>• Encompass.</li> <li>• Citizens Advice</li> </ul>
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