

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Monday, 22 July 2024 - 10.00 am

PRESENT Councillor R Hicks (Chair)
 Councillor A Dart (Vice-Chair)
 Councillors D Brenton, L Bright, P Hames, C Hodson, C Leather,
 T Tinsley, L Piper and J Whittaker

ALSO PRESENT S Hearse - Chief Executive
 S Dorey - Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring
 Officer)
 S Kearney - Head of Communities & Place
 D Sibley - Climate & Sustainability Officer
 T Vanstone - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services
 Officer
 K Brown - Democratic Services Officer

Councillors H Thomas

444. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K James and Councillor R Lock. Councillor D Bushby substituted for Councillor K James.

445. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2024

Councillor P Hames questioned the accuracy of his comment in minute 430. The recording of the meeting was checked, and it has been ascertained that the minutes as written are correct.

It was proposed by Councillor C Leather, seconded by Councillor J Whittaker and -

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June be signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For - 9, Against – 0, Abstentions - 2)

446. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

447. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

An error was noted on the date for a future meeting. This has been amended.

Reference the Town Hall item due for the September 24 meeting, the Head of Communities & Place confirmed this would be regarding the financials of the conversion of the Town Hall.

448. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair reminded Members they should declare if they have an interest.

Councillors P Hames and J Whittaker declared a personal interest for item 8 – dual hatted Northam Town Council.

Councillor D Bushby – declared a personal interest for item 8 – dual hatted – Bideford Town Council.

449. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

There were no Part II items.

450. URGENT MATTERS OF INFORMATION TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR AND THE COMMITTEE

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

451. CASHLESS PARKING PROPOSAL FOR SOME TORRIDGE CAR PARKS

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was to consider the suitability of converting 5 Pay and Display car parks to cashless payment only to reduce cash handling costs and extend the longevity of cash taking pay and display machines in other locations.

In the discussion that emerged, Members raised concern at cashless and felt they could not support the proposal due to the impact on the public, especially the older generation.

In response to a query regarding the proportion of cash collected, the Head of Communities & Place confirmed the use of cash is decreasing.

It was also confirmed that if Members agreed for cashless in the 5 car parks, implementation could be carried out immediately with a simple conversion of the machines. In the event of any machine breakdowns the Civil Enforcement Officers are trained to carry out basic repairs and there is a contract for the bigger repairs.

Following a query asking if the credit card and Ringo charges were set to increase, the Head of Communities & Place advised he would confirm this following the meeting.

The Head of Communities & Place explained how Ringo system works and confirmed TDC do not absorb any additional charges.

It was proposed by Councillor C Leather, seconded by J Whittaker and –

RESOLVED:

That the 5 identified car parks within the report become cashless parking sites be refused.

(Vote: For – 10, Against – 0, Abstentions – 1)

452. 2024 UPDATE TO TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CARBON, ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY PLAN

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was to put forward for approval by Committee the 2024 update of the Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan for Torridge District Council.

Councillor P Hames, as Lead Member for Climate Change, praised the report and expressed his gratitude for all the hard work that had gone into the update. He stressed the urgency for this Carbon Plan, the need to be more proactive for Climate Change and moved the recommendation in the report.

A discussion took place.

It was noted how the document had been made more comprehensive and was now easier to read.

Councillor T Tinsley expressed her disappointment in the document stating that it did not stress the urgency of the Climate Change Emergency and felt that more could be added to reflect this.

Through the continued discussion it was agreed that comments made had been noted.

Following a query surrounding the possibility of pursuing a greener energy tariff, the Sustainability & Climate Officer explained, in detail, the current green tariff contract and advised there are better deals however TDC agreed at Full Council to the current green tariff contract. Any changes would have to be approved at Full Council and if Members opted out of the current agreement charges would be applicable.

In response to a query the Sustainability & Climate Officer advised she could confirm, following the meeting, of the other members within the procurement group.

The Chief Executive added that the current contract is due to expire in September 2028 and a new contract can be examined following that date.

Councillor P Hames voiced his frustration at the slow progress that has been made regarding Climate Change, namely due to the lack of funding, budget and resources, however advised of all the other emerging projects and ideas that support the commitment to the Climate Emergency.

It was confirmed that the publication of the Carbon Plan would fulfil some elements of the Climate Emergency declaration.

Details were provided to the Committee regarding the risks to the Authority in the eventuality of Net Zero not being met by 2030.

Councillor T Tinsley proposed that the Carbon Plan goes back to the Councillor Climate Change Working Group to be made more TDC specific and more ambitious, this was seconded by Councillor L Bright.

Following confirmation that comments and suggestions made would be referred to the Councillor Climate Change Working Group Councillor T Tinsley was satisfied her concerns would be addressed and withdrew her recommendation.

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

RESOLVED:

That the 2024 update of the Carbon, Environment and Biodiversity Plan for Torridge District Council be approved for publication.

(Vote: For – 9, Against – 0, Abstentions – 2)

453. TORRIDGE ESTUARY STRATEGY AND BIDEFORD PORT AND HARBOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Before the commencement of this item the Head of Communities & Place advised that originally a previous out of date report had been published with the agenda however had now been corrected. Members were asked if they were happy to proceed which they were.

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was to consider the recommendation from Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) that “The Council urgently needs an updated Estuary Strategy, and this this work should be added to the relevant work schedule or Business Plan” and to provide options.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor D Brenton proposed that the recommendation from Internal Overview & Scrutiny be supported, and that the existing strategy be refreshed in consultation with Harbour Board Working Group and Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Communities & Place clarified the role and responsibility of the new Clean Maritime Officer and advised of the objective and work required for updating the existing strategy if approved.

It was confirmed that the current Estuary Strategy is available to view on TDC's website.

It was proposed by Councillor D Brenton, seconded by Councillor C Hodson and -

RESOLVED:

That the existing Estuary Strategy is refreshed in consultation with Harbour Board Working Group and Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee, be approved.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

454. RENT CONCESSION - MEN'S SHED

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to decide whether or not to provide a rent concession to the Men's Shed.

A discussion progressed where Members acknowledged the good work and benefits of the Man Shed and how it supports a certain demographic but felt to make a decision more information was required.

Councillor C Hodson proposed that for the first 12 months the rent be charged at the rate the Man Shed were charged at their previous premises, giving time for TDC to examine their accounts and then review and re-set lease charges for years 2 and 3, this recommendation was seconded by Councillor L Piper.

Councillor R Hicks proposed that the decision be deferred pending information sought on the size of the previous premises in comparison to the TDC units, this was seconded by Councillor T Tinsley.

Concerns were raised about setting a precedent, to which it was explained that each application is considered individually.

The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that the lease had already been signed, however could be amended to reflect any decision made.

Details were provided on lease arrangements across the property portfolio and how requests for reduced rent were moved from officer delegation to Community & Resources Committee for consideration.

Councillor L Piper proposed that the decision be deferred, and further information requested and brought back to the Community & Resources committee in September. Until the decision is made a 100% discount be allowed. Councillor C Hodson withdrew her previous recommendation and seconded Councillor L Piper's proposal.

It was proposed by Councillor L Piper, seconded by Councillor C Hodson and –

Resolved:

That the decision is deferred until further information is ascertained, with 100% discount on the rent charged and the item be brought back for consideration at the September Community & Resources Committee meeting.

(Vote: For – 4, Against – 4, Abstentions – 2)

The Chair used his casting vote to refuse the proposal. The motion was lost.

Councillor D Bushby had left the room and took no part in the vote.

The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) confirmed as the lease had already been agreed the full rent would be applicable until any alternative decision is made.

It was proposed by Councillor R Hicks, seconded by Councillor T Tinsley and –

RESOLVED:

That the decision is deferred until further information is ascertained and the item be brought back for consideration at the September Community & Resources Committee meeting.

(Vote: For – 7, Against – 1, Abstentions – 3)

455. NORTHERN DEVON RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was to consider whether Torridge District Council should formally join the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance.

It was confirmed that £10,000.00 had already been pledged from the Shared Prosperity Fund for feasibility work. With the funding came conditions for its use and had to be used by the end of March 2025. Commitment was also required from North Devon District Council and Bideford Town Council and to date the Head of Communities & Place advised neither had committed any funding and if they do not, TDC would have to look to repurpose the funding.

A brief discussion took place where Members viewed their opinions on the re-opening of the link between Bideford and Barnstaple.

It was proposed by Councillor P Hames, seconded by Councillor D Brenton and -

RESOLVED:

That Torridge District Council become a member of the Northern Devon Railway Development Alliance.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 11.52 am

Chair:

Date: