

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILFULL COUNCIL MEETINGCaddsdow Business Support Centre - Caddsdow Bideford EX39 3BEMonday, 14 October 2024 - 6.30 pm

PRESENT	Councillor D Bushby (Chair)	
	Councillor D Smith (Vice-Chair)	
	Councillors S Andrews, L Bach, A Brenton, D Brenton, C Bright, L Bright, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Craigie, A Dart, T Elliott, J Gubb, P Hackett, P Hames, S Harding, C Hawkins, R Hicks, C Hodson, S Inch, K James, T Johns, C Leather, W Lo-Vel, R Lock, S Newton, P Pennington, L Piper, P Shepherd, H Thomas, C Wheatley and J Whittaker	
ALSO PRESENT	S Hearse	- Chief Executive
	S Dorey	- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
	S Kearney	- Head of Communities & Place
	G Bryant	- Finance Manager (S151 Officer)
	A Redwood	- Major Projects Manager
	A Avery	- Community Engagement Officer
	T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
	K Brown	- Democratic Services Officer

319. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: L Ford, S Gibson, K Hepple and T Tinsley.

320. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no Public Contributions.

321. 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.

Both the Chief Executive and the Head of Communities & Place declared an interest as directors of Active Torridge.

The Leader spoke on behalf of the directors of Active Torridge and advised of their interests, however, as the directors had been appointed to the role via Torridge District Council this did not restrict them from voting.

Councillor R Hicks advised he had no personal interest in Active Torridge.

Both Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin and Councillor L Piper declared non-pecuniary interest in Active Torridge.

322. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

The Chair reminded Members of the Council's substitution scheme and advised if Members were unable to attend a meeting they should endeavor to find a substitute.

Councillors C and L Bright arrived at 6.34pm.

324. ANNUAL REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2023 - 24

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was to report on the treasury management activity in the year and actual prudential indicators for 2023/24.

A brief discussion took place where TDC's Ethical Investments and historic loans were clarified.

The report was noted.

325. DRAFT FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2023/24

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to confirm the recommendation for the utilisation of the 2023/24 surplus.

A discussion commenced.

Councillor C Leather moved the recommendation in the report.

Following concerns raised, the Finance Officer (S151 Officer) confirmed the allocated amounts had developed from key pressures and priorities, resulting in £500k being assigned to leisure services and decarbonization to aid the reduction of TDC's Carbon Footprint.

Councillor P Hames proposed that the item be referred back to Group Leaders to discuss the allocation in more detail.

The Chief Executive added to the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) responses regarding the split and listed how the recommended allocation had been established through individual priorities.

Councillor L Piper addressed the committee, agreeing with the urgency on carbon reduction however stressed the importance of the recommendation in the report and seconded Councillor C Leather's proposal.

Councillor J Craigie proposed that the £500k Capital Reserve be ring fenced and re-named the decarbonisation reserve, this was seconded by Councillor P Hames.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the findings from the health & safety audit were included in the report presented to the Audit & Governance Committee which is available for all to view.

Just prior to the vote Councillor D Brenton seconded Councillor P Hames' proposal to refer the item back to Group Leaders to discuss the allocation in more detail.

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

Resolved:

That setting aside the draft surplus from 2023/24 as outlined in the report be approved.

(Vote: For – 24, Against – 4, Abstention – 4)

As a vote was taken on the first proposal by Councillor C Leather and carried, no vote was taken on Councillor J Craigie and Councillor P Hames' proposals.

326. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND INVESTMENT PLAN REVIEW 2024/25

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was to obtain Member approval for alterations to the Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan for 2024 – 2025.

Councillor D Smith declared an interest as a member of board for The Globe.

A discussion took place.

In response to a query, the Head of Communities & Place confirmed that there is £10k identified to support the Bideford Railway Alliance feasibility work. He also provided details on how Members would be able to contribute to the Devon County Council Local Transport Plan consultation.

Councillor K James moved the recommendations in the report, this was seconded by Councillor R Lock.

Concern was raised by Members regarding the lack of university commitment. The Head of Communities & Place provided reassurance that there is still a strong interest from both Exeter and Plymouth University however the presence, once the project is complete, may not be a physical one. It was also confirmed that there is a significant interest from the private sector.

The Head of Communities & Place provided details of the new joint Clean Maritime and Green Energy Officer and confirmed that she could be invited to the Councillor Climate Change Working Group meetings.

As the discussion continued comment was made on the lack of information offered to Members, Climate Change investments and the need for further scrutiny via the Internal Overview & Scrutiny committee, however it was confirmed that policies are set by Full Council which can then be scrutinised by the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Communities & Place advised why a recent joint meeting with North Devon District Council had been cancelled.

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

Resolved:

That the revised Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan priorities for 2024 – 2025 intervention themes for delivery be approved.

That the appropriate alterations be made to the Capital Programme to reflect the altered capital priorities for 2024 – 2025 investment plan be approved.

That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive for decisions under the value of £20,000.00 be approved.

(Vote: For – 23, Against – 2, Abstentions – 0)

327. BIDEFORD TOWN HALL AND OLD LIBRARY AND HOLSWORTHY LEISURE CENTRE RENOVATION, INVESTMENT AND DECARBONISATION PROPSALS

The Major Projects Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to set out the potential for Members to consider opportunity to develop underutilised assets, which would bring them back into a productive and operational use for the growth in leisure services for the district. It comprises the culmination of the constructive collaboration between the Economic Development, Climate, Leisure, Projects and Estates Teams and pulls together evidence of issues associated with some of the Councils existing operational premises and the opportunities that exist for the development of Leisure Services.

The Major Projects Manager advised the report was an accumulation of work from several officers.

The Finance Officer (S151 Officer) continued the presentation and detailed the financial implications in the report.

A discussion took place.

The Chief Executive addressed a concern regarding a section in the report implicating that compensation payments or claims could be made from Active Torridge for any loss of business associated with pool or hall closures. He confirmed it was a condition of the contract between TDC and AT, that TDC would provide facilities for AT to operate from although in the eventuality that this may occur, the management fee would cover any loss.

The Major Projects Manager advised additional costs could be incurred as the project progresses, and detailed possible scenarios, however there is a contingency reserve for this prospect.

Councillor T Johns left the meeting at 9pm.

Advice was given on minimising the inconvenience to other users of the Town Hall while work is advancing.

Following a query regarding the new PV panels meeting the demand at Holsworthy Leisure Centre, the Major Projects Manager confirmed they would offset the current kwh, meet existing running costs and contribute towards the new air source heat pump.

It was also confirmed that the new Asset Management Plan was being pursued via Internal Overview & Scrutiny for all TDC's property conditions.

The Head of Communities & Place and Major Projects Manager reassured Members of the due diligence work carried out on the air source heat pump to ensure it is compatible.

The Finance Manager (S151) provided further guidance on unsupported borrowing.

It was proposed by Councillor D Bushby, seconded by Councillor C Hodson and –

Resolved:

Holsworthy Leisure Centre.

That the investment at Holsworthy leisure centre for decarbonisation and energy efficiency projects be approved.

That the replacement of the Holsworthy Pool roof be approved.

That the Public Sector Decarbonisation award and the associated funding package for the project be approved and added to the Capital programme accordingly.

That the Capital Programme be increased by £1.834m for the cost of the roof and decarbonisation works at Holsworthy Leisure Centre be approved.

Town Hall and Old Library

That the roof work progress immediately (already approved in capital programme but will need an increase) be approved.

That the refurbishment and renovation of the interior of the Town Hall and Old Library be approved and that a lease with Active Torridge for their occupation of part of the building for a term to coincide with the term of the leisure contract be approved.

That the funding arrangements to enable project delivery be approved.

That Members authorise officers to make an application for any necessary consents (Planning, LBC, etc) be approved.

That the Capital programme be increased by £3.181m for the cost of delivering the stated work at the Town Hall, Bideford be approved.

That the Authorised and Operating prudential limits be increased by £1million be approved.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

328. ACTIVE TORRIDGE GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was to review the governance agreements for Active Torridge.

It was confirmed by the Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer), that herself and the Finance Manager (S151 Officer), were completely detached from Active Torridge and this was done deliberately to enable full scrutiny.

A discussion commenced where Members recognised the achievements of Active Torridge, however commented that a larger emphasis could be made on mental health, working with GPs and reaching out to the wider, less privileged areas of the district.

Further information was provided on Social Prescribing.

Councillor L Piper addressed Members providing reassurance that KPI's would now be incorporated into the new Business Plan to tackle concerns raised in the discussion.

In response to queries regarding Active Torridge's responsibility to improving the health & wellbeing of residents within the district, the Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that the Governance does not cover this area. She re-iterated the original objectives and obligations Active Torridge had to TDC and verified these had been fully met. Membership numbers and data was not a requirement although this would be reported to the Overview & Scrutiny

Committees. Active Torridge had far exceeded expectations and were now full to capacity, hence the need for a fourth venue.

The Chief Executive supported the comments made by the Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) adding more information would be provided later in the meeting and that the aims and objectives of Active Torridge is to increase wider community engagement.

The report was noted.

329. ACTIVE TORRIDGE BUSINESS PLAN AND CONTRACT EXTENSION PROPOSAL

The purpose of this report was to present the Active Torridge Business Plan and seek approval for the principle of a contract extension (2027 -2032) with associated management fee and report schedule.

The Leader commenced the presentation providing details on:

- Strategic Context
- Reasons to invest Leisure - health & wellbeing, buildings & assets and reduction in carbon footprint –
- Current activities and engagement.
- Summary

Following his speech the Leader moved the recommendations in the report, which was seconded by Councillor C Hodson.

Councillor L Piper continued the presentation expressing his gratitude to officers who put together the report and acknowledged points made in the discussion so far. He articulated his enthusiasm for his various roles both at Torridge District Council and in the voluntary sector. He stressed the importance of reaching out to the community and tackling societal problems, speaking passionately about how Active Torridge's Business Plan set out the foundation to improve and make a difference to those more disadvantaged, isolated and struggling. He referenced the funding already secured and how this would help with decarbonisation. He ended by congratulating Active Torridge on the success so far and handed over to the Chris Keeble, Chief Operating Officer of Active Torridge to continue with the presentation.

The Chief Operating Officer delivered a slide presentation highlighting the following:

- Strategic Aims
- Year 1-3 review
- Spotlight on Active Torridge
- Postcode analysis
- Financial history
- Key Initiatives for 2025/26
- Ambition and growth
- Financial 25/26 – 28/29

- Management fee projections
- Contract Extension

To conclude the presentation Judith Gentry, the Non-Executive Director for Active Torridge addressed the Committee. She introduced herself and detailed her work experience and expertise and how this contributes to Active Torridge. She fully validated the Business Plan whilst acknowledging the improvements that need to be made. She advised how the governance review had been examined three times by external consultants and that the Board welcome recommendations for improvements and support the need for KPIs.

Following the conclusion of presentation the Chair moved the recommendations in the report, however this was not necessary as it had previously been moved and seconded by Councillor K James and Councillor C Hodson.

In response to a query the Chief Operating Officer advised the ambition of a purpose-built facility would be in future years, following the successful implementation of current aims and objectives.

Following a query surrounding the utilisation of the 100 free memberships given out by Active Torridge, the Chief Operating Officer advised he did not have to hand the figures however would find out and let Members know.

The Head of Communities & Place clarified that TDC does a lot of community engagement.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by C Hodson and –

Resolved:

That Members note the content of the Active Torridge Business Plan.

That Members note that Active Torridge has triggered the 2-year extension to the original leisure contract and are committed to delivering leisure services for the Council until March 2027.

That the management fee for the 2-year contract extension identified in the Business Plan be approved.

That the principal of a further 5 year contract extension to run from April 2027 until March 2032 and delegate responsibility for the agreement of that contract and any associated reporting requirements, to the Head of Legal and Governance be approved.

That it be approved, for budgeting purposes, that the management fee requirement, be agreed, in line with the amounts identified in the business plan presentation (although exact final amounts for inclusion within a revised contract may vary from these) and amend the Council's medium term financial strategy to reflect the ongoing commitment.

(Vote: For – 31, Abstentions – 0, Against – 1)

330. PLAYZONES

The Community Projects Officer presented the report, the purpose of was to obtain member approval for the funding of three PlayZone schemes by reallocating Rural England Prosperity Funding and working in partnership with Active Torridge and various community organisations.

At 9pm and in accordance with the Constitution, it was proposed by Councillor D Bushby, seconded by Councillor S Newton and –

Resolved:

That in view of the fact 3 hours had elapsed since the meeting had commenced, that the meeting should continue.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

In response to a query, the Community Projects Officer provided details on the funding agreement with Football Foundation and that there will be separate pricing structures for community and grassroots organisations.

It was proposed by Councillor D Brenton, seconded by Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin and –

Resolved:

That the delivery of the three PlayZone sites identified in the report be approved.

(Vote: For 29, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0)

331. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

There were no questions submitted under Procedural Rule A9.

332. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

333. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion.

334. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

335. PART II - (CLOSED SESSION)

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.32 pm

Chair:

Date: