

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILFULL COUNCIL MEETINGCaddsdow Business Support Centre - Caddsdow Bideford EX39 3BEMonday, 3 March 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, L Bright, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Craigie, T Elliott, J Gubb, P Hackett, P Hames, C Hawkins, K Hepple, R Hicks, C Hodson, S Inch, K James, C Leather, W Lo-Vel, R Lock, S Newton, P Pennington, L Piper, P Shepherd, T Tinsley, H Thomas and C Wheatley

ALSO PRESENT S Hearse - Chief Executive

 S Dorey - Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

 S Kearney - Head of Communities & Place

 P Hudson - Finance Manager (S151 Officer)

 T Vanstone - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer

 S May - Corporate Support Officer

397. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Whittaker, Gibson, Harding, Dart, Ford and Johns.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Newton in case of late attendance.

398. COUNCIL MINUTES

Members mentioned a spelling mistake within the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2024, this will be amended.

Councillor Pennington expressed concern for the many in the area who are eligible for Pension Credit who have not yet applied. In response, the Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) stated that Torridge District Council aims to work closely with the Department of Work and Pensions and highlighted that many communications were sent out in hopes that those who are eligible apply.

Councillor Thomas asked the Committee for an update on his Notice of Motion which was brought to Full Council on the 9th September. The Chief Executive

explained that the report had been brought back to Full Council, the outcome of which was that Members were to have an informal meeting to discuss further. The Chief Executive concluded that no information has been communicated with Officers that this meeting has occurred.

It was proposed by Councillor Lock, seconded by Councillor Pennington and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record with the amendment of a spelling error.

(Vote: For – 26, Against – 0, Abstentions – 4)

It was proposed by Councillor Bushby, seconded by Councillor James and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd December be confirmed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 26, Against – 0, Abstentions – 4)

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th January be confirmed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 23, Against – 0, Abstentions – 7)

399. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

400. 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.

401. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

As the report for the Torridge Community Regeneration Programme (formerly Levelling Up Partnership) was able to be published prior to the meeting, there was no longer a Part II.

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

The following matters were raised by the Chair:

The Chair reminded Members that there is a Members Briefing on Thursday 6th March regarding Devolution and the Housing Strategy.

403. DEVON AND TORBAY COUNTY COMBINED AUTHORITY - TEAM DEVON JOINT COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY BOARDS

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to approve the Constitution of the Team Devon Joint Committee and appointments to the advisory boards.

The Leader spoke to the Committee and proposed that Councillor Hodson be appointed to the Devon and Torbay CCA – Housing Advisory Board. The Leader proceeded to move the recommendation within the report. This was seconded by Councillor A Brenton.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor A Brenton and –

Resolved:

- The Leader of the Council is the Torridge District Council member of the Team Devon Joint Committee.
- Councillor Hodson be appointed to Devon and Torbay CCA – Housing Advisory Board.

To note:

- That the Leader of the Council has been appointed by the Devon District Forum to sit on the D&T CCA Audit Committee.

(Vote: For - Unanimous)

404. ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Executive presented the report followed by the Leader. The purpose of the report was for Members to note the Council's Annual Report for the financial year 2023/24 and agree to circulate to partners.

The Leader commended the Senior Management Team and Operational Services staff on the detailed collaborative work and stated that the report allows Members to reflect on the successes and the challenges faced by a small council.

Councillor Hodson congratulated the team of Officers who put this document together and informed the Committee that this report is an excellent example of

good communication between Officers and Members, which was a concern previously raised.

The Annual Report was noted by the Committee.

405. TORRIDGE COMMUNITY REGENERATION PROGRAMME (FORMERLY LEVELLING UP PARTNERSHIP)

With the permission of the Chair the agenda was reorganised and this item was the first to be discussed after Declarations of Interest. This was because the Chair of the Torridge Place Board was in attendance and among others, presenting the item.

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose was for Full Council to receive the latest information and update of progress on Torridge's Community Regeneration Partnership with Government and to approve the addition of the projects related to the partnership to the Council's Capital Investment Programme.

The Chair of the Torridge Place Board congratulated Torridge District Council on their ability to achieve this funding against a difficult backdrop and with the challenges that Torridge has recently faced. He commented that the Minister approved projects cover a breath of opportunity for all which includes business, culture, and environment.

The Leader expressed gratitude for the work completed by the Officers and Boards involved. Councillor James then moved the recommendation.

Members noticed a spelling mistake within the report. In response the Chief Executive clarified the matter.

Members briefly discussed the project regarding Bideford Hospital, specifically what the funding would be used for. The Chair advised the Committee that these details will become clearer at a later date once the plan comes into fruition. The Chief Executive furthered stating that these projects have been proposed by the Government, they are not Torridge District Council projects. Dentistry is not mentioned because it hasn't been proposed as a point of project delivery by the Government.

Councillor Newton arrived at the meeting at 6:50pm.

In response to a question about the Cleave Wood project, the Chief Executive informed Members that Torridge District Council own a parcel of land within the area and reiterated that the intention is that this site be used for residential use and that details would be provided at a later date. Members clarified their concerns, specifically regarding flood risk. The Head of Communities & Place told members that this funding would allow for a reassessment of the land.

Further questions were raised about resources and whether Torridge District Council has the ability to carry out these projects. The Chief Executive advised Members that this issue is currently being evaluated and as the Peer Review

inferred, the Council would not be able to achieve these projects with the current staffing resources, however there will be some external input.

Members asked the Committee if the funding being assigned to the revenue account would be used for staffing. The Chief Executive explained that although the sum of £250,00 is large, when spread across the programme the sum would not be enough to significantly aid with staffing.

Councillor Hames congratulated the Committee although commented that some further details were provided at the prior Group Leader meeting. The Chair stated that this item was strictly confidential until the day of the meeting and therefore not a lot of information could be shared.

Members highlighted that they were thankful for the breadth of projects over a vast number of areas.

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

Resolved:

That the £20,070,000 Government funding for the Torridge Community Regeneration Partnership is added to the Council's Capital Programme.

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

406. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

There were no questions submitted under Procedural Rule A9.

407. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

408. NOTICES OF MOTION

There was one Notice of Motion.

409. WRITTEN NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR THOMAS

Our current First Past The Post (FPTP) system originated in the Middle Ages. Many democracies, including former British colonies like Australia and New Zealand, have abandoned FPTP in favour of fairer systems.

Under FPTP, votes do not have equal weight and many are wasted, leading to voter apathy and frustration with both national and local elections.

Proportional Representation (PR) ensures all votes count, have equal value, and seats won match votes cast.

The Single Transferable Vote (STV) variant of PR is already in use for local elections in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The introduction of PR for local elections in Scotland led to an increase in turnout: 44.8% at the last elections in 2022. In contrast, turnout for Torridge was 33% in the 2023 local district elections.

I propose this Council resolves to:

1. Request the UK Government brings forward legislation to allow local elections in England to be run using a PR voting system.
2. Write to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition asking them to support legislation for the introduction of PR.

Councillor Thomas requested a recorded vote and spoke on the Notice of Motion.

It was proposed by Councillor Thomas, seconded by Councillor Craigie and –

Resolved:

That the Notice of Motion be agreed.

Following the support of more than five Members, 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	X		
BUSHBY, D		X	
COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X		
CRAIGIE, J	X		
DART, A			
ELLIOTT, T		X	
FORD, L			
GIBSON, S			
GUBB, J			X
HACKETT, P		X	
HAMES, P	X		
HARDING, S			
HAWKINS, C	X		
HEPPLE, K	X		
HICKS, R		X	
HODSON, C		X	
INCH, S		X	

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
JAMES, K		X	
JOHNS, T			
LEATHER, C	X		
LO-VEL, W	X		
LOCK, R		X	
NEWTON, S		X	
PENNINGTON, P	X		
PIPER, L	X		
SHEPHERD, P	X		
SMITH, D	X		
THOMAS, H	X		
TINSLEY, T	X		
WHEATLEY, C	X		
WHITTAKER, J			
TOTAL - 36	19	10	1

(Vote: For – 19, Against – 10, Abstentions – 1)

The Notice of Motion was carried.

410. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

411. PART II - (CLOSED SESSION)

There were no Part II items.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.20 pm

Chair:

Date: