



## Membership of the Committee

Chair	Councillor S Inch
Vice Chair	Councillor P Pennington
Councillors	A Boyle A Dart R Darch A Eastman T Johns I Parker A Whittle
Non-elected representatives	Mr P W Topham Mr D Mason
Supporting the Committee	Jamie Hollis, Senior Solicitor Sean Kearney, Commercial & Leisure Services Manager Mary Richards, Democratic Services Officer

## The Role of External Overview & Scrutiny

The Council has two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, an **External** Overview & Scrutiny Committee and an **Internal** Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committees have the power to review the policies of the Council and its objectives, and are entitled to 'call in' decisions made by the Community & Resources Committee which are not yet implemented. They can also recommend that the Community & Resources Committee reconsider such decisions. Issues that remain unresolved will be referred to the Full Council for determination.

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the performance of external public sector bodies operating within Torridge.

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee is also the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee.

The Council remains committed to its current policy of involving the community in its decision making process and includes community representation on both Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

## **Introduction by the Chair**

I am very pleased to be able to present the Annual Report on the work of the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee during 2016/2017.

It has been an interesting year for the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee and we have looked at a range of issues which are of interest to, or impact upon, the lives of local residents. We have engaged with a wide variety of local organisations and people, including the blue light emergency services, the voluntary sector and other public bodies to improve services to, and the well being of, our community. Calling on experts from within the Council as well as from external bodies has provided a pool of knowledge which has been a real benefit and ensures that the Committee is well informed to make recommendations.

Again, this year, the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued its work scrutinising the NHS during a time of considerable transformation and we have been well supported by the Lead Member for Health Well Being/Community Safety.

Looking forward, I hope that the work of this Committee will be complemented by the findings and recommendations of the LGA Peer Challenge. We will continue to strive towards improving local services, providing greater transparency and delivering better value for money to the residents of Torridge.

I would like to conclude by thanking our elected and independent members on the Committee who have been very active in leading and presenting on specific topics; the Lead Member for Health Well Being/Community Safety for her regular updates; and our officers who have been excellent in providing reports, information and insight in to the many issues which have come before our Committee.

Kind regards

**Simon Inch**

Councillor Simon Inch  
Chair – External Overview & Scrutiny Committee



## A look back at 2016/2017

Councillor S Inch, Chair, and Councillor P Pennington, Vice Chair saw another year in office and there were 2 changes to Committee Membership part way through the municipal year. Finally, at the end of the year, the Committee welcomed a new non-elected member, Mr David Mason.

A restructure of the Forward Plan was introduced, grouping items into themes and a Working Group was set up with internal Overview & Scrutiny to review grants given to external organisations.

In September 2016, the Committee approved the introduction of a public speaking scheme at its meetings to allow members of the public a greater opportunity to participate and be involved in the Committee's work.

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee has looked at a number of issues across a range of Council services and the services provided by external organisations.

### Highlights of this year's scrutiny:

#### TDC Community Safety Partnership



The new Community Safety & Public Health Officer was introduced to the Committee and he gave an overview of the Community Safety Partnership, was set up to tackle issues including alcohol & drug abuse, domestic abuse & sexual violence; re-offending; anti-social behaviour and protection of the most vulnerable.

The Partnership was made up of representatives from the local Police Force, the local councils (Torridge and North Devon as well as County), the Fire Authority, Clinical Commissioning Groups and voluntary organisations, the fire and police service, Devon County Council, North Devon Council and Torridge District Council. These organisations worked together to develop and implement strategies to protect the local communities from crime and to help people feel safe.

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee looked forward to receiving further updates.

#### Health, Well Being And Social Care



A regular item on the agenda, this topic was one which prompted lively debate on numerous occasions, particularly in relation to the Success Regime, the reduction in hospital services, the closure of beds, support infrastructure, ambulance response times and greater involvement of TDC in the NHS consultation programme.

A Task and Finish Working Group was formed with the purpose of formulating questions to put to the CCG, Health & Well Being Board and NDHCT and later in the year a lengthy debate took place in relation to the letter and attached documents received from Dr Tim Burke. The Committee planned to:

- Become involved in the Clinical Review Groups taking place within the National Health Service at an early stage.
- attend a joint meeting with North Devon Council and that Dr Burke; Lead Chief Executive for the Success Regime and Senior Colleagues be invited also.

Health, Well Being and Social Care will continue to be an important standing item on the agenda.

## Water Quality And Flood Risk



The Environment Agency Flood Risk Team and Devon County Council Flood & Coastal Risk Team both attended meetings and delivered informative presentations which allowed the Committee to better understand the issues facing the region. The Environment Agency 6 year capital investment plan was well received.

The Lead Member for the Environment was gathering information to provide an evidence based argument to present to South West Water and it had been agreed that the Torridge MP and the North Devon MP should be involved.

There were ongoing issues in respect of sewerage. Consequently, this item would remain on the Forward Plan for further scrutiny and a report to all Councillors would follow.

## Citizens Advice Bureau



The Chief Executive of the North, Mid & West Devon Citizens Advice Bureau gave an update to the Committee on case statistics and trends. Information was provided on how the funding from Torridge District Council had been spent.

The Committee acknowledged the services provided by the CAB and how important this was to members of our community.

## South West Ambulance Service Trust



The Committee heard from the Head of Operations for the West Division and the Operations Manager for ambulance services across North Devon and the details they provided had been very informative, giving the Committee a better insight into the problems the service faced. Information was given about the fleet and crews and the voluntary support from the BASICS Scheme which provided a network of trained specialists.

## North Devon Biosphere Reserve



The Committee had the pleasure of being addressed by Mr A Bell, Manager, North Devon Biosphere Service. His presentation covered all aspects of the Biosphere from marine and woodland projects to ecotourism. The Biosphere Reserve partnership has delivered an extensive range of environmental improvement projects since the designation was made.

It was noted that the North Devon Biosphere Reserve was considering charitable status.

## North Devon AONB



The Committee was informed of the projects and priorities for the North Devon AONB. The presentation incorporated information on funding, AONB Management Plan, the Sustainable Development Fund, AONB and Planning and Performance Indicators 2015-16.

The organisation was now engaging with schools and the importance of this cooperation was appreciated.

The primary purpose of the AONB “to conserve and enhance natural beauty” had to be balanced against needs of agriculture, forestry and rural industries as well as the economic and social needs of local communities.

## **Other items**

### Tourist Information Groups

An introductory review of tourism had been undertaken and the importance of tourism to the economy and the need to invest more in tourism had been discussed.

### Evaluation Of Impact – Partner Survey 2016

Mr P Topham, Independent Non-elected Member, had presented his final report, which had involved a survey of ten organisations who partner with Torrington District Council (TDC) in the provision of services to its residents.

The main themes identified were partners’ generally positive relationship with the Committee; the importance of being able to explain their work; the importance of the Committee as a conduit between partners and community; their commitment to achieving value for money in the services they provide; a desire to work more closely with the Council.

The review concluded that the findings of the survey be considered for action or further enquiry.

### Joint Meeting Of Internal and External Overview & Scrutiny Committees

A joint working group had been set up.