



**Torrige District Council**  
**External Overview & Scrutiny**

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2018/2019**

## **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 selected external bodies and companies serving the community 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**

It is my pleasure to present an overview of the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee over the past 12 months. The Committee has continued to work with partners in all sections of our community to help improve the quality of life for Torridge residents. I would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of all who have contributed - as invited guests, TDC officers, elected & non-elected members. I would like to make special mention of Mr Keif Bines and Mr David Mason, non-elected independent members and Councillor S Inch, who sat on the Committee during the first part of the municipal year and whose contributions were greatly appreciated.

Scrutiny provides opportunities to gather evidence and make recommendations for improvements. Throughout the year guest speakers from partner agencies and external organisations addressed our meetings, enabling us to build up our knowledge and understanding of how they help deliver our priorities.

I would also like to thank our colleagues and fellow Councillors at North Devon Council for the joint scrutiny that we have undertaken this year. Our joint meetings have covered issues including crime & disorder, health services, flood risk management and agriculture, all of which affect the greater northern Devon area.

The Lead Member for Health and Well Being has provided regular updates on health care and crime and disorder. A valuable insight into the work of the Community Safety Partnership was given by the Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager.

Joint task and finish groups with Internal Overview and Scrutiny have been set up to consider external grants, play area strategy scoping and the Government response on the review of scrutiny in LAs. The work of these groups is still ongoing and I am sure will produce some useful feedback.

In 2017 Mr Topham reported to the Committee on an interview survey of TDC partners, following which he developed a questionnaire for presenters to complete. A trial was conducted from May to December 2018, which covered 5 committee meetings and 8 presentations. The aim of the trial was to test whether the procedure worked. The response had not been encouraging, with only 3 forms being returned (digitally) out of 8. However, the information gleaned from the returns was very interesting and it was agreed that the trial should be extended for a further 6 months.

**Councillor A Eastman**  
**Chair – External Overview & Scrutiny**

## **Committee Membership**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Chair                       | Councillor A Eastman   |
| Vice Chair                  | Councillor P Pennington  |
| Councillors                 | R Boughton<br>A Boyle<br>A Eastman<br>T Johns<br>N Laws<br>I Parker<br>C Simmons |
| Non-elected representatives | Mr P Topham<br>Vacancy x 2   |

## **Some of the presentations we received in 2018/19:**

### **Stronger, Safer, Healthier Communities**

As a result of letters written by the Committee expressing concerns about life expectancy in Torridge, Tracey Polak of Public Health Devon County Council was invited to attend the meeting on 14 November 2018 and Dr Womersley of the CCG was invited to attend on 9 January 2019.

#### Devon County Council Public Health

Tracey Polak, Assistant Director/Consultant of Public Health, Devon County Council, had been invited to the meeting to address concerns the Committee had raised about the reduction of life expectancy in Torridge and what was being done from the health care perspective. She focused on life style choices and wider determinants, such as employment, housing and education. Factors in Torridge raising alarm included self harm, suicide, hospital admissions for alcohol, diabetes and children seriously injured on the roads.

TDC's Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager was able to provide the Committee with a comprehensive update of the work of the CSP in this area.

#### CCG

Dr Womersley gave a high level overview of the CCG, its aims and challenges. The focus this year was around wellbeing with its links to housing, education, health services, employment and social and medical care. The CCG aimed to deliver as

many services locally as possible but there would always be a need to use centres of excellence and specialist consultants elsewhere in Devon. Various services were being pooled to provide improved access.

### Clarity – 23 May 2018

Anne Jenkins, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Clarity addressed the meeting on 23 May 2018. Clarity is a registered charity which offers therapeutic counselling, group support and group therapy to anyone experiencing mental health or emotional issues.

Counselling services are delivered by qualified counsellors or final year counselling students led by the Head of Therapy who has over 20 years experience in mental health services. All counsellors and administration staff are volunteers and receive no payment other than travelling expenses.

The Committee acknowledged that Clarity was helping to cover many of the gaps in the Mental Health Services.

### 1610 Leisure Services - 23 May 2018 and 10 April 2019

23 May 2018 - An informative presentation was given by several representatives of 1610 Leisure Services which detailed membership statistics, financial performance, customer satisfaction surveys and customer feedback. Information was shared about pricing and the desire to make the service affordable to customers. The Committee was introduced to the concept of cashless payments and reassured that nobody would be turned away. Committee Members were able to put forward complaints they had received.

10 April 2019 – I Blythe and R Hayes presented service performance highlights and were particularly excited about the new concept of exercise referral schemes (prescriptive memberships) which now constituted 11% of membership. Details were given about the equipment at the facilities both in terms of enhancement and challenge; swimming promotions and the “Let’s Move” scheme which had been operating very successfully.

The Committee learnt that since the last visit by 1610, when many complaints about the facilities had been received, the lines of communication with TDC had much improved. Nevertheless, the committee confirmed that they were still receiving complaints. The issues raised were acknowledged and information was provided about personnel procedures, ongoing staff training and measures implemented to ensure that the expected levels of service are achieved and standards are improved.

Members felt 1610 Leisure Services should be reviewed biannually.

## Quality Environment

### North Devon Coast AONB – 4 July 2018

Jenny Carey-Wood, Manager of the North Devon Coast AONB, presented the highlights from the annual report prepared in February 2018. She talked about the events which had taken place and the grants which had been awarded.

Members encouraged the AONB to try to publicise more widely so that holiday parks, for example, were aware of forthcoming events.

An interesting debate had developed on the impact of Brexit on rural communities and the social impact of planning decisions.

### Devon County Council and the Environment Agency – 22 August 2018

Martin Hutchings, Devon County Council Flood and Coastal Risk Manager explained to the Committee that Devon County Council was the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), and was responsible for managing the local flood risk in Devon from surface water, groundwater and consenting and enforcement on ordinary watercourses, including planning / SuDS, highways flood risk management, land drainage consents and issues specific to Torridge. The Environment Agency was responsible for managing flood risk from rivers and sea.

Simon Dart, Flood Risk Engineer, Environment Agency spoke about coastal erosion, Brunswick Wharf, Northam Burrows and piloting a programme “Natural Flood Management”, under which the EA was looking to raise Kenwith by about one meter.

During the presentations it had become apparent that funding might be available to address the Brunswick Wharf wall reinforcement issue and the Committee agreed that this be followed up in writing. It was later confirmed that no funding was available.

## Prosperous and Sustainable Economy

### North Devon Marketing Bureau – 14 November 2018

Nick White reported on national and local tourism trends and offered comparisons with other South West Counties. Details were given of the milestones achieved by the North Devon Marketing Bureau during 2017-2018 and the links with Visit Devon, particularly in respect of events and websites. He added that TDC now had a Tourism Strategy.

An officer Task & Finish Group had been set up to work with Nick White and the next stage of the process is for a Member Task & Finish Group to sit to discuss the findings.

## Great Torrington Chamber of Trade – 20 February 2019

A joint presentation was given by Catherine Wapshott and Jayne Wafforne who spoke positively about retail in the town, collaboration with Dartington Glass and RHS Rosemoor and the aspirations for a cable car. The Committee learnt about the events the Chamber had held and the challenges faced.

In response to concerns about parking, a review of signage had been conducted and action had been taken to improve effectiveness. Further signage will be required once the electric car charging point is installed

Great Torrington Chamber of Trade will be invited to attend a meeting later in the year.

## Collaboration with North Devon Council

North Devon Scrutiny Committee and Torrington External Overview and Scrutiny met jointly three times. Issues affecting the greater northern Devon area would receive greater significance when coming together in one voice. Health was discussed at 2 meetings with representation from Northern Devon Healthcare Trust, the Clinical Commissioning group and other interested parties. The third meeting looked at Agriculture, it's supporting industries and looking at the impact of brexit with all the uncertainties.

It is intended that joint working will continue, bringing a strong united voice to external matters which so affect our residents.