

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Tuesday, 28 May 2019 - 2.00 pm

PRESENT                      Councillor P Watson (Chair)  
                                    Councillors P Hames, R Boughton, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Gubb,  
                                    S Langford, J Manley, S Newton and T Inch

ALSO PRESENT              J Wallace                      - Head of Paid Service  
                                    M Richards                  - Democratic Services Officer  
                                    Councillor N Laws  
                                    Councillor P Pennington

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions followed.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

2. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Inch, seconded by Mr Dengate and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April be agreed and signed as a correct record subject to the amendment that Mr I Harper had sent apologies prior to the meeting.

(Vote: For 4, Abstentions 7)

**Matters Arising**

Minute 82 (b) - Call-In Westward Ho! Park

The Head of Paid Service reaffirmed the statement made by the Strategic Manager (Resources) that the constitution did not require a reason for a call in. With regard to the asset transfer decision, she confirmed that there is no appeal process. It was requested that the constitutional protocol be reviewed to which the Head of Paid Services responded officers were looking at this. The review of the business plan by the independent person was discussed further and it was noted that this will be addressed when the call-in is examined by the Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

Minute 69 a) – Local Housing Allowance

An update was requested on the correspondence with Kit Malthouse. The Head of Paid Service did not believe there had been a further response.

#### Minute 81 - Income Generation Task and Finish Group

The Chair confirmed that the Task & Finish Group still meet.

#### Minute 90 – S106 Agreements

Details of the unallocated funds were requested. The Head of Paid Service explained that funds can be allocated for something specific, such as education, highways or recreational facilities but this was not always the case, some funds were not allocated to a specific purpose. The officer concerned had been asked to ensure details of S106 monies were publicised so that groups could bid for funding from the unallocated amounts. The Head of Paid Service confirmed that in some cases Town and Parish Councils can apply for funding.

#### Minute 92 – Income Generation Task & Finish Group

The Chair confirmed that the Task & Finish Group was still looking at empty properties.

More information was requested about revision of the constitution and it was noted that this responsibility fell within the remit of the Monitoring Officer and work had already started on this with support from an expert in the private sector who was providing templates from other authorities and advising on best practice. Furthermore, the Leader was intending to have a working group to review the constitution. Additionally, the Head of Paid Service had been in contact with the Local Government Association who had also offered assistance.

### 3. ACTION LIST

The action list was reviewed.

### 4. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

### 5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded that declarations of interest should be made as and when the specific agenda item to which they related was under discussion.

### 6. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

There were no matters brought forward.

### 7. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

8. INTRODUCTION TO THE SCRUTINY ROLE / NEW STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY - MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Head of Paid Service addressed items 8 and 9 on the agenda simultaneously, referring Members to the document “Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities” for more detailed information.

Members learnt that there was no statutory requirement for Torridge District Council to have a Scrutiny Committee. The scrutiny role had been brought in for those councils working with an Executive or Cabinet system with decision making powers. Torridge operates a committee system and decisions are taken within the committee by elected members. The Head of Paid Service referred to Article 6 of the constitution which set out the terms of reference of the Scrutiny Committee – this will be made available to Committee Members. The statement of purpose is also set out in the constitution for the External and the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committees which often worked together.

The presentation looked at:

- The range of Acts which bring about the scrutiny function. The Scrutiny Committee can look at anything relating to the wellbeing of its residents.
- The legal powers of the Scrutiny Committee.
- The financial challenge of austerity, particularly the Government’s proposed withdrawal of the revenue support grant and plans to fund through business rates alone.
- Councillors having an active input on policy and performance issues affecting local people.
- The principles of effective overview & scrutiny.
- The type of issues the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee will look at and those that will be covered by the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- The Committee’s approach to scrutiny, the ways of working and key tasks.
- The call-in procedure – additionally, the Head of Paid Service spoke specifically about the Westward Ho! call-in and pre-determination
- The work programme, the forward plan and outcomes. The Head of Paid Service suggested that the Committee invite the Leader to a future meeting to set out how she sees the Council moving forward.
- Working relationships and officer support.

Key points Members should bear in mind:

- The scrutiny role is politically unbiased
- The scrutiny role is a learning experience
- The scrutiny role is about questioning and listening

- Members should prepare for the meeting – The Chair of External Overview & Scrutiny recommended Committee Members attend the Community & Resources meeting to get an idea of the debate.

The Chair of External Overview & Scrutiny invited all Members to attend the External Overview & Scrutiny meeting to be held on 5 June.

## 9. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was reviewed.

It was recommended that the Westward Ho! Call-in be the first agenda item for the next meeting. (Papers to include a timeline of what has happened and decisions made.)

Additional topics for future consideration:

- Peer Review, including empty homes (to include an overview of the findings of the first peer review and how these had been addressed by the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> peer review)
- Bideford Harbour
- External Grant Review – with timeline and end date
- The economy (once strategic options have been decided)
- The licensing of caravan sites – this will be raised at the next meeting of the Licensing Committee
- Recreational spaces – responsibility for sites within Torridge. The Head of Paid Service gave an update on the play strategy.
- A discussion took place about 1610. The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee is monitoring performance and is still not completely happy with the service and level of complaints. It is important that scrutiny continues and that due diligence is carried out. The current contract will be simplified when the contract comes up for renewal.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 3.19 pm.

Chair:

Date: