

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Monday, 25 November 2019 - 10.00 am

PRESENT

Councillor R Hicks (Chair)
Councillor D McGeough (Vice-Chair)

Councillors D Brenton, C Bright, D Bushby, P Christie, A Dart, K James, N Laws, R Lock, R Wiseman and D Hurley (substitute for J Hutchings)

ALSO PRESENT

J Wallace - Head of Paid Service
S Hearse - Strategic Manager (Resources)
S Dorey - Senior Solicitor
J Williams - Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager
S Cawsey - Democratic Services Officer

Councillors M Clarke, R Craigie, C Hodson, C Leather and P Pennington

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hutchings.

51. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2019

It was proposed, seconded and -

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2019 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 10, Abstentions 2)

Matters Arising

Minute No 47 – Northam Burrows Visitors Centre

Councillor Christie referred to a recent article in the local newspapers which stated that Torrridge District Council are asking for Tenders to move pebbles on the burrows. He sought clarification on this.

The Strategic Manager (Resources) confirmed that this will be paid for by the Golf Club, but Torridge, as the Coastal Defence Authority, will be managing the works.

52. ACTION LIST

The Action List was noted.

53. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

54. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made when the specific agenda items to which they related were under discussion.

56. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

It was proposed, seconded and –

Resolved: That the Agenda as circulated be agreed.

(Vote: For - Unanimous)

57. URGENT MATTERS OF INFORMATION TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR AND THE COMMITTEE

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

58. TAXI RANK PROVISION

The purpose of the report, presented by the Environmental Health & Community Safety Manager was for the Committee to consider allowing the concrete apron of the Quay as a taxi feeder rank.

This option had been a recommendation from the Task and Finish Group set up to review the taxi rank provision. When presented to the Licensing Committee it was agreed to refer the recommendation to this Committee.

When discussing this matter, the following points/concerns were raised:

- Health and safety issues – taxis existing the entrance

- Signage – concerns these would be ignored. It will be advisory signage, not legal and cannot be enforced as not on Devon County Highways land
- Alternative locations were suggested
- This to be for taxis only and to ensure taxi drivers are aware there will be no right turns

It was acknowledged this is an issue that had been ongoing for a number of years, and the conclusion reached was, that although not an ideal option it was the best solution.

It was proposed that a twelve month monitoring period be included in the recommendation.

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

Resolved:

That the following option recommended by the Taxi Rank Task and Finish Working Group be agreed:

“That a feeder rank system be established on the concrete apron area of the Quay side, as shown on Appendix A attached to the report, for a monitoring period of 12 months”.

(Vote: For 10, Against 2)

59. NOTICES OF MOTION

The Head of Paid Service presented the report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the actions taken on the Notices of Motion presented at Full Council on 28 October 2019.

The Head of Paid Service had received an update from Councillor Ford that the Consultation for the restructuring of the Fire and Rescue Service had been extended to January, and the contribution figure to be £2,500. If Members wished to support this motion it would be included in next years Revenue Budget.

Councillor James informed Members that a meeting of the Climate Change Working Group will be held 26 November at 10am. All Members are invited to attend.

With regard to the Notice of Motion for two disabled swings, Councillor James had discussed with Councillor McGeough the need to look at the costings involved. As stated in the report, this matter needs to be considered as part of the Play Strategy.

Councillor James gave an update on the Play Strategy, advising that the work is still ongoing and is being prepared by the people who carry out the maintenance and inspections for the Authority. This will be a cost saving against having outside Consultants. He will pursue this matter.

The Committee had concerns with the contribution for the restructuring of the Fire and Rescue Service being included in next years Revenue Budget, as this may be too late if the monies are required immediately when the Consultation ends in January. The following amendment was therefore proposed:

“that if required the contribution of £2,500 be immediately available in January”.

Councillor Pennington stated that the Play Strategy had been included on the Agenda for the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting to be held 27 November. He requested that an extract of these minutes referring to the Play Strategy be forward to External Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as no draft Play Strategy would be available for review.

It was proposed by Councillor Hicks, seconded by Councillor Laws and -

Resolved:

- That further information be received, as outlined in the report, at the appropriate Working Group/Committee/Full Council.
- That a contribution of £2,500 towards the cost of a Judicial Review, dependent on the outcome of the consultation for the restructuring of the Fire and Rescue Service be approved. This to be included in the 2020/21 Revenue Budget or if required to be immediately available in January.

(Vote: For 11, Abstentions 1)

60. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (IF ANY)

The Strategic Manager (Resources) gave a brief summary of the discussions that had taken place with regard to this item. This matter had been raised a number of times through the Quarterly Business Report.

With regard to a designated Officer to review homelessness, the Strategic Manager (Resources) explained that to make this viable there would have to be a significant number of empty properties brought back into use. Those people with empty properties pay additional council tax in the hope they will bring the property back into use. Members enquired as to whether paying additional Council tax had had an effect on the number of empty properties or whether the additional tax could be further increased. The Strategic Manager (Resources) to provide the numbers, but mentioned that increases can only be in line with parameters .

The Strategic Manager (Resources) agreed to look into the Grants Scheme previously offered by the Council for property owners to repair properties.

Details were given of additional funding for the Better Care Fund. This additional funding is ring fenced for Disabled Facilities Grants and for Housing Renewal work, not towards homelessness.

Councillor Bushby referred to certain empty apartments with in the Town and explained why they are classed as uninhabitable. On request for further information from Members, it was agreed the meeting go into Part II.

61. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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

Resolved:

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 and Paragraph 10 of Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

62. PART II (CLOSED SESSION)

63. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PART II

Councillors updated the meeting on further confidential information with regard to the apartments referred to above.

A number of concerns were raised and discussed. Members were informed that as the owner was within his rights there was no further action that could be taken.

Further discussion followed on :

- A designated Officer for homelessness and the ways in which this option could be viable
- To approach Devon County Councils with options re Council Tax
- Homeless in Torridge no comparison to what ND Council have
- Joint working with ND Council on specific bids

No recommendations were made.

64. LEGAL BRIEFING

A verbal confidential report was given by the Senior Solicitor.

The purpose of the report was to seek Member approval for the Authority to join in the legal proceedings with the National Trust.

The Committee, although in support of this, emphasised that the Council's costs must be paid for by the National Trust.

It was proposed by Councillor Christie, seconded by Councillor Brenton and -

Resolved:

That the Council join in the legal proceedings with the National Trust, provided the National Trust pay the costs.

(Vote: For 11, Against 1)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED)

It was proposed, seconded and –

Resolved: That the press and public be readmitted.

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 11.17am.

Chair:

Date: