

QBR Q2 / September 2019 – Advance Q&A

Highlights - Agenda Page 13

Goal 2 - Leisure Centre stats – Ian Harper

In addition to the attendance figures could income for last quarter compared to same period last year be given please.

Sean Kearney – We don't receive this information as 1610 receive and retain all the income from visits to the various leisure facilities.

Goal 4 – Invalid Planning Applications – Ian Harper

Invalid applications 65% are these being submitted by agents, what is the, rough estimate, additional costs to the Council?

Shaun Harrington - The invalid question is difficult one to answer without spending a significant amount of time investigating the many applications. However, we would consider that a large proportion of the invalid applications will be from Agents. In terms of additional costs, an invalid application will require some amount of 'double handling' and additional correspondence resulting in additional cost in terms of staff time. Given that reasons for an invalid application can be broad, and therefore the associated additional work also being broad we are not able to put a financial figure on this without a lot of further work. We continue to highlight this problem at agent forums etc.

Revenue & Capital Highlights – Agenda Page 16 – Ian Harper

Summary of variances identified - Note overspend on:
Premises related costs.
Supplies and services
Software related.

David Heyes:

Premises Related

	Over / (under)
• Business Rates Public Conveniences The government announced that business rates would be waived on Public Conveniences, budgets were amended but the necessary legislation was delayed for one year.	£11k
• Mazar Case – Business Rates Essentially a court ruling meant some commercial council tenants became liable for their business rates, consequently the Council received a business rate refund.	(£21k)
• Ground Maintenance works various car parks	£17k
• Bank End Harbour works	£14k

Mooring points, bollards, water points	
• New Stake Park Wall	£10k
• Riverbank Bank House	£11k
Various works, access control, new fencing, improvements to LED lighting	
• Other Miscellaneous	£6k
Total	£48k

Supplies & Services	Over / (under)
• Additional Parking Machine – Wilkey’s Field	£13k
• Bank Charges – New Car Parking Machines	£8k
• Cleansing Services – Homeless Hostels Used to undertaken by TDC staff	£6k
• Public Burials Burials undertaken where there are no next of kin	£6k
• Postage Additional Postage – Green waste renewals and District Elections	£13k
Total	£46k

Software Related	Over / (under)
• IDOX server upgrades	£26k
• Maintenance under spends telephony system	(£20k)
• Academy System upgrades (Housing Benefit) Funded from Central Government grant	£6k
• Refuse – In-cab technology Vehicle Tracking	£16k
• Other Miscellaneous < £3k	£9k
Total	£37k

Capital & Reserves – Agenda Page 16 - Cllr Langford

All totals in the spent to 30 Sept column are lower than the figure in the Net Capital Programme Budget 19/20 column except for Culture and Sport. Why is that figure higher?

David Heyes - The budget and expenditure in this area is almost entirely for the Stake Park *plus* £25k for Calf Street Play area but the £25k allocated to Calf Street Play area has not yet been spent.

The net budget takes into account external funding and therefore is the “Cost to the Council”

Gross Budget for Stake Park	£203,000
Less external contributions	(£87,000)
Net Budget	£116,000

Gross spend	£203,689
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So, in reality the Council has spent £689 more than the budget.

Capital & Reserves – Agenda Page 16 – Ian Harper

Is there a schedule of when these will be spent?

David Heyes – The majority of reserves held are designated to fund the capital programme and are released as capital expenditure is incurred.

The projected expenditure profile of the Capital Programme is as below:

2019/20	£8,164k
2020/21	£9,041k
2021/22	£3,298k
2022/23	£3,266k
2023/24	£ 772k
2024/25	£ 154k
2025/26	£2,634k

With regards to revenue reserves circa £1.25m is held in the Transition in Government Funding reserve the utilisation of which will be dependent upon the future budget deficits it has to fund.

Other revenue reserves are utilised as and when they are required. For example, there is an apprentice reserves which is utilised to fund apprentices that the Council engages.

Capital & Reserves – Agenda Page 16 - Steve Dengate

Note 1: Disabled Facilities Grant of £1,112k received in advance of spend September 2019. can I ask for a bit more background on this and where the grant fund(s) are designated?

David Heyes - Annually the Council receives Better Care Funding (**BCF**) via Devon County Council, in 2019/20 Torrington has received £854k BCF and has also carried forward £258k under spends from prior years.

Traditionally the monies have been used for disabled adaptations, which allows people to remain in their own homes. However increasingly some of the grant funding is spent on energy efficiency for homes, e.g. insulation and new boilers. For 2018/19 the split was £527k Disabled Adaptations and £137k energy efficiency.

Earmarked reserves – Agenda Page 17 - Steve Dengate

Section 106 monies:

1. Could we please have a current schedule showing the allocation amounts given (£349,839) and also any un-allocated funds available?
2. Can we have a projected forecast if possible, of expected funds based on Heads of Terms.
3. Confirmation that the local Councillors have been engaged / involved in these discussions?

1. David Heyes - The schedule of Section 106s is contained within the attached spreadsheet *section 106 Finance Version*. The £349,839 is split between “Capital” S106s (£148k) the purpose of which are shown within the attached, commuted sums (£186k) where monies are released annually to fund grounds maintenance and general repairs. There is also £16k which relates to a section 106 for Atlantic Village to be spent on promoting retail and tourism within Bideford. The second attachment *section 106 detail* provides some additional explanation.
2. Rachel Webdell - Unfortunately we do not hold easily accessible data for obligations that have been secured, although this is something that the government will be requiring Local Authorities to collate going forward. Therefore, over the next year we will be putting systems in place which will capture the details of all agreed Section 106 obligations.
3. Shaun Harrington - The protocol to involve members with S106 agreements is that Planning Officers will email the Ward Members outlining Heads of Terms as part of the planning process and prior to the drafting of any S106 agreements or issuing of decisions.

Investments – Agenda Page 17 - Steve Dengate

Current Investment Holdings: If it does not breach any confidence can we please have sight of the last available monthly report from Capita Asset Services giving the assessment on the current investment holdings and deposit holding accounts where the funds are held?

David Heyes – see attached *Torrige Council Monthly Investment Report Sept 19* Page 4 is the most relevant section.

Goal 1 – Agenda Pages 18-20

LEP Local Industrial Strategy ER4.C - Agenda Page 18 - Ian Harper:

1. Torridge Strategy, will this be a Torridge Strategy or a joint strategy with NDDC?
2. What areas are being considered, will this include the Maritime sector.

Sean Kearney

1. Yes, there will be a joint strategy with North Devon. At present we are in discussion with them about the style of the document. Our preference is that it is more a prospectus that helps us to present the opportunity that Northern Devon Offers as opposed to a large document full of statistical justification.
2. Priorities will include Innovation and enterprise, digital, marine, Agri/ Food, Tourism and Care. There will also be a recognition of climate change and the need to repurpose our market town economies.

Inward Investment / Investment in Growth ER4.C – Agenda Page 18 – Ian Harper

Airband switching form wireless to fibre, what about the areas now receiving wireless will they be upgraded, whilst not our issue will Airband be able to meet this change, only recently a small family run business, communication with them is poor?

Chris Fuller - No upgrades will take place where existing installs have already taken place as the funding is not there to do so.

Harbour Review H1.C – Agenda Page 19 - Steve Dengate:

In view of Minute 23 of our meeting 17/09/19: Action List – Estuary Strategy: To circulate detailed action plan in relation to Item 7.4, Page 26 of the estuary Strategy to Committee Members and the response from the Planning & Economy Manager. *“The report was never produced. It was a job for the then Harbour Master but for several reasons it never materialised. The task remains outstanding.”* Could we please have an indication where in the planning cycle this report is and how it will inform the Harbour Review?

Sean Kearney – Other more pressing issues have overtaken the report in terms of immediate priority and so there is currently no intention to produce it in the short term. There has also been a three day per week reduction in staff resource in the Harbour Service and so resourcing a report will be difficult at this time.

Harbour Review H1.C Page 19 - Ian Harper:

who has responsibility for Estuary beyond the designated area of the Board?

Sean Kearney - This is not a simple question to answer. Different organisations have responsibility for different issues. The far bank of the Torridge after Ethelwynne Brown Close is in North Devon although most of the foreshore is leased to us by the Crown. The District boundary runs down the middle of the river.

Regulation and management of water-based activities are not the responsibility of any organisation in particular. Users are requested to abide by a voluntary code of conduct that was prepared by the Taw and Torridge Estuary Forum, but they are not policed or enforced. There is more information in the Estuary strategy <https://www.torridge.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=13968&p=0>

Goal 2 – Agenda Page 21

Action PL2.C - ND & TDC Traveller Site Allocations Development Plan Document: - Steve Dengate

How is this going then? We do seem to be rehearsing the known, when will this piece of work be programmed in for delivery?

Dawn Burgess - The delivery of a Traveller's Site Allocations DPD will be considered as part of a wider review of the Local Plan and as part of a requirement for Plan to be reviewed within five years of adoption. While there is currently no defined timeframe for this action, we anticipate that Traveller Site Allocations will be covered

in an update to the Local Development Scheme, which we expect will be undertaken next year.

NI155 Affordable Housing Delivery – Agenda Page 23 – Ian Harper

Affordable Housing, CLTs is there a reason why there has been no uptake of the grant available?

Rachel Webdell - Whilst we have several CLT's operating in Torridge, we only have one currently at a stage in the development process whereby this funding could be accessed for the intended purpose. The CLT in question is Holsworthy CPT. As of now they have not submitted an application which I understand is due to them currently working on the wider viability of their proposed scheme which has secured planning permission.