

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall, Bideford

Tuesday, 17 December 2019 - 3.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor P Watson (Chair)  
Councillor P Hames (Vice-Chair)

Councillors R Boughton, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Gubb, S Langford,  
J Manley, T Inch and S Newton

Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper

ALSO PRESENT

S Hearse - Strategic Manager (Resources)  
D Heyes - Finance Manager  
S Kearney - Planning & Economy Manager  
H Roper - Service Improvement Officer

Councillors N Laws, D McGeough and P Pennington

44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Gubb had sent apologies that she would be late arriving.

45. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Manley, seconded by Councillor Newton and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 8, abstentions 1)

46. ACTION LIST

The action list was reviewed and it was noted that actions raised on the QBR would be addressed later in the meeting.

The Strategic Manager (Resources) told Members that allocation of a dedicated officer for homelessness had been considered as requested at Community & Resources Committee and Members had agreed that sufficient resource was already in place.

The action relating to local authority settlements will be driven by the release of the papers by Central Government.

Councillor Cottle-Hunkin joined the meeting.

It was put forward that TDC should investigate social housing further. The Strategic Manager (Resources) responded that this was something for when the Strategic Plan was being considered and he explained the process. During the ensuing discussion the Chair said that he would raise the matter with the Planning Department in relation to affordable housing options.

47. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

48. 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.

49. URGENT MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

There were no urgent matters, although Mr Dengate asked that clarification be provided about the Treasury Management Report which went to Full Council on 9 December.

50. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

51. QBR TRAINING

A training session was led by the Service Improvement Officer and the Finance Officer.

Councillor Gubb joined the meeting at 15.19.

52. S106 UPDATE

The Service Improvement Officer guided Members through the table indicating where amounts had been allocated or were unallocated and where sums were site specific. Members were urged to speak to Rachel Webdell, Strategic Enabling Officer, for specific information. Members should also seek out local schemes for consideration.

The Planning & Economy Manager confirmed that the balance shown in the table against the Atlantic Village had in fact been spent and he surmised that the funds had perhaps not yet been drawn from the account. Further clarification was given around allocation criteria. The meeting was informed that once funds had been received there was no requirement to consult further with the developers but

developers could claim money back if it is not spent within 5 years. It was preferred that developers provide the facilities rather than the money.

Councillor Laws joined the meeting during the above discussion.

There were concerns that Members were often not aware of the funds available or the timescale in which the monies had to be spent. It was noted that the report is updated monthly but due to the nature of the funding there were often no changes.

53. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT ANALYSIS

The Disabled Facility Grant “End to End time” Analysis was reviewed. The Service Improvement Manager highlighted the complexities and the challenges and elaborated on the arrangements with South Hams District Council. He asked whether it would be beneficial, going forward, for Members to see South Hams figures against those for Torridge.

Councillor Pennington raised a concern as Chair of External Overview & Scrutiny in relation to perception by the public and partners of the figures presented in the analysis.

54. CLT UPDATE

The Service Improvement Officer reported that the Strategic Enabling Officer was in regular contact all 5 Community Land Trusts in the area, none of which were at a stage in their maturity to make an application. In addition to these, interest had been registered by a village hall community and a parish council but they did not fall under the scheme.

Funding was discussed and since the funding was made available in early 2018 it appeared that people were seeking to gain grant funding rather than loans.

In the new year there will be more advertising of the scheme.

55. EXTERNAL GRANTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Planning & Economy Manager presented the report, giving a brief overview of the new Homes Bonus and detailing those bodies in receipt of grants and those on Service Level agreements. New Homes Bonus Funding comes to an end in 2020/2021 as Government are expected to review this area of funding and although it will be replaced there was uncertainty as to the format it will take. It was anticipated the level of funding will remain the same.

The Committee was asked to consider the recommendations set out in the report. A short discussion took place on the Councillor Grant Scheme and it was felt more should be done to promote the scheme and make organisations aware.

Councillor McGeough left the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Langford and –

Resolved:

That the recommendations in report be approved.

(Vote: For - unanimous)

56. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Strategic Manager (Resources) referred to the point Mr Dengate had raised earlier in the meeting about revisiting the Treasury Management Report as discussed at Full Council on 9 December. He detailed the request made by Councillor Christie at that meeting that the Council look at ethical investment. He added that there had been formal recommendation and the request had been noted.

Mr Dengate suggested that a position statement be drawn up in relation to the Council's stance on ethical investment. The Strategic Manager (Resources) advised that this was something which could be considered during the budget setting process for 2020/2021. It was agreed the first requirement was to define ethical investment.

Councillor Pennington urged caution in view of the recent suspension of the M&G property fund. The Strategic Manager (Resources) stated that property investment was still returning a yield of 4.4% and most Local Authorities were still investing in property. It was important that investment be prioritised firstly by security, then liquidity and finally revenue.

It was agreed that ethical investment be put on the Forward Plan for the April meeting and the suggestion was made that policies already in use by other organisations be used as a starting point for the discussion.

It was proposed by Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Manley 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 6 of Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

57. PART II

58. FORWARD PLAN - PART II INFORMATION

Councillor Pennington, Chair of External Overview & Scrutiny, asked that, further to the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 11 November, Internal Overview & Scrutiny scrutinise the events leading to the recent court case with Kivells.

The Strategic Manager (Resources) reminded the Committee that the outcome and judgement had been taken to Full Council for consideration and a conclusion had been reached. A decision made by Full Council cannot be called in.

A short discussion followed.

The item was not added to the Forward Plan.

It was proposed by Councillor Inch, seconded by Councillor Manley that the press and public be re-admitted.

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm and closed at 5.02 pm.

Chair:

Date: