

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL
COMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETING

Virtual Meeting via Zoom with Public Access via YouTube
<https://tinyurl.com/TorridgeYouTube>

Monday, 29 June 2020 - 6.00 pm

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

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

ALSO PRESENT S Hearse - Interim Head of Paid Service
 S Dorey - Senior Solicitor
 D Heyes - Finance Manager
 S Kearney - Planning & Economy Manager
 A Redwood - Property and Procurement Manager
 S Cawsey - Democratic Services Officer

Mr S Dengate - Non elected Member

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Laws.

2. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON 16 MARCH 2020

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

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020 be signed as a correct record.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Brenton, D	X		
Bright, C	X		
Bushby, D	X		
Christie, P	X		
Dart, A			X
Hicks, R	X		
Hodson, C (sub)	X		
Hutchings, J			X
James, K	X		

Laws, N			
Lock, R			X
McGeough, D	X		
Wiseman, R	X		

(Vote: For 9, Abstentions 3)

3. ACTION LIST

The action list was noted.

4. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

5. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Bushby advised that he had a prejudicial interest in Agenda item 13 and would leave the meeting at the start of that item.

7. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

It was proposed by Councillor Hicks. seconded by Councillor Brenton and –

Resolved: That the Agenda as circulated be agreed.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Brenton, D	X		
Bright, C	X		
Bushby, D	X		
Christie, P	X		
Dart, A	X		
Hicks, R	X		
Hodson, C (sub)	X		
Hutchings, J	X		
James, K	X		
Laws, N			
Lock, R	X		

McGeough, D	X		
Wiseman, R	X		

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

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

The following items were reported to Members:

- A Special meeting of the Community & Resources Committee had been arranged for Monday 13 July 2020, to discuss Councillor McGeough's Notice of Motion re Free Car Parking.
- The Planning & Economy Manager gave an update on the potential redundancy situation at Swallowfields in Bideford. The Company will be looking to relocate to France putting 120 people at risk of redundancy – most are production and admin staff. This is likely to take place at the end of August 2020. Officers had been in contact with DWP to see what support the Council can offer.

9. URGENCY PROCEDURES

The Interim Head of Paid Service presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to note the urgent decisions recently taken under the Council's Urgency Procedure.

Following comments made by Members regarding the Covid-19 Hardship Support Grant, the Interim Head of Paid Service advised that those in receipt of financial support included families where there had been an urgent need to purchase white goods, and a need to purchase IT equipment to access online apps for school services.

The Planning & Economy Manager confirmed that all local Secondary Schools had been made aware of the fund and would convey details/ information to families.

The Senior Solicitor reported that details of the Fund would be published as from the following week, asking that the public come forward if they are having financial difficulties. Details will also be circulated to all Members.

The Committee noted the report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The Interim s151 Officer gave a slide presentation which highlighted the financial impact of Covid-19 on Torridge Council, and updated the assessment of the Council as a "going concern". It also highlighted the potential impact of Covid-19 on the Councils' Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The key points highlighted included:

- Additional Expenditure – PPE, Agency back filling for staff self isolating, Support for Community Groups, Homelessness and ICT Remote Working
- Significantly Reduced Income – impact on the vast majority of the Council’s income streams (apart from Garden Waste).
- Impact will be long lasting, potentially lasting for years, won’t disappear with easing of lockdown
- Potentially the greatest challenge ever faced by Torridge Council
- Sources of Funding for Torridge – impact on Council Tax, Business Rates, Fees and Charges
- Positive - Torridge has no immediate cash flow issues, mainly due to having reserves set aside for future capital projects. The cash balances of the Council will decline during 2020/21 for two prime reasons:
 - Paying over Council Tax to its preceptors based upon pre Covid-19 estimates of Collectable Council Tax
 - Reduced income from Fees and Charges

During the debate the following issues/concerns were raised and responded to by the relevant Officers:

- Replacement of vehicle fleet which is a major expenditure on capital equipment – to lease vehicles - although it is an option it would be a pressure on the finances (Revenue budget)
- Consideration to be given to abandoning certain of the major projects. All the projects in the capital programme to be looked at going forward. Officers are lobbying the Government for additional financial support.
- Returns – Government accepted returns from Torridge Council as being realistic. The Government had asked for a list of projects that could be accelerated in order for them to be used to boost the economy. A list of those projects in the pipeline had been submitted – these included Future High Street project, acquiring additional land at Caddsdwn, finance for Environmental centre. Council Tax collection - contact to be made with council tax payers to ensure payments start coming in. Help to be provided to those payers facing hardship.
- Allocation of Government Grants received.
- In the event of a local lockdown, Management Plans are in place – DCC being the upper tier authority responsible for the Plan.

- Governments position with regard to additional funding to the Authority and processes/procedures involved. The requirement for this Council to consider and to decide on how to manage its global services should the Government not provide additional funding.
- Regular contact meetings are held with the MP and Simon Clarke, Local Government Minister. Government are now expecting the Council to start looking at income streams wherever possible. Guidance from Government is they are prepared to look at expenditure the Council are unable to recoup. They are looking at providing funding for projects to drive the economy forward, not reserves.

Councillor Bright referred to the Special Community & Resources Committee meeting which had been scheduled to consider Councillor McGeoughs Notice of Motion for free car parking, and stated he thought it contradictory to the recommendations in this report. The Interim s151 Officer clarified that the report had been written before the Notice of Motion had been put forward.

The Committee thanked the Interim s151 Officer for an excellent presentation.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Lock and -

Resolved:

That following consideration of the financial impact of Covid-19 upon the Council, the necessity for the Council to maximise its income streams where ever possible be agreed

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Brenton, D	X		
Bright, C	X		
Bushby, D	X		
Christie, P	X		
Dart, A	X		
Hicks, R	X		
Hodson, C	X		
Hutchings, J	X		
James, K	X		
Laws, N			
Lock, R	X		
McGeough, D	X		
Wiseman, R	X		

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

11. 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.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Brenton, D	X		
Bright, C	X		
Bushby, D	X		
Christie, P	X		
Dart, A	X		
Hicks, R	X		
Hodson, C	X		
Hutchings, J	X		
James, K	X		
Laws, N			
Lock, R	X		
McGeough, D	X		
Wiseman, R	X		

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

12. PART II (CLOSED SESSION)

13. STRATEGIC LAND ACQUISITION

Councillor Bushby declared a prejudicial interest - a relative with a financial interest – and left the meeting.

The Property Manager presented the report and updated the Committee on the progress with regard to the acquisition and change in value of a commercial development site, and to obtain Member approval for its use.

Councillor McGeough left the meeting 19.23.

A lengthy debate followed during which all issues/concerns raised by Members were addressed by the Property Manager. Legal advice was given by the Senior Solicitor.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Hodson and –

Resolved:

That the recommendations as set out in the report, together with an additional deadline recommendation be approved.

A recorded vote was taken.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Brenton, D		X	
Bright, C	X		
Bushby, D			
Christie, P	X		
Dart, A		X	
Hicks, R	X		
Hodson, C	X		
Hutchings, J	X		
James, K	X		
Laws, N			
Lock, R	X		
McGeough, D			
Wiseman, R	X		

(Vote: For 8, Against 2)

The meeting commenced at 18.00 and closed at 20.20.

Chair:

Date: