

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILCOMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETINGTown Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HSMonday, 30 January 2023 - 10.00 am

PRESENT Councillor R Hicks (Chair)
 Councillor A Dart (Vice-Chair)
 Councillors C Bright, D Bushby, P Christie, C Hodson, D Hurley,
 K James, N Laws, R Lock and S Newton

ALSO PRESENT S Hearse - Chief Executive
 S Dorey - Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring
 Officer)
 S Kearney - Head of Communities & Place
 D Heyes - Finance Manager (Section 151 Officer)
 P Hudson - Senior Capital Accountant
 K Brown - Democratic Services Officer
 S Cawsey - Democratic Services Officer

Councillors P Hames, C Cottle-Hunkin, P Pennington and
 C Leather

Non-Elected – Mr S Dengate

314. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brenton.

315. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Trina Jones, General Manager at The Plough in Torrington addressed the meeting regarding the Authority providing revenue support to The Plough.

In 2025 the Plough will be celebrating 50 years and with that in mind a target was set to build a three year business plan. She outlined the history, activities, costs, general running of the Plough, Grant funding and cultural being essential for the health and wellbeing of people.

With regard to the three year plan, the Plough will need to be confident that Torrridge and other Authorities will give financial support. Part of the Plan is to try and increase funding.

She asked that Members engage with Officers and the Plough to help support the business plan and to discuss the way forward.

316. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

317. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

There were no Part II items, but the Chair said the meeting would move into Part II to discuss any commercially sensitive matters.

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

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

319. S106 MONITORING FEES

Councillor Dart declared a personal interest – Director of a Building Company

The Planning Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider a proposal for the introduction of Section 106 Monitoring fees.

Councillor James proposed the recommendations as set out in the report.

During the discussion questions addressed by the Planning Manager included:

- The number of S106 Agreements yet to be signed.
- Is there evidence to show Developers would reduce S106 contributions? A provision in the Local Plan for viability to be tested.
- A private individual building a property in their garden, does this apply? It is unlikely that any development with one or two dwellings would have a S106 Agreement.

Councillor Hodson referred to previous concerns raised by Members regarding the lack of consultation with Ward Members, and recommended the following amendment:

“That Members be provided with regular update reports.”

Councillor James withdrew his proposal.

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

Resolved:

That the introduction of a new charging mechanism for S106 monitoring, in line with the fees as set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report, be implemented with effect from 1 April 2023 be approved. That Members be provided with regular update reports.

(Vote: For 10, Abstentions 1)

320. FEES AND CHARGES

The purpose of the report, presented by the Senior Accountant, was for Members to review the level of miscellaneous fees and charges.

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

Resolved:

That the charges for services to be effective from 1 April 2023 as set out in the Appendix attached to the report, be agreed.

(Vote: for – Unanimous)

321. THE PLOUGH

The purpose of the report, presented by the Head of Communities & Place, was to update Members on the Plough Arts Centre and to consider whether it is possible to provide the organisation with revenue support.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Christie, the Head of Communities & Place clarified the position regarding the bid submitted by the Plough to become a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) and to receive core support of £120,000 per year for three years. The bid set out that the organisation would receive Local Authority Grants, but it did not state which Local Authority.

It became apparent during the discussion that Members were wanting to provide core funding to support the organisation but were also mindful of the Council's financial position.

The following proposals were put forward.

It was proposed by Councillor Bright, seconded by Councillor Laws that the Council provide a contribution of £10k per year for three years.

Councillor Christie proposed to support the Plough and for each Councillor to give £250 from their Councillor Grants for three years and that would give a total of £9k. There was no seconder for this motion.

Councillor Hodson proposed an amendment to Councillor Brights motion – "To contribute £10k this year and to review the position this time next year."

This motion was seconded by Councillor Hurley.

Councillor Newton proposed a minimum of £10k for three years and this to be reviewed on an annual basis. There was no seconder to this motion.

Following further discussion, a vote was taken on the amendment proposed by Councillor Hodson and seconded by Councillor Hurley.

(Vote: For 4, Against 7)

The motion was lost.

A vote was taken on the proposal by Councillor Bright, seconded by Councillor Laws and -

Resolved:

That a contribution of £10k per year for a period of three years be approved.

(Vote: For 9, Abstentions 2)

322. BUDGET 2023 - 24, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24 - 2027/28

The Finance Manager & s151 Officer introduced the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider, formulate and recommend the Budget 2023/24 to Full Council.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) indicates the possible extent of the budget and funding shortfall that the Council will face in the future. It is an aid in identifying the extent of service changes that the Council will need to make to achieve a balanced budget in each financial year up to 2027/28.

A detailed and informative slide presentation was given highlighting the salient points in the report.

Councillor Christie referred to the significant increase in the police precept and asked that the Police Commissioner be invited to attend at Torridge to answer questions on this.

Councillor Newton proposed an amendment to the recommendations to include – “that the remit of the Member Budget Working Group be strengthened”. There was no seconder.

Councillor James, Chair of the Members Budget Working Group, updated on the savings the Group had identified and how this can be achieved.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Hodson that the recommendations outlined in the report be approved.

Councillor Dart expressed concerns with increasing the council tax and the impact it would have on residents and proposed not to accept the budget. There was no seconder.

Members thanked the Finance Manager for an excellent report and detailed presentation.

A vote was taken on the motion proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Hodson and –

Resolved:

That the following be recommended to Full Council:

- a) That Torridge's Band D Council Tax for 2023/24 be increased by (2.99%) from £178.66 to £184.00 per year
- b) That Torridge's Net Revenue Budget 2023/24 is £11.155m
- c) That the contributions to the Council's reserves as outlined in paragraph 11.4 of the report be approved.
- d) That in light of the risks to the Council's finances identified within the report that the Member Working Group continue its work to bring the Council's budgets back into balance.

That members note:

The Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer) assurance of the robustness of the budget 2023/24 set out in section 13 of the report.

Note the assumptions and forecast applied to develop the MTFs outlined in section 9 of the report.

Note the risks associated with the Budget 2023/24 and MTFs outlined in section 10 of the report.

A recorded vote was taken.

Councillor	For	Against	Abst.
Hicks, R	X		
Dart, A		X	
Brenton, D			
Bright, C	X		
Bushby, D	X		
Christie, P	X		
Hodson, C	X		
Hurley, D	X		
James, K	X		
Laws, N	X		
Lock, R	X		
Newton, S	X		

(Vote: For 10, Against 1)

323. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24 TO 2027/28

The Deputy Section 151 Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider, formulate and recommend updates to the Capital Programme 2023/24 to Full Council.

The Capital Programme includes authorised projects which require updating due to inflationary pressures, along with new PIDs (Project Initiation Documents) which require authorisation from Members before inclusion.

Following comments from Councillor Hames regarding the budget for climate of £10k, how the Council is going to further their carbon reduction commitment and cost reduction gains from solar, the Finance Manager stated that the leisure facilities are the biggest consumption of energy. The logical option would be to get grant funding, but it is unlikely external funding would be secured.

The Chief Executive referred to the Climate Change Working Group set up by Members and the aspirations from that Working Group was to bring forward ideas and proposals to this Committee, Community & Resources, for projects to be possibly funded. This Committee would then allocate or recommend to Full Council projects to take forward. To date nothing has come forward from the Working Group.

Councillor Christie mentioned the Gypsy and Traveller site provision and enquired whether the £100k was still in the budget. The Chief Executive advised a decision by Members was to leave the monies in the capital programme should the Local Plan include such a site.

It was proposed by Councillor Hodson, seconded by Councillor Newton and -

Resolved:

That the following be recommended to Full Council:

That the Capital Programme be updated to include:

- Sully House
- Sully House Modular Units
- Hubbastone Conversion

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

324. PART II (CLOSED SESSION)

There were no Part II items.

The meeting commenced at 10am and closed at 11.45am