

- Cllr D Smith Mayor of Great Torrington
- Gerard Fawcitt
- Arabella Knot
- Richard Wolfenden-Brown
- Inca Lowson

All spoke passionately about the Plough, giving a comprehensive description of the benefits, its facilities, and their personal experiences of the Plough.

Emphasis was made by the speakers on the need for financial support from the Authority, the need to work with each other and for Torrington to be enthusiastic in their support.

Details were given of those providing financial support, such as Town Councils, Business supporters, etc. who do so because they recognise that the Plough benefits people from all walks of life, all ages and all backgrounds and is a much-valued cultural resource for the residents of Torrington and those further afield.

Members were asked to give their support for future funding of the Plough.

228. 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.

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

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

230. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

231. CALL-IN - THE PLOUGH ARTS CENTRE, TORRINGTON

A report had been presented to Community & Resources Committee in January 2023, the purpose of which was to update Members on the Plough Arts Centre and to consider whether it is possible to provide the organisation with revenue support. Community & Resources Committee debated this matter and resolved that a contribution of £10k per year for a period of three years be made to the Plough. This decision had been called in by Councillor Watson.

Councillor Watson clarified the reason for his call-in which was to scrutinise the figure of £10k and not to agree to £25k which was not affordable to the Authority.

Councillor Cottle-Hunkin referred to conversations she had had with Senior Officers in relation to the call-in procedure and confirmed she had been advised that an alternative recommendation increasing the funding for the Plough could be

proposed. She spoke passionately giving reasons as to why the Authority should be supporting the Plough.

The Head of Legal clarified the call-in process - if an alternative recommendation was made at this meeting it would need to go back to Community & Resources Committee to ascertain whether they agree with the alternative recommendation. If they did not agree it would then go to Full Council for resolution.

The Financial Manager addressed questions and concerns and reported on the impact this would have on the Council's financial position. In February the Council approved the budget, this did not include financial support for the Plough, therefore it will be for Members to determine how the support will be funded.

During the debate it became evident that although Members supported the Plough, they were also mindful of the Council's financial position.

The Head of Communities & Place responded to comments made regarding monies given to the Burton Art Gallery which he advised was not funding but is by way of a Service Agreement.

Councillor Watson emphasised strongly the affordability aspect for the Council, should funding support be given.

Following the debate, it was proposed by Councillor Langford, seconded by Councillor Harding that the decision of Community & Resources Committee stands.

It was proposed by Councillor Inch, seconded by Councillor Watson that funding support is not given to the Plough.

Councillor Cottle-Hunkins proposed that a contribution of £25k is given to the Plough. There was no seconder for this Motion.

Following further discussion Councillor Inch withdrew his motion.

A vote was taken on the proposal by Councillor Langford, seconded by Councillor Harding and –

Resolved

That the decision made by Community & Resources Committee for a contribution of £10k per year for a period of three years stands.

(Vote: For 6, Against 2, Abstentions 1)

The Head of Communities & Place confirmed the matter would now be presented to Full Council for Members to determine how it will be funded.

232. QBR3

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to receive the quarterly business report for the period ending 31st December 2022. Salient points of the report were highlighted to Members, with emphasis on the key significant adverse and favourable variances and the projected deficit for 2022/23.

Following a question regarding the majority of deficit being for homelessness – temporary accommodation, the Finance Manager advised that in order to reduce these costs, Officers are continually looking to acquire properties for either conversion or to Lease.

The Questions and Answers document was reviewed. Additional information was provided as follows:

Pages 22 – 26 Theme 2 – Communities, Health and Housing

The Head of Legal responded as follows to questions raised:

The Homeless Strategy is not yet in place but there is a significant amount of work being carried out behind the scenes. The Strategy to be brought before the Committee over the next few months. In relation to resources, the Head of Legal confirmed there is sufficient staff in place currently to undertake this work.

Member Budget Working Group – it was confirmed that the minutes from the Group are not circulated to everyone, but reports are presented to Full Council.

The Head of Communities & Place advised that Members had approved the use of the ring fenced £50,000 for the Rural Prosperity Fund, but to date no monies had been received which will come direct from the Government.

An enquiry was raised in relation to Xlinks and the Planning Performance Agreement – the Head of Communities & Place updated as follows:

- The Agreement is between the Planning Authority and the Developer over a prescribed process of assistance, and they essentially fund a Planning Officer to look at their application. Normal Protocols will be followed.
- Pre App being confidential
- The authority is advising as much consultation as possible should take place, there has already been two rounds of public consultation.

The Head of Communities & Place said for Members to contact him if further information is required.

233. SOCIAL VALUE

Following a request from the Chair, the ICT, Strategy and Performance Manager gave an update on the Procurement Bill – this was required before Officers could look in detail at Social Value and how to produce own Social Value Policy.

Looked at Bill progress – passed through House of Lords, progressing through House of Commons, it has gone through First and Second reading and the Committee Stage and is currently at the Report Stage. It will then go on to a Third reading when consideration of the amendments will happen and then go to Royal Assent.

Councils are being told they will get six months to implement the Bill. The proposals are to move from awarding criteria based on price alone, to include considerations of social value, public health, benefits, wellbeing and suitability. It is proposed to create a single central platform of contract data and registration where all Councils and public bodies will register their procurement.

They will establish time lines for transparency notices with a procurement review unit to enable concerns around awards and transparency to be investigated.

Workshops and training to be set up.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Hames, the ICT, Strategy and Performance Manager advised that environment would be included in a supplement, not in the Bill.

234. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

Councillor Hames had received a number of concerns regarding increased costs for car parking and residents parking and suggested speaking to Officers and to then bring back to this Committee.

The meeting commenced at 10am and closed at 11.45am