

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILCOMMUNITY & RESOURCES MEETINGTown Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HSMonday, 24 July 2023 - 10.00 am

PRESENT

Councillor R Hicks (Chair)
Councillor A Dart (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Andrews, D Brenton, L Bright, P Christie, P Hames,
K James, C Leather, R Lock, J Whittaker and C Wheatley

ALSO PRESENT

S Hearse	- Chief Executive
S Dorey	- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
S Kearney	- Head of Communities & Place
P Hudson	- Senior Capital Accountant
T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
S Cawsey	- Democratic Services Officer

Councillors C Hodson and P Pennington

338. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Piper.

339. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 MARCH 2023

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

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2023 be signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 6, Abstentions 6)

340. ACTION LIST

The Action List was reviewed and updated.

Minute 281 – Skate Park

Councillor Leather questioned what the concerns were in relation to flooding in the skate park. Councillor Christie explained he had raised concerns because in the

past the sports ground had flooded and TDC were suggesting building a wall to address the noise issue. The concern was the water would pond up behind the wall.

341. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

342. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted and updated.

Councillor Christie asked that an item "Tolerated Trespass site" be added to the Forward Plan for the September meeting.

Councillor Christie explained that at the examining of the previous Local Plan, the Inspector recorded that no Tolerated Trespass site for travellers had been included. The Inspector let the Plan go through because at that time a potential site was forthcoming. It was unlikely this would be the case again because there is still no site. A site suggested was the abandoned laybys on the Link Road. The history to the site and previous discussions with Devon County Council who had said at the time they had alternative uses for the site, were conveyed to the Committee.

Councillor Christie emphasised the need for this item to be included on the Agenda for the September meeting, particularly following recent issues from Travellers.

The Chief Executive reported that any potential site would need to go through Community & Resources Committee. In terms of determining policy and local planning this matter should be presented to the Joint Planning Policy committee in the first instance.

It was proposed by Councillor Hicks, seconded by Councillor Christie that this item be added to the Community & Resources Forward Plan.

(Vote: For 11, Against 1)

343. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

344. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA BETWEEN PARTS I AND II

There are no Part II items.

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

There were no urgent matters brought forward.

346. DECISION TAKEN UNDER URGENCY PROCEDURE

The purpose of presenting this item was for Members to note the urgent decision taken under the Council's Urgency Procedure in relation to the additional support for those in receipt of Council Tax Support.

In accordance with the Constitution there is a requirement for decisions to be reported to the next appropriate Community & Resources Committee explaining the reason for the urgency.

The Head of Legal & Governance (& Monitoring Officer) confirmed the £25 is a one-off payment for the year.

Councillor Lock asked that going forward names are printed under the signatures. The request was agreed.

The Committee noted this item.

347. DRAFT FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2022/23

The Principal Accountant (Deputy S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to confirm the recommendation for the utilisation of the 2022/23 surplus.

During the discussion all questions asked were responded to by the Principal Accountant (Deputy S151 Officer). Key issues raised included:

Councillor Christie noted the increase in costs under elections due to voter ID and enquired as to whether Torridge is reimbursed from Town and Parish Council elections. The Senior Elections and Democratic Officer reported that as yet no figures were available from the recent Northam Town By -Election, but agreed to circulate once they are received.

The Senior elections and Democratic Officer confirmed that the Authority had received additional New Burdens funding for voter ID and agreed to circulate the figures, prior to voter ID and additional costs with voter ID, once finalised.

Councillor Brenton queried the funding for a Graduate Trainee – The Chief Executive advised the funding is for a two year period and will work across different services.

HAF1 - Councillor Leather asked what the timescale was for the Council to utilise the accommodation to meet their homelessness needs. HAF1 funding is provided by Central Government to procure accommodation for Ukrainian and Afghan refugees – the Head of Legal & Governance gave a detailed explanation on what the scheme is, how the scheme works and what the Council is required to do under the scheme. In response to Councillor Leather's question, no time scale has been given and guidance has yet to be received.

Councillor L Bright referred to the following reserves - Succession and Apprentice and Agency Backfill – and asked how those specific numbers had been reached and was this the first time those figures had been put forward to Committee. The Chief Executive said they are not based on any specific posts and are best estimates based on trying to split the money available across these priority areas. The Agency Backfill reserve does not yet exist and will be a new reserve. Clarification was given as to why there are separate reserves and not just a single pot.

Councillor L Bright referred to the three staffing reserves (Succession and Apprentice, Agency Backfill and Graduate Trainee) stating it was a lot of money taken from reserves to go into staff costs, but acknowledged it was an important risk area for the Authority. She expressed concerns with approving this as it is the first time coming to Committee with little information.

Councillor L Bright referred to the 17% staff turnover and asked what measures are being taken by the HR Department to counter this. The Chief Executive explained it is a similar position across the public sector and a % of staff are going into the Agency market and then wanting to come back on an agency basis – TDC does not operate this way. The HR department have implemented a range of health, well being and social type of matters and have also launched a website and app which allows members of staff to access a variety of different things such as support and training.

Councillor L Bright referred to the Member Budget Working Group's recommendation to reduce the Councillor Grants from £2k to £1k and the importance of these Grants particularly now with cuts by Central Government. She suggested that instead of £250k being put into the Recruitment and Retention reserve that figures should be reduced to £214k and the Councillor Grants be reinstated to £2k. The Chief Executive advised that the Member Budget Working Group does not have any decision making powers. A recommendation from that Group was put forward to Full Council when it was Members who voted to reduce the Councillor Grant monies.

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

Resolved:

That the setting aside of the draft surplus from 2022/23 as outlined in the report attached to the Agenda be approved.

(Vote: For 10, Abstentions 2)

348. PART II (CLOSED SESSION)

There were no Part II items.

The meeting commenced at 10am and closed at 10.50am