

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILINTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETINGTown Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HSTuesday, 12 September 2023 - 2.00 pm

## PRESENT

Councillor S Newton (Chair)  
 Councillor J Craigie (Vice-Chair)  
 Councillors C Bright, D Bushby, C Cottle-Hunkin, T Elliott,  
 C Hodson and S Inch

Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper

## ALSO PRESENT

S Hearse	- Chief Executive
G Bryant	- Finance Manager (S151 Officer)
G Batten	- Principal Accountant
A Fay	- Service Improvement Officer
D Sibley	- Climate & Sustainability Officer
T Vanstone	- Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer
K Brown	- Democratic Services Officer
K Hewlett	- Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

258. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor W Lo-Vel.

259. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor C Hodson, seconded by Councillor S Newton and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

(Vote: For - unanimous)

260. ACTION LIST

The action list was discussed and updated.

In addition to the items on the action list, Mr S Dengate enquired to when the Peer Review would take place. The Chief Executive responded and confirmed there is no exact date however it was expected next year.

261. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

262. 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.

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

No matters were brought forward.

264. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

265. CARBON NEUTRAL TARGET 2030

The Sustainability and Climate Officer introduced herself to the Committee and explained her role.

A slide presentation was delivered on Torridge District Council's climate targets.

It was confirmed that the Carbon Footprint report would be finalised by the beginning of October and an update would be presented to the Committee in the future.

The Sustainability and Climate Officer welcomed any questions from the Committee.

Following a query regarding the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), the Sustainability and Climate Officer advised how this is being used locally by the National Trust. The idea has not been discounted completely, for TDC, and discussions are ongoing, however there are cost and insurance implications. The new Social Value Policy could be an important part in helping to reduce carbon emissions.

It was advised that Hydrogen would be beneficial to the North Devon area however a local source would be required. The Sustainability and Climate Officer informed the Committee of a potential Hydrogen project being progressed which TDC could be part of if funding is awarded.

In response to a query regarding the Annual GHG Emissions baseline starting in 2020/21, the Sustainability and Climate Officer advised how data was held before this date but was now not comparable.

The Sustainability and Climate Officer confirmed she is not solely tasked with costs involved for reducing Carbon on projects and costings are done on individual project basis.

Following a query surrounding grants, the Chief Executive and the Sustainability and Climate Officer advised the Committee of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme that is available.

The Sustainability and Climate Officer left at 2.27pm.

266. SOCIAL VALUE TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Chair presented this item, the purpose of which was to approve the draft terms of reference for the Social Value Policy.

It was proposed by Councillor S Newton, seconded by Councillor J Craigie and –

Resolved:

That the terms of reference for the Task & Finish Group be approved.

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

267. QBR 1

Prior to the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presenting the report, the Chair explained the reasoning behind circulating the Quarterly Business Report to all Councillors.

It was advised that Councillor Pennington had given thanks to all Officers involved in collating the detailed responses to the questions, this was echoed by the Chair.

The Finance Manager (S151 Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to receive the Quarterly Business Report (QBR).

Both the Finance Manager (S151 Officer) and the Service Improvement Officer delivered a slide presentation of the QBR which highlighted salient points.

Following the presentation, a query was raised concerning the trio of trade pitches available on the quay and the requirement for them to be vacated overnight. The Chief Executive advised the Estates Manager would give an update at the next meeting.

The Questions & Answers to the QBR were discussed in detail with further comments and questions added as follows.

Councillor C Hodson enquired what happens to the remaining balance of the Household Support Fund if not allocated by 30.09.2023. During the meeting the Chief Executive had contacted the Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) who confirmed that TDC are on track to spend the balance, however if it were not, as the scheme is Devon wide the money can be moved across the county.

Referring back to the previous comment from Councillor D Bushby regarding the use of the three trade pitches on the quay, the Chief Executive explained this was initially a trial and the development of the quay needed to be looked at.

The discussion progressed with comments made from the Committee regarding the development of the quay as a whole. Other organisations would need to be involved along with TDC. The Chair advised he would speak with the Chair of TDC's Harbour Board group to progress this topic.

The Chief Executive provided clarity on the Hubbastone Road accommodation.

It was advised that from an operational perspective officers recognise that the XLinks project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project recognising therefore that any Planning Application that would come forward would be dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate and not TDC. However, that in itself presents potential opportunities for TDC to form a more rounded view of any proposals that can be submitted during the process without the constraints of the Local Planning Authority. It was confirmed that we are not aware whether the process had yet commenced.

Following concern regarding staff vacancies, the Chief Executive advised the need for agency staff and the process followed. He re-assured the Committee that the situation is monitored closely.

Following discussion regarding the Ice Machine at the Fish Dock it was agreed that further information was required from the Estates Officer on its energy efficiency.

The Principal Accountant left at 3.52pm.

The Chief Executive explained why the Business Rate collection rate had decreased.

The QBR was noted.

The Chair presented this item and advised following the last meeting, and the discussion surrounding enforcement capacity, he had been tasked to refine this item as enforcement covers a vast range of areas.

Following discussions with both the Chief Executive and the ICT, Strategy & Performance Manager, the Chair proposed that the main areas to concentrate on were within Planning and Environmental Protection.

There are no statutory obligations for Planning Enforcement however there is for Environmental Protection.

The Chair proposed that these two areas are investigated initially, and reports are brought back to the committee with a measure of the size of the issue.

A brief discussion commenced with the census from the committee that they were in agreement with the Chair. Concern was raised that smaller enforcement issues may be lost, the Chair advised they maybe within the remit of Planning or Environmental Protection enforcement already.

It was suggested that the Planning Enforcement report be presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023 committee meeting and that the Chair, along with the Chief Executive, would speak to the Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) and the Public Health & Community Safety Manager and ascertain what would be brought forward for the Environmental Protection Enforcement.

It was proposed by Councillor S Newton, seconded by Councillor J Craigie and –

Resolved:

That Planning and Environmental Protection Enforcement capacity be investigated, and reports brought back to Committee.

(Vote: For – 9, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0)

## 269. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was discussed and updated.

Regarding a query asking when the Homelessness Strategy would be presented, the Chief Executive advised he would ascertain a timeframe and update at the next meeting.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 4.32 pm

Chair:

Date:

