

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Caddsdwn Business Support Centre - Caddsdwn Bideford EX39 3BE

Wednesday, 1 November 2023 - 6.00 pm

PRESENT Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin (Chair)

 Councillor A Brenton (Vice-Chair)

 Councillors L Bach, S Harding, C Hawkins, P Shepherd,
D Smith, C Hodson (substitute for L Bach), W Lo-Vel (substitute
for H Thomas) and P Pennington

ALSO PRESENT	S Dorey	- Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
	P Morrish	- Technology and Customer Support Manager Condition Monitoring Technology Group (CMTG) Torrington
	T Hart	- General Manager Harland & Wolff Appledore
	T Cole	- Training Manager Harland & Wolff Appledore
	K Brown	- Economic Development Manger
	K Hewlett	- Democratic Services Officer

214. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Thomas and Councillor Bach.

Councillor Lo-Vel was present as substitute for Councillor Thomas and Councillor Hodson was present as a substitute for Councillor Bach.

215. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Harding, seconded by Councillor Smith and

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 September be agreed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 5, Abstentions 3)

216. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received.

217. ACTION LIST

Members reviewed the action plan.

Members restated their concern regarding bus services in the local area. It was agreed to contact Stagecoach and request they attend a future Committee to discuss consultation and bus routes. It was also suggested that North Devon could be made aware of the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Brenton, seconded by Councillor Lo-Vel and Resolved:
To invite Stagecoach to future Committee.

(Vote: Yes, 5, abstention 1)

During an update on actions relating to the Link Centre provision members queried if the petition would be heard at Full Council and it was confirmed it was on the forward plan.

Following discussion on the Link Centre provision in Holsworthy and the previous venue for the Link Centre it was agreed that Cllr James and Cllr Shepherd would be asked to report back on their meeting.

Cllr Bach joined the Committee at 18:16. Following a query regarding substitution at Committee meetings it was explained that Councillor Hodson would continue as the substitute and take part in any votes.

218. 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.

219. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

Chair provided members with an update on the Mobile Library service and highlighted concerns regarding access to childcare provision, which had been raised with her by a constituent. Members discussed the issues regarding access to provision and national policy and it was agreed the issue may feed into the future committee schedule.

Councillor Brenton arranged to contact the Children's Centre in Bideford for some perspective.

221. EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT IN TORRIDGE

Chair welcomed the panel members who had been invited to speak and provided apologies for PETROC.

The panel then introduced themselves to committee:

- Peter Morrish, Technology and Customer Support Manager Condition Monitoring Technology Group (CMTG) Torrington
- Tom Hart, General Manager Harland & Wolff Appledore
- Tony Cole, Training Manager Harland & Wolff Appledore
- Chris Fuller, Economic Development Manger – regarding Northern Devon Futures

The Training Manager for Appledore Shipyard (Harland and Wolff) provided a presentation for members, along with a short video which had been created by young people from PETROC and helped to show the role of apprenticeships at Appledore.

More detail was provided regarding recruitment processes and the timetable for applications. The induction programme was explained, along with the general scope of the apprenticeship and how those taking part were supported to find their preferred skills.

Following the presentation from the Training Manager at Appledore Shipyard a question and answer session took place.

There was discussion regarding retention and take up of apprenticeships at the shipyard and the General Manager and Training Manager provided members with statistics regarding the take up for the last 3 years. It was explained it would be 18 months before retention rates would be available as this would be when the first group of apprenticeships complete.

Members discussed how the apprenticeship worked for the person taking part, and the role of PETROC was highlighted in supporting the learning journey of apprentices. The process of matching someone's skills to the needs and future plans of the company was explored and explained for members.

Discussion moved onto qualifications and speakers confirmed the expected grades and reflected on the changes in apprenticeship model and how the grading compared to University qualifications.

It was stated that apprenticeship salary rates were comparable with minimum wage. All speakers confirmed that mature apprenticeships were also taken on.

Chair passed over to Peter Morrish who provided a summary of his background and the work of CMTG. He reflected on the ethos of the company to provide

lifelong learning and explained this in terms of apprenticeships - detailing the types apprenticeships that have been completed at the company.

The importance of the work of PETROC locally was restated and they were explained as a vital cog in the plans for the area moving forward.

A question and answer session followed, using the questions submitted by members prior to the meeting.

Members discussed gender balance. It was explained this was a local and national issue within the industries present at Committee and there was acknowledgment of the barriers experienced by women, as well as those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Access to childcare provision, mentioned during an earlier agenda item, was recognised as one of those barriers. It was suggested that national figures on apprenticeship take-up may provide an answer.

The Economic Development Manager highlighted work with Maritime UK South West to raise profile of the sectors and challenge the potential imbalances and the Crown Estate was also mentioned in terms of their work recognising diversity.

The impact of reduced public services, such as transport were highlighted as having a major impact for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and for those under 18 with no personal transport. Reliable bus routes to outlying areas were felt to be important to promote opportunity in those areas.

Throughout the meeting discussion returned to the importance of good local infrastructure. This was felt to be a key challenge for business productivity, alongside the lack of affordable housing for employees.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the need for more collaborative working, and opportunities to work together and share practice across the variety of sectors within the district.

The challenges of being based in a rural location were noted and the Economic Development Manager highlighted the scope and opportunities coming from Levelling Up fund and how this was supporting the narrative coming from the meeting.

Possible solutions suggested during the meeting were community / workforce transport, as well as the development of business breakfast clubs and webinars for local businesses in the area to network. As well as more partnership work between business and education to promote and tailor apprenticeships.

The Committee reflected on how to support small growing businesses in the local area and improve connectivity, and the Economic Development Manager highlighted work taking place to develop a local makers map. Members were interested to find out more about this work.

Whilst discussing housing needs and Community Land Trusts the Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) provided an update on the recruitment process for an Enabling Officer.

There was a suggestion that Westward Housing Association be called in regarding their service provision and stock. It was agreed this would be added to the Forward Plan suggestions.

The following actions were summarised:

- Look to see if there are figures regarding gender equality. Whether there is any benchmarking on national level regarding apprenticeships.
- Action on bus service and transport links and community transport.
- Extend an invitation to PETROC to find out about the work taking place on apprenticeships and the aim for University Status.
- Update on the makers map of local businesses.
- Look at future of the Chamber of Commerce for the local area.

Members and the Chair thanked all who attended.

222. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

Chair reviewed the forward plan with members.

Members were also advised that a date for the joint Community Safety Partnership Update with North Devon District Council was being considered and would be confirmed shortly. Provisional suggestions were for 30th November.

An update was provided regarding plans to arrange a joint meeting with North Devon on Dentistry.

The following additions were suggested:

- 6 December 2023 – Invitations to PETROC or Lendology
- 31 January 2024 – Invitation to Stagecoach.
- 13 March 2024 – Active Torridge. Councillor Cottle-Hunkin declared a personal interest as a member of the Active Torridge Board.
- 24 April 2024 – Invitation to Pickwell Foundation.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.20 pm