

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Tuesday, 30 April 2024 - 10.00 am

PRESENT Councillor S Newton (Chair)  
Councillors C Cottle-Hunkin, T Elliott, W Lo-Vel, P Pennington  
and C Wheatley

Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper

ALSO PRESENT S Kearney - Head of Communities & Place  
J Walter - Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager  
K Brown - Democratic Services Officer  
K Hewlett - Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

Councillors P Hames

312. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from absence were received from Councillor C Bright with Councillor C Wheatley substituting, Councillor S Inch with Councillor P Pennington substituting and Councillor C Hodson.

Apologies were also received from the Chief Executive.

313. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor T Elliott, seconded by Mr I Harper and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> February be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 4, Against – 0, Abstentions - 4)

314. ACTION LIST

The action list was discussed and updated.

315. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr Michael Teare, Chair Way of the Wharves and Bideford and River Torridge Heritage Harbour had attended the meeting to speak to the Committee regarding

Bideford and the River Torridge's Heritage Harbour status. He detailed how this title had been obtained and advised of other Heritage Harbours.

He described the historical navigable extent of the water works and what it means, national recognition and what it does not mean, no legal or financial obligations.

He referred to communities and organisations involved with the Heritage Harbour and how it would fit in with TDC's Place Story. He spoke passionately about the harbour and the benefits of encouraging visitors to the area and that it promotes tourism.

316. 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.

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

No matters were brought forward.

318. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

319. CALL-IN - THE DEVON, CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY ADAPTATION STRATEGY

The Head of Communities & Place presented the report, the purpose of which was for the committee to scrutinise the decision of Community & Resources Committee, in April 2024, to note the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Adaption Strategy.

The decision had been called-in by three Members of the Committee, one of which was Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin who addressed the committee expressing her anguish as to why this was not endorsed at the Community & Resources Committee meeting and stated reasons why this strategy was so important and needed to be endorsed.

Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin proposed that the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Adaptation Strategy be sent back to Community & Resources Committee to be endorsed.

The Chair and the Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager clarified the call-in process.

Following a suggestion that workshops are set up for Members to attend to learn more about climate change, the Head of Communities & Place advised work is ongoing within the strategy for this.

Reasons were given as to why the decision had been called-in to Internal Overview & Scrutiny and not External Overview & Scrutiny.

Members expressed their views on the strategy and decision. The consensus from the committee was agreement with Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin's proposal.

It was proposed by Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin, seconded by Councillor W Lo-Vel and –

Resolved:

That it be approved that the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Adaption Strategy be returned to the Community and Resources Committee to be endorsed.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

### 320. REVIEW OF THE ESTUARY STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economic Development Manager presented this item, the purpose of which was to provide Members with an update on the Estuary Strategy.

A slide presentation was delivered which highlighted the following:

- Initial review by Internal Overview & Scrutiny and context
- Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre
- Celtic Sea FLOW and Harland & Wolff
- Initial review challenges and progress
- Next steps

A lengthy discussion took place.

Councillor P Pennington declared an interest regarding cabling route.

In response to a query regarding TDC having control in Appledore, the Head of Communities & Place referred to the legislative obligations in place for TDC to adhere to. If the area already governed was to increase to include Appledore this would incur additional costs and risks to the authority which currently is not an option. A Harbour Revision order would be necessary for any changes that may result from future opportunities however currently TDC are not in a financial position to expand the Harbour.

The Economic Development Manager provided detail, to the committee, of the North Devon & Torridge Maritime Network that had recently been created, organisations involved, the aims and objectives of the group and how it fits in with the Levelling Up Partnership.

Following a query regarding sufficient staff resources, the Head of Communities & Place advised, that jointly with North Devon District Council and through North Devon Plus, a specialist had been recruited for a 12-month period to assist the Economic Development Manager. He also confirmed TDC's current responsibility

regarding Appledore Quay and the reasons why TDC cannot manage deep water moorings.

Regarding the possibility of improving the area at Brunswick Wharf for leisure and tourism, the Head of Communities & Place advised of work that had gone on to investigate this possibility and the restrictions as to why it was not progressed. He also detailed work conducted to assist people with accessing the estuary.

The Economic Development Manager could not give an exact deadline for completion due to the reliance on other organisations and partnerships and all coming together.

The Head of Communities & Place reminded Members that the Harbour Board Working Group has the Heritage Harbour under constant review.

The Chair emphasised the need for an updated document, which encapsulates all the new ideas and opportunities, that can then be fully scrutinised by the Committee and requested a timeline to see greater evidence of a new strategy.

In response to the above the Head of Communities & Place confirmed that an Estuary Strategy does not currently sit in the Council's Strategic Plan, nor any business plans as an action, therefore he suggested that the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommend to Community & Resources Committee the urgent requirement for an updated Estuary Strategy.

It was proposed by Councillor S Newton, seconded by Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin and -

Resolved:

That the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommend to Community & Resources Committee that the Council urgently needs an updated Estuary Strategy and that this work should be added to the relevant work schedule "Business Plan".

(Vote: For – unanimous)

### 321. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE TWO YEAR REVIEW

The Operational Services Manager attended the meeting to provide an update on the Grounds Maintenance following the service being in house for two years.

A slide presentation was delivered which highlighted the following:

- Where we are now
  - 2 years since the service was brought back in house
  - Complaints significantly reduced
  - Estate being managed more efficiently due to round scheduling

- Budget set for the resources required to provide a good standard of maintenance
- Additional summer seasonal worker to cover annual leave
- Three crews – Rural, Town and Shrub
- Rural round scheduling were displayed
- A map showing Torridge sites for grass cutting
- Changes to the service
  - Only purchase Perennials
  - Lower on-going bed maintenance
  - Shredder purchased for producing own compost and reduce additional revenue costs
  - Bio-diversity Sites identified and maintained
  - Increase use of Victoria Park green houses
- Scrub Team
  - Main Cemetery grass maintenance
  - Shrub maintenance
  - Flower/Rose bed maintenance
  - Hedge maintenance
  - Tree maintenance
  - Ad-hoc maintenance including complaints
  - General weeding hard surfaces etc
  - Victoria Park grass maintenance
  - Biodiversity site maintenance
- Issues and next steps
  - Changing seasons means cutting season has changed
  - This doesn't always meet customer expectation
  - Tree maintenance is greater than required.
  - Quarterly Tree Risk Assessments (QTRA) highlighting more ongoing management of our trees.
  - Continued round monitoring to drive further improvements.

A discussion took place.

In response to queries the Operational Services Manager advised he is content with the service however it is still in its infancy and his greatest area of concern is balancing customer expectations, staff resources and capacity. The Head of Communities & Place added that with the service being in house TDC's estates can be managed more efficiently and advised of the advantages and benefits this brings.

The Operational Services Manager provided information on the budget and advised the service is now on par with what was being paid to the previous external contractor.

Members congratulated the Operational Services Manager on the work carried out and the service he is providing.

Once the new Operational Services Centre is complete this would contribute to improving the service further.

Details of the external tree contractor was given and the work he carries out. Replanting of trees is part of the work within the Biodiversity Management Plan.

It was confirmed that the order has just been placed for the tractor for Northam Burrows and it would be shared between the Burrows and the Grounds Maintenance Team.

The Chair thanked the Operational Services Manager for attending the meeting and advised he would be invited back to committee in the future.

### 322. UPDATE ON PLANNING ENFORCEMENT WORKLOAD/CAPACITY

The Planning Manager attended the meeting to present to the committee an update on the Planning Enforcement Workload and Capacity following a previous meeting.

A slide presentation was delivered highlighting the following points:

- Cases received 2019 – 2024
- Outstanding cases
- Action undertaken since November 2023
- PS1 Government Return 2023 Q3
- PS1 Government Return 2023 Q4
- QBR to end March 2024
- Service Improvement Actions
  - Templates created - PCNs, S215, case closure
  - Planning Enforcement & Legal monthly meetings
  - Review of Enforcement Plan
  - Staffing
  - CPD / Engagement
  - Condition monitoring project
  - Respond to LURA changes
  - Biodiversity Net Gain enforcement obligations

The Planning Manager advised that the additional member of staff for the period Oct 2023 – March 2024 had assisted significantly in reducing the backlog of cases.

A brief discussion took place.

The difference between a Planning Contravention Notice and an Enforcement Notice was explained.

In response to a query regarding the Planning Manager advised she would ascertain correct information on the appeals and forward to the Committee. Committee would like to see the draft Enforcement Plan before being presented to Full Council.

The Planning Manager advised of the realistic number of cases per Officer and how this would be achieved.

The Chair requested that a report be presented to the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis, alongside the QBR, to monitor the backlog of live cases.

It was confirmed that Enforcement is not a statutory duty of the Authority.

At 1pm and in accordance with the Constitution, it was proposed by Councillor S Newton, seconded by Councillor P Pennington and –

Resolved:

That in view of the fact 3 hours had elapsed since the meeting had commenced, that the meeting should continue.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

### 323. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Chair advised that the forward plan would be properly discussed and updated following the AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

It was requested that listed buildings be added to the forward plan. Whilst the Planning Manager was in attendance, she gave a brief overview on how listed buildings sit within her department and the process of monitoring.

The Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager advised a record of locally listed buildings is on TDC's website along with an interactive map to view.

Once the Social Value Policy has been formally adopted at Full Council then it can be monitored and brought back to this Committee in the future.

The Reserves Policy would be implemented before the next budget cycle.

It was proposed by Councillor W Lo-Vel, seconded by Councillor P Pennington and –

Resolved:

That it be approved that there be a communications programme to inform Town and Parish Councils and the general public of listed buildings in their area. The communications programme would include:

- where data on listed buildings can be found
- that TDC have an interest in monitoring conditions of listed buildings.
- how to report any issues and/or concerns.

(Vote: For – unanimous)

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 1.18 pm

Chair:

Date: