

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETING

Town Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HS

Tuesday, 17 September 2024 - 10.00 am

PRESENT                      Councillor S Newton (Chair)  
Councillors C Bright, C Hodson, S Inch, W Lo-Vel and D Smith

Independent Members Mr S Dengate and Mr I Harper

ALSO PRESENT              S Dorey                      - Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)  
S Kearney                      - Head of Communities & Place  
G Bryant                      - Finance Manager (S151 Officer)  
A Fay                              - Service Improvement Officer  
G Batten                      - Principal Accountant  
K Brown                      - Democratic Services Officer  
K Hewlett                      - Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

Councillors P Pennington

335.     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Cottle-Hunkin, T Elliott, the Chief Executive and the ICT, Strategy and Performance Manager.

336.     MINUTES

The Chair welcomed Councillor C Hodson to the Committee as the newly elected Vice-Chair.

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

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For – 5, Against – 0, Abstentions - 3)

Matters Arising

Minute 331 – Councillor P Pennington requested it be recorded that there was no invitation for a seconder to his proposal. Reasons why a seconder was not required were clarified by the Head of Legal & Governance. Councillor P Pennington was satisfied with the explanation given.

337. ACTION LIST

The action list was discussed and updated.

338. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There were no public contributions.

339. 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.

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

No urgent matters were brought forward.

341. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

342. HR STRATEGY

The HR & Communications Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to note the HR Strategy.

It was advised the current HR Strategy is due to expire this year and the new HR Strategy looks at completed actions plus actions to progress moving forward. The aims and objectives of the HR Strategy were explained.

Following the presentation of the HR Strategy a discussion took place.

In response to query regarding recruitment and retention, the HR & Communications Manager advised of the difficulties endured over the past couple of years and how this had improved recently. How Covid-19 had affected working methods/patterns and the impact this has had on recruitment and retention was also discussed.

The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) provided clarification on a query surrounding agency staff and how the delivery of extra schemes included funding for agency staff.

The Principal Accountant explained how agency costs are offset in the budget.

Details of training and development for staff were given and how the previous 'buddy system' could be re-visited.

The HR & Communications Manager provided details of the Union Representatives for staff and the newly created Staff Focus Group which is used to assist the Union and provide feedback from staff on any concerns.

Following a question regarding attending education establishments to promote working at the Local Authority, the HR & Communications Manager confirmed the work carried out and events attended.

Members noted the HR Strategy.

The Chair thanked the HR & Communications Manager for attending the meeting.

343. QBR 1

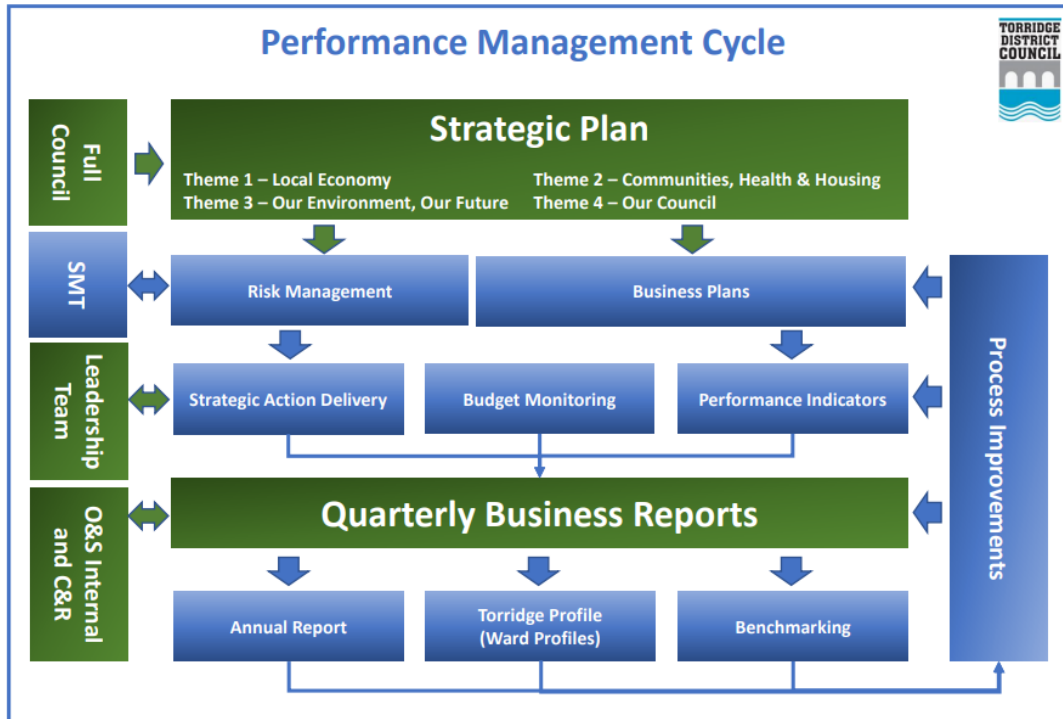
The Service Improvement Officer presented this item giving a slide presentation on the key points to the Themes as set out in the Quarterly Business Report 4 for the period ending March 2024.

The Principal Accountant then continued the presentation giving an update on the financial aspects of the QBR4.

Following this part of the presentation a discussion took place.

The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) advised that it is the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to administer Guaranteed Pension Credit (GPC), however, TDC do assist the DWP to publicise the message to claim. In response to a further query, it was advised that it would be hard to decipher who are eligible to claim GPC but do not.

Following comments made by the Chair on the importance of understanding the performance management cycle to effectively interpret the information within the QBR, suggestion was made to have the below slide added to the minutes.



The Question-and-Answer Supplement was discussed in detail with the additional questions/comments made as follows:

The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) added to a communications question, advising of other avenues of communications and outside organisations that TDC work closely with to deliver messages. The fact that the Household Support Fund is utilised signifies adequate communications.

In response to a query regarding the refresh of the Estuary Strategy, the Head of Communities & Place advised he would get an update from the Economic Development Manager.

Councillor C Hodson left at 11.35am.

Councillor C Bright, Councillor P Pennington and the Head of Communities & Place left at 12noon.

#### 344. ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair presented the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Annual report for 2023-24.

Following the presentation of the report the Committee agreed for the Annual Report to be presented at Full Council.

#### 345. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan was discussed and updated.

It was advised that the Empty Homes policy would be captured in the wider Housing Strategy. The Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) advised that the Housing Strategy would be presented to Full Council later in the year and that Members would be able to comment on the draft before it goes out for consultation.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and closed at 12.15 pm

Chair:

Date: