

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

Caddsdow Business Support Centre - Caddsdow Bideford EX39 3BE

Monday, 9 September 2024 - 6.30 pm

PRESENT Councillor D Bushby (Chair)

Councillor D Smith (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Andrews, C Bright, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Craigie, A Dart, T Elliott, L Ford, S Gibson, J Gubb, P Hackett, P Hames, S Harding, C Hawkins, K Hepple, R Hicks, C Hodson, S Inch, K James, T Johns, C Leather, W Lo-Vel, R Lock, S Newton, P Pennington, L Piper, P Shepherd, T Tinsley, H Thomas, C Wheatley and J Whittaker

ALSO PRESENT G Bryant - Finance Manager (S151 Officer)

S Hearse - Chief Executive

S Dorey - Head of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

S Kearney - Head of Communities & Place

I Rowland - Senior Planning Policy Officer

T Vanstone - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services Officer

K Hewlett - Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

301. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: L Bach, A Brenton, D Brenton and L Bright.

302. COUNCIL MINUTES

8th April 2024

It was proposed by Councillor Hackett, seconded by Councillor Smith and Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th April 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Vote 25 for 5 abstentions)

15 July 2024

A query in relation to declarations of interest on page 16 of the minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 15th July was noted by the chair.

It was proposed by Councillor Lock, seconded by Councillor Newton and Resolved:

That the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 15th July be confirmed as a correct record, with the agreed amendment, and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 26, Abstentions 4)

Councillor Cottle-Hunkin joined the meeting at 18:35.

303. **PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

None received.

304. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded that declarations of interest should be made as and when the specific agenda item to which they related was under discussion.

305. **AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II**

There were no Part II items.

306. **TO CONSIDER CORRESPONDENCE OR OTHER BUSINESS ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE DIRECTION OF THE CHAIR**

No items were raised.

307. **ASHWATER PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA DESIGNATION**

Chair introduced the Torridge District Council (TDC) Planning Policy Team Leader, who presented the report, the purpose of which was to seek the designation of Ashwater Civil Parish as a Neighbourhood Area under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended.

Members were provided with some detail as to the formality of the request and advised of the appendices attached with the agenda. It was explained it was for Full Council to ratify the recommendation set out in the report.

Following a brief discussion it was proposed by Councillor Hackett, seconded by Councillor Lock and -
Resolved:

That Members agreed the extent of Ashwater Civil Parish, as outlined on the map at Appendix 2 to this Report, be designated as a Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of neighbourhood planning, in accordance with Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended.

(Vote: For Unanimous)

308. THE JO COX CIVILITY COMMISSION

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to present to Full Council a request from the Jo Cox Civility Commission to support their work on tackling abuse and intimidation of elected representatives and consider a financial contribution to that work. Members were advised of the recommendation.

It was proposed by Councillor Newton, seconded by Councillor Cottle-Hunkin and –
Resolved:

That Members support the work of the Jo Cox Civility Commission and agreed to contribute a sum of £500 towards their work.

(Vote: 31 For, Abstentions 1)

Councillor Hames joined the meeting at 18:39.

309. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN & PARISH REPRESENTATIVE ON STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) explained the purpose of the report and advised of the recommendation to recruit Councillor Hugh Brading to the role of Town and Parish Representative until either the end of his term in 2027, or after 4 years.

It was proposed by Councillor Bushby, seconded by Councillor James and –
Resolved:

That Councillor Hugh Brading be appointed to the role of Town & Parish Representative for a term of four years, pursuant to section 28 of the Localism Act 2011.

(Vote: For Unanimous)

310. LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND (LAHF) ROUND 3

Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Members in respect of the LAHF R3 funding and ask for authority to add £944,925 to the Council's Capital Programme.

Following a brief discussion it was proposed by Councillor Hodson, seconded by Councillor Bushby and –

Resolved:

That Members agree to add the sum of £944,925.00 to the Council's Capital Programme with further delivery details to be agreed by Council at a later date.

(Vote: For Unanimous)

311. DEVON HOUSING COMMISSION REPORT

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to present the Devon Housing Commission Report, which was recently published. Members were advised that this report had been sent to members in advance of the Housing Strategy Workshop and a link was attached in the report for Full Council.

Members were provided with the detail of how the Devon Housing Commission Report had been researched and consulted on; and advised that the Leader of the Council was the TDC representative. The Chief Executive highlighted the Devon Housing Commission action plan and explained that actions related to Local Authorities had been highlighted in the report for Full Council, and that updates on how TDC were progressing work were shown in bold.

The recommendations set out in the report were highlighted before members were asked for their question.

Members asked about the recommendation relating to having a Housing Strategy and member involvement in the development of the draft, following the recent workshop. The Chief Executive advised members that the Planning Officer and Councillor Hodson had circulated a summary of the discussions and comments following the workshop to all members and provided the opportunity for further comment.

Members reflected on the discussions from the workshop and the role of Councillors and Officers in the development of strategy at the Council. It was explained that at future Leadership meetings, which all Councillors can attend, members will review the progress on the strategy and will be able to provide feedback. Members were also reminded of the opportunities that had already been presented to them as part of the consultation process.

During discussion on the Housing Strategy Members were reminded that the agenda item related to the Devon Housing Commission Report.

Members raised that land at the Crescent Langtree, mentioned within the report, it was noted that feedback received from the local community had raised concerns around the appropriateness of the location.

Following further discussion relating to the Housing Strategy for TDC the Chief Executive advised of the timetable for the Housing Strategy and that it would return to Full Council in November 2024, before going out to the public for consultation, with final implementation and delivery plan planned for discussion at the January 2025 Full Council.

There was a query in relation to the Housing Enabling Officer vacancy at TDC, mentioned in the report. The Chief Executive confirmed that so far recruitment had been unsuccessful, but the council continued to explore options in terms of recruiting to the post.

Members duly noted the report and recommendations.

Councillor Ford left the meeting at 19:08

312. TORRIDGE CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to present the draft action plan for the Corporate Peer Challenge that took place at the end of April 2024.

Members were advised that the Chief Executive and Group Leaders had met to draw up an action plan from the recommendations that came out of the Peer Review. The Action Plan had been attached to the agenda and published in advance of the meeting.

The Chief Executive noted the recommendations set out in the report and highlighted the timescales for future work before handing over to the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Ford returned to the meeting at 19:10.

The Leader of the Council addressed Members, summarising the work that had taken place since the Review findings were received and providing his support for the recommendations set out in the report. Lead Members were thanked for their support.

Members were advised of some of the changes already made since the Review findings - Member Briefings were noted and explained for members.

During discussion Councillor Ford requested the minutes note that he did not support the work as it did not go far enough in his opinion.

Members noted a typo on page 81 of the report regarding political groups and were advised this would be updated.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Newton and - Resolved:

That Members:

- Approve the Corporate Peer Challenge Action List attached to the report
- The Group Leader are those appointed to the comprise the working group to Implement the actions on Member Development and Review of Constitution (procedures).
- Note that progress on implementing the actions will be reported to Full Council around November 2024 and January 2025 in advance of the CPC review scheduled for February 2025.

(Vote: 31 For, 1 against).

313. CHANGES TO THE CONTRACT PROCEDURAL RULES

The Section 151 Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was for members to consider the recommendations from the Audit & Governance Committee on the 16th July 2024 to agree changes to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules following the approval of a Social Value Policy and to amend the Contract Procedure Rules regarding Waivers.

It was proposed by Councillor Hackett, seconded by Councillor James and – Resolved:

That Members approve the changes to the Contract Procedure Rules as referenced in this report.

(Vote: For Unanimous)

314. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR ON INTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) advised of the vacancy for Vice Chair of Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee and it was for Full Council to appoint to this vacancy.

It was proposed by Councillor James, seconded by Councillor Cottle-Hunkin and - Resolved:

That Councillor Hodson be appointed to the role of Vice-Chair on Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee

(Vote: 31 For, 1 Against)

315. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

Questions were asked by Councillor Thomas and Councillor Pennington.

In accordance with the Constitution a written answer to the question had been circulated to Members.

Question from Councillor Thomas

According to the current North Devon & Torridge Local Plan 2011-31, land owned by Torridge District Council at Cleave Wood is allocated as being for housing.

However, revised flood risk mapping by the Environment Agency has put part of the site south east of Manteo Way into a Flood Zone 3 area.

Has the council challenged the EA reclassification of flood risk in relation to Cleave Wood or any other land owned by this authority?

Councillor H Thomas
6 September 2024

ANSWER

No

Councillor Thomas asked the following supplementary question and Chair advised that an answer would be provided following the meeting.

'Following the Environment Agency reclassification, how much has the Cleave Wood land owned by Torridge decreased in value and in terms of the number of houses that could be built upon it, assuming the classification is not challenged?'

Question from Councillor Pennington

How many pensioner households in Torridge are entitled to Pension Credit (PC) and are not claiming it?

Given the additional financial pressures on low income pensioners just above the means tested income limit for PC due to

1. loss of the universal Winter Fuel Payment
2. Increase in household energy tariffs
3. Due to the personal allowance on income tax not rising and now being liable

What help is available for these households?

Councillor P Pennington
4 September 2024

ANSWER

Pension Credit is administered by the Department for Work and Pensions, therefore TDC does not hold the information in relation to eligibility.

Torridge is currently administering the household support fund round 5 to assist people in hardship. <https://www.torridge.gov.uk/article/21172/Household-Support-Fund-5>

Scheme 6 has been announced, and will be available when the current scheme ends on the 30th September. Scheme 6 will run through to March 2025.

In terms of cost of living help, there are various other schemes as set out on our website, details of which can be found at:
<https://www.torridge.gov.uk/costoflivinghelp>

Councillor Pennington asked the following supplementary question and Chair advised that an answer would be provided following the meeting.

'If the Council is faced with an elderly woman who has been respectably working all her life to keep her money going, keep her home going, and is very proud, and is one of the probably 800 pension credit people who could be claiming pension credit and does not and then would be entitled to Council Tax support -how would our officers deal with that situation when they suddenly find they are not paying their Council Tax?'

316. **PETITIONS**

There were no petitions.

317. NOTICES OF MOTION

There was one notice of motion.

318. WRITTEN NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR THOMAS

It is fundamental to the democracy of Torridge District Council that all elected members are involved in preparing important strategies, such as the Joint Planning Policy and the Housing Strategy.

In order to make the most of the talent and knowledge of all councillors, it is proposed that the following improvements to working practices are adopted whenever new policy is being developed:

1. A clear timetable of meetings and workshops is in place at the outset to enable all members to know when and how they can make contributions.
2. If it is decided that, in the interests of efficiency, any such meetings or working groups are not to be open to all councillors, their membership includes fair political representation of all groups by proportionality.
3. When a meeting takes place, a record is agreed by the Leader and any lead members involved and that record is sent to all councillors forthwith.
4. Workshops involving discussions in small groups include a feedback session (organised separately if necessary) where the outcome of those discussions are shared and further developed among all members.

Councillor Thomas requested a recorded vote and spoke on the notice of motion.

It was proposed by Councillor Thomas, seconded by Councillor Ford and – Resolved:

That the notice of motion be agreed.

Following the support of five other Members a recorded vote was taken:

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
ANDREWS, S	X		
BACH, L			
BRENTON, A			
BRENTON, D			
BRIGHT, C	X		
BRIGHT, L			
BUSHBY, D		X	
COTTLE-HUNKIN, C	X		
CRAIGIE, J	X		
DART, A	X		
ELLIOTT, T		X	
FORD, L	X		

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
GIBSON, S		X	
GUBB, J		X	
HACKETT, P		X	
HAMES, P	X		
HARDING, S		X	
HAWKINS, C	X		
HEPPLE, K		X	
HICKS, R		X	
HODSON, C		X	
INCH, S		X	
JAMES, K		X	
JOHNS, T	X		
LEATHER, C		X	
LO-VEL, W	X		
LOCK, R		X	
NEWTON, S		X	
PENNINGTON, P	X		
PIPER, L	X		
SHEPHERD, P		X	
SMITH, D	X		
THOMAS, H	X		
TINSLEY, T	X		
WHEATLEY, C	X		
WHITTAKER, J	X		
TOTAL - 36	17	15	

(Vote: 17 For, 15 Against)

The Chief Executive advised members that given the scale of the work required a further report to Full Council would be required, which would set out the requirements and consider the implications.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.29 pm

Chair:

Date: