



Torrige District Council

**INTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2024/2025**



SECTION

CONTENTS

PAGE

1.	Introduction by Chair	2
2.	Scope of Responsibility	3
3.	Committee Membership 2024/25	4
4.	Work carried out this year	5
4.1	Work Carried out this year – Highlights	6-7
4.2	Additional Work Carried out	8-9
5.	Key Actions	9-10
6.	Future Work Programme	11
7.	Appendix 1	12-16

1.

INTRODUCTION BY CHAIR

The core function of the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee is to monitor and scrutinise the Council's financial and activity performance, as recorded in the Quarterly Business Reports (QBR) and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. In addition, other plans, policies and strategies are scrutinised on a periodic basis. Before coming to Committee, the QBR is now circulated around all Councillors and the increase in questions being submitted by Councillors who are not on the Committee is very welcome.

Overview and Scrutiny provide an important element of accountability and confidence-building although it is accepted that supporting this function takes a considerable amount of Officer time. However, I was pleased that the proposed merger of the two O&S Committees was not supported by Full Council - to have done so would have placed an enormous workload on a single Committee with the inevitable consequence being a reduction of scrutiny across the Council's activity area.

Amongst the additional work carried out by the Committee, this year saw work on the much-awaited updated Estuary Strategy, an important multi-activity area that this Committee has been highlighting for a number of years and it is important that the momentum is maintained. However, one area of disappointment has been the continued delay in sharing the KPIs for Active Torridge. Given the considerable amounts of money granted to Active Torridge from the Council's budget it is important that this Committee continues to request such information so an assessment of value for money can be properly made. In the future, the review of Active Torridge might best be undertaken by a joint meeting of both scrutiny Committees as they both have oversight responsibilities in this area.

As always, I am grateful to Committee Councillors and our Non-Elected Representatives for their time and attendance throughout the year and for ensuring that we were quorate on all occasions.

Councillor S Newton

2.

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Council has two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, an **External** Overview & Scrutiny Committee and an **Internal** Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

- 1) The Overview & Scrutiny Committees have the power to review the policies of the Council and its objectives and are entitled to ‘call in’ decisions made by the Community & Resources Committee which are not yet implemented. They can also recommend that the Community & Resources Committee reconsider such decisions. Issues that remain unresolved will be referred to the Full Council for determination.

- 2) The Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee exercises its functions in respect of the Council’s policies, decisions, performance framework and actions with an “inward facing” emphasis.

The full Terms of Reference for the Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of the report.

3. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2024/25

Chair: Councillor S Newton

Vice Chair: Councillor C Hodson

Councillors: Councillor J Craigie
Councillor C Bright
Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin
Councillor T Elliott
Councillor S Inch
Councillor W Lo-Vel
Councillor D Smith

**Non-Elected
Representatives:** Mr S Dengate
Mr I Harper

Support Officers: S Hearse - Chief Executive
S Dorey - Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring
Officer)
G Bryant - Finance Manager (S151 Officer)
J Walter - Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager
G Batten - Principal Accountant
A Fay - Service Improvement Officer
K Brown - Democratic Services
L Glover - Democratic Services

Following the Annual General Meeting on the 19th May 2025, the Committee Membership changed.

4.

WORK CARRIED OUT THIS YEAR

Reviews of:

The Committee held 8 meetings, covering various topics including:

- Quarterly Business Report 1 to end of June 2024
- Quarterly Business Report 2 to end of September 2024
- Quarterly Business Report 3 to end of December 2024
- Quarterly Business Report 4 to end of March 2025
- Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2029/30
- Budget 2025/26, Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2029/30

Additional Work Carried out:

- S106 Monitoring Fees Update
- Agreement of Work Programme
- HR Strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Economic Strategy
- Estuary Strategy
- Draft Enforcement Plan
- Update of Social Value Policy
- Formation of a Task and Finish Group

4.1. WORK CARRIED OUT THIS YEAR - HIGHLIGHTS

QBR

Throughout the year, Quarterly Business Reports (QBRs) were submitted and were closely scrutinised. Prior to the meetings, Members were invited to raise questions and responses were provided. This enabled a fuller understanding of the information presented and the opportunity to provide additional details.

A substantial array of questions were submitted on each quarterly report, linked to the wider strategic aims of the Council.

Members raised questions regarding:

- Small Businesses
- Household Support Fund
- Harbour
- Private Contractors
- Active Torridge
- Temporary Accommodation
- Key Income Streams
- Land Charges
- Economic Development
- Joint Local Plan
- Planning
- Car Parking
- Staff Costs
- Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre (ACMIC)
- Ethical Investments
- Staff Vacancies
- Housing Strategy
- Vehicle Replacements
- Waste Management
- Planning Enforcement
- Staff Sickness
- Universal Credit
- Capital Projects
- Infrastructure
- Major Projects

WORK CARRIED OUT THIS YEAR - HIGHLIGHTS

Budget 2025/26, Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2029/30

The following recommendations were made at the meeting on the 4th February 2025:

That the following be recommended to Full Council:

- a) Torridge's Band D Council Tax for 2025/26 be increased by (2.99%) from £189.50 to £195.17 per year
- b) Torridge's Net Revenue Budget 2025/26 is £12.109m
- c) The contributions to the Council's reserves as outlined in paragraph 11.4 are approved.
- d) That in light of the risks to the Council's finances identified within the report that the Member Working Group continue its work to bring the Council's budgets back into balance.

That members note:

- The Chief Finance Officer (s151 Officer) assurance of the robustness of the budget 2025/26 set out in section 13 of the report.
- Note the assumptions and forecast applied to develop the MTFs outlined in section 9.
- Note the risks associated with the Budget 2025/26 and MTFs outlined in section 10.

Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2029/30

The following recommendations were made at the meeting on the 4th February 2025:

That the following be recommended to Full Council:

The Capital Programme is updated to include four new projects:

- Sound Level Meters (Noise monitoring equipment) - £30K
- Audio Visual equipment for Caddsdon - £30K
- Replacement Electric Van for the Burrows - £9K
- Parking Ticket Machines - £142K

Through discussion, the following additional recommendation was made:

- That it be approved, where operationally viable solar-powered technology should be included.

4.2 ADDITIONAL WORK CARRIED OUT

As well as the formal reviews stated above, additional work that was carried out during the year included:

- **S106 Monitoring Fees Update** – The Planning Manager updated Members on the monitoring of Section 106 agreements, focusing on fees, how monies are spent, processes, and improvements.
- **Agreement of Work Programme** – At the meeting on the 18th June 2024, Members discussed and added items Forward Plan, and highlighted items to be kept under review.
- **HR Strategy** – Following the expiration of the previous HR Strategy, the new HR Strategy was presented to the Committee by the HR & Communications Manager. Members noted the formation of the Staff Focus Group, which is used to provide feedback from staff.
- **Asset Management Plan** – an update was provided by the Estates Manager regarding Commercial Portfolio Management, Climate Change Response, Car Park Management and Health and Safety. Members were informed that this information would not routinely be brought to the Committee.
- **Economic Strategy** – The Economic Development Manager provided an update, outlining progress made since the strategy was approved in July 2024. Members noted progress made per cluster, and questioned how the Economic Strategy supports business startups. The Committee noted that a Cultural Development Officer had been appointed by the Council.
- **Estuary Strategy** – an update was delivered by the Economic Development Manager, who outlined the background of the strategy, progress made, additional requirements, next steps and put forward the recommendation to extend the Estuary Strategy deadline to June 2025. The Chair confirmed that the Committee would grant the extension. Members questioned the overarching aim of the strategy and discussed the economic activity of the estuary.
- **Draft Enforcement Plan** – The Planning Manager gave a presentation, including information on cases received between 2020-2025, current outstanding cases, enforcement action, appeals and outcomes, timescales and the use of a high and medium priority case classification. The Planning Manager outlined the benefits of adding an additional low priority tier to this classification. Members raised concerns over timescales and the wording of ‘second site visits’. The Committee unanimously voted for the Draft Enforcement Plan document to be brought to the Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to Full Council.

- **Update of Social Value Policy** – The Strategy, Performance & ICT Manager and the Community Projects Officer delivered an update that outlined the progress of the policy. The presentation detailed the background of the policy, the delivery and use of the National Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs), social value roles and responsibilities, projects, progress and next steps. Members discussed the monitoring of economic progression and the overstating of social value by developers. Regarding ACMIC, the Community Project Officer explained that, at the start, there will be quarterly on-site meetings with the Appledore Social Value Manager.
- **Formation of a Task and Finish Group** – the purpose of the group was to review the PID format and to consider introducing scores for climate and social value. The group was formed at the meeting on the 4th March 2025, with Councillor S Newton, Councillor W Lo-Vel and Councillor J Craigie being members.

5. Key Actions

Action	Steps Taken
<p>30.04.24 - Communications Plan for Listed Buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (29.10.24) H Smith indicated that a building advice letter had been circulated to all Parish Councils on the 8th October 2024. • (14.01.25) The use of Historic England mapping was suggested, to help encourage Town and Parish Councils to identify listed buildings. • (04.02.25) The Chair (Councillor Newton) agreed to continue communication with the Planning Manager on this.
<p>18.06.24 - Electric Vehicle Charging Points – A report to be brought to this Committee on the current distribution of EV Charging Points, the serviceability from the provider and if the number of EV points in the district will meet future needs. The Chair to discuss further whether the Committee should review the wider piece of work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (17.09.24) S Kearney advised that this would be an item at the Councillor Climate Change Working Group on the 26th September 2024. • (12.11.24) J Walter advised that findings would be brought back to a future meeting as a Part II item. • (14.01.25) H Gardner explained that the EV contract with Equans had terminated. H Gardner said that TDC are looking to work with a single supplier to increase Charging Point coverage across the Torridge district.

<p>30.07.24 - Members requested Active Torridge Data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (04.02.25) A report on Active Torridge’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be taken to the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12th February 2025. Members were advised that they could attend this meeting.
<p>04.03.25 - Members requested a report from the Car Parking Team highlighting trends and detailing the impact of car parking charges on footfall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members noted that this would be an agenda item at the next meeting.

6.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

To continue to scrutinise/ monitor:

- The Council's performance, budget, and financial strategy through quarterly business reports (QBRs)
- Planning Enforcement Plan
- Asset Management Plan – Maintenance – Planned & Responsive
- Procurement Frameworks
- KPI's for Active Torridge
- Grounds Maintenance
- Housing Delivery Plan
- Estuary Strategy

7.

APPENDIX 1

Article 6 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees

6.1 Terms of Reference

The Council will appoint two Overview & Scrutiny Committees (an Internal and an External Overview & Scrutiny Committee) to discharge the functions conferred by Sections 21 & 21A of the Local Government Act 2000. The terms of reference, functions and responsibilities of each Overview & Scrutiny Committee are set out in Part 3 but the general role of the Committees are as follows:-

- a) review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council’s functions;
- b) make reports and/or recommendations to the Full Council and/or any committees in connection with the discharge of any functions;
- c) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants;
- d) exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Council and/or any committees of the Council;
- e) hear any matter brought to it as a Community Call for Action under powers adopted under section 21A Local Government Act 2000 and make any necessary reports or recommendations on the same; and
- f) review matters previously decided by the Council’s established Committees under the Referral Procedure set out in Article 12.6 and Part 4 of this Constitution.

6.2 Specific functions

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee is also appointed to act as the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee appointed under section 19 of the Police & Justice Act 2006.

6.3 Proceedings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees

The Overview & Scrutiny Committees will conduct their proceedings in accordance with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Rules of Procedure set out in Part 4 of this Constitution and the Council’s Voting Scheme set out in Part 8 of this Constitution.

6.4 Membership

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have a maximum of 3 Non-elected Members appointed. The appointment of the Non-Elected Members will be a function for Full Council and the term of office shall be 4 years from appointment. The termination of an appointment prior to that date will be a matter for Full Council. At the end of the 4 year terms, each Member may re-apply to be appointed for a further term with no restriction on the number of terms that may be served.

Statement of Purpose

The Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees have been appointed to discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 and 21A of the Local Government Act 2000, the Police & Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in relation to the work of Full Council, Council's established Committees and other external bodies.

The Council has appointed an Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee will exercise its functions in respect of the Council's policies, decisions, performance framework and actions with an "inward facing" emphasis.

Terms of Reference, Function and Responsibilities – Applicable to Both Overview & Scrutiny Committees

The following Terms of Reference, functions and responsibilities shall apply equally to both The Internal and External Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Either of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees shall:-

- a) exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Council and/or any committees of the Council in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and to recommend that either the decision be reconsidered or that the decision be exercised/implemented by the Council;
- b) hear any matter brought to it as a Community Call for Action under powers adopted under section 21A Local Government Act 2000 and make any necessary reports and/or recommendations on the same;

- c) make reports and/or recommendations to Full Council and/or any Committees in connection with the discharge of any of their functions;
- d) assist the Council and its Community & Resources Committee in the development of its Budget and Policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
- e) question Members of the Council's Committees and in particular, as appropriate, the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Chief Officer regarding their views on issues and proposals affecting the District;
- f) make recommendations to the Council's Committees and/or Full Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
- g) question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent); and
- h) call officers to account under the relevant Petition Scheme from time to time in force and contained at Part 7, Chapter 1 of the Constitution.

Finance

The Overview & Scrutiny Committees may exercise overall responsibility for any budgets made available to them.

Annual Report

Each Overview & Scrutiny Committee will report annually to Full Council on its workings, and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods as necessary.

Officers

The Overview & Scrutiny Committees may exercise overall responsibility for the work programme of the Officers employed to support their work.

Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Terms of Reference, Function and Responsibilities

The following Terms of Reference, functions and responsibilities shall apply to the Council's Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee only. The Council's Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee shall:-

- a) review and/or scrutinise decisions made, or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions including decisions taken by the Community & Resources Committee or by an Officer;
- b) review matters previously decided by the Community and Resources Committee of the Council and matters referred to it by Full Council under the Referral Procedure set out in Part 4 Chapter 4 of this Constitution;
- c) exercise any of its functions in respect of decisions relating to the overall resource of the Council, both land and finance;
- d) monitor the overall budget of the Council and ensure compliance with that budget (both revenue and capital) and the Council's assets, including arrangements for audit and review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- e) monitor compliance with the Council's overall policy framework;
- f) monitor the efficient administration of the Council's trading responsibilities;
- g) question members of the Community & Resources Committee and Chief Officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or project
- h) consider Ombudsman reports as relevant to the Community & Resources Committee.

Composition of both Internal and External Overview & Scrutiny Committees

1. The Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees shall be made up of up to twelve (12) Members.
2. Membership of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee shall be made up as follows:
 - a) Nine (9) District Councillors; and

b) Up to three (3) Non-Elected Representatives.

3. The quorum shall be six (6).

4. Non-Elected Representatives are entitled to vote at Committee meetings in accordance with the Council's adopted Voting Scheme.