

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Town Hall, Bideford

15 October 2012

PRESENT: Councillor A J Eastman (Chair)
Councillor A T Inch (Vice Chair)

Councillors: A P Boyd, D Brenton, M Brown, P S Christie, P R Collins, P Davies, B M Edwards, R H Hicks, J Himan, S G Inch, K J James, T Johns, R Johnson, M Langmead, D M Lausen, C J Leather, G E Lee, J Lewis, R A Lock, H A Martin, B M Parsons, H J Ratledge, G G Tabor, P Watson and J Whittaker

ALSO PRESENT J Wallace (Head of Paid Service)
K Miles (Solicitor)
S Harding (Chief Accountant)
S Hearse (Joint Head of Finance with North Devon Council)
L Inch (Committee Clerk)
S Squire (Committee Clerk)

B Higgins (Executive Principal) Bideford Autistic Society

The Chair introduced and welcomed the following Officer to the meeting:
Susan Squire – Democratic Services Officer

The Chair mentioned that it had been brought to his attention that Mrs Joan Hardwick had recently sadly passed away. She was elected in 1991 and remained a Torrington Councillor for Heanton until 2003.

59. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A Dart, M Footitt, DC Fulford, PW Pennington, B Redwood, AJ Symons, and RMM Tisdale.

60. MINUTES

The minutes of the Meeting held on the 3 September 2012 were presented.

UPDATE ON MINUTES:

Agenda item 50 a) - Councillor Parsons advised that Mrs Horton is now working with Devon County Council and Torridge District Council in addressing the issues concerning the access road.

Agenda item 50 b) – Councillor Parsons advised that he had a meeting with Councillor Lausen and the Housing Manager regarding the housing conditions. A letter has been written to Mr Patterson asking for evidence to be produced before the end of the month or Torridge District Council will consider the matter closed.

Resolved: That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Vote: For 23, Abstentions 4)

61. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

a) Mr M Sweet handed a letter to The Mayor of Bideford, Councillor S. Inch. Mr Sweet was concerned about various issues and the effect they were having on Bideford.

The Chair thanked Mr Sweet for his comments and advised that they had been noted, he also asked Mr Sweet to contact his District Councillor Tony Inch about these issues.

62. CORRESPONDENCE OR OTHER BUSINESS ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE DIRECTION OF THE CHAIR

The Chair advised that he had attended several services in which clergy had been ordained into the Church and it had been beneficial for him to attend these.

The Chair informed the meeting that he and the Deputy had attended the Petroc Higher Education Awards in Barnstaple. He wanted to congratulate Councillor Peter Christie who was a guest speaker at the event, which was a big success.

The Solicitor advised that the Boundary Commission for England had published proposals regarding changing the parliamentary boundaries which involves Torridge and North Cornwall and also West Devon. There is an embargo until 16/10/12 and then the proposals are available to view. The Solicitor advised he had 2 copies which were available for Members to view but they could not be taken away. There were also copies available at the other Torridge offices.

63. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

There were no questions.

64. BIDEFORD AUTISTIC SOCIETY

Mr Ben Higgins, the Executive Principal of Broomhayes School gave a presentation on Autism, The Autistic Society and Broomhayes.

Mr Higgins described what autism was and that it caused social communication difficulties. He explained that the National Autistic Society was formed 50 years ago and they run many charitable activities, coordinate research and training. The services are run for children and adults.

Mr Higgins explained that Broomhayes is a school and a children's home to 25 young people. He informed the meeting that the local community was important to them as they do not want the school to be isolated. Links with the community and opportunities for young people to contribute are important and new links are being looked for.

Mr Higgins asked if Councillors had any ideas of ways that they could contribute, these would be welcomed. He also invited anybody who would like to visit Broomhayes to please contact the school as visitors are welcome; or to look on the website address – www.nas.org.uk/broomhayes

Councillor Lewis asked Mr Higgins if it might be possible to arrange a meeting to discuss local opportunities.

The Chair thanked Mr Higgins for his very interesting and informative presentation.

65. AMENDMENT TO PAY POLICY

The Solicitor and the Joint Head of Finance left the meeting.

Councillor Collins presented this Item under Part I. He advised that after the last Full Council meeting this item had been fully discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting. Russ Symons from the South West Councils had attended and provided advice at this meeting.

Councillor Collins advised that after full consideration they had come to the same pay policy options as previously.

A discussion followed and Councillors expressed concern that they did not have any details of the pay policy at this meeting. There was also concern about the additional payments being proposed.

Councillor Collins explained that the additional payments were on a yearly basis. He further advised that he was happy to go into detail but that the meeting would need to move into Part II.

Councillor Parsons suggested that the amendment to the pay policy was a fair and sensible way to move forward.

Councillor Lee stated that it was unusual to be asked to make a decision without the

details to hand but he stated that he had had sight of these and highlighted that the proposals are not permanent but for 9 months initially.

It was further discussed that there were some sticking points but it was important to get this moving forward and that it was not permanent. It was mentioned that there was a need to trust those that had made the decisions.

It was proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Lock and

Resolved:

That the amendment to the pay policy be approved but that after nine months the Council review how the arrangements are working and to explore other arrangements as required.

Vote: For 21, Against 3, Abstentions 3

66. LEAD MEMBERS

Councillor Parsons advised that the purpose of the report is to approve the new Lead Member process and associated changes to the Council's constitution. In May 2011 a review of the Lead Members was undertaken to reduce the Lead Members numbers from 37 to 8. He advised that a lot of work has been done by the Lead Members.

Councillor Parsons advised that the Working Group which had been formed to review new arrangements for Lead Members have now provided a final report. The Working Group felt that the Lead Members were carrying out their duties very well and that the reduction in numbers was a vast improvement.

The final report made several recommendations which were put to the Full Council. The recommendations included that Lead Members be appointed each year at the AGM and that Lead Members form part of the Leadership Team. It was also recommended that the Lead Member role description and also the Constitution be amended accordingly. As part of the proposal the existing Lead Members were confirmed and the Leader proposed to advertise the vacancy for Lead Member for Internal Resources.

A brief discussion followed. Councillor Whittaker advised that she would like to remain Lead Member for Elections (Lead Member for Internal Resources), as she had already been working on elections with officers. Councillor Parsons advised he would take this matter forward for discussion.

Councillor Hicks questioned why Lead Members should report to Leadership and not to Full Council. He expressed concern that the council was moving towards an Executive.

A discussion then followed about Lead Members being politically balanced. Councillor Parsons advised that Lead Members do not need to be politically balanced

but he was concerned about the comments regarding moving towards an Executive. He reassured that this was not the intention.

Councillor Christie queried the Lead Member Structure and Outside Bodies as the Jennets Nature Reserve is now defunct and also there had been issues with CPRE and pressure group. Councillor Tabor responded that she had attended the first CPRE meeting but unfortunately had been unable to attend further meetings. She had received an email from them which she would pass to Councillor Lausen.

Councillor Pauline Davies left the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Johnson and –

Resolved:

- That the contents of the report be noted.
- That the constitution be amended so that Lead Members are approved each year at the Annual General Meeting and that any changes during the year are approved by Full Council.
- That the Constitution be amended so that Lead Members are part of the Council's Leadership Team.
- That the amended Lead Member Protocol, Lead Member Structure and Lead Member Role Description be approved.
- That the following Lead Members be approved –
 - Lead Member for the Natural & Built Environment - Gaye Tabor
 - Lead Member for Recycling, Refuse Collection & Street Cleaning - Chris Leather
 - Lead Member for Communities - Jane Whittaker
 - Lead Member for the Torridge Economy – Phil Collins
 - Lead Member for Homes & Housing - David Lausen
 - Lead Member for Health & Community Safety – Andy Boyd
- That the Leader be authorised to advertise the following Lead member vacancy:
 - Lead Member for Internal Resources

(Vote: For 25, Against 1)

67. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS PANEL

The Head of Paid Service informed Members that a vote was needed for a representative to sit on the Police and Crime Commissioner Panel.

Councillor Christie enquired whether Torridge would have any input. Councillor Boyd advised that he will be representing this Council and if there are any issues that Members or Officers need raising he would do this on their behalf and feedback any responses to this Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Johnson and seconded by Councillor Parsons and

Resolved:

That Councillor A. Boyd be elected to sit as a representative on the Police and Crime Commissioner Panel.

(Vote: For 19, Abstentions 7)

68. RETENTION OF BUSINESS RATES

The Joint Head of Finance gave a presentation on the retention of Business Rates. He mentioned that the Business Rates final settlement will be approved in January to start in April next year, but is still going through the consultation process.

A discussion followed on the items below:

- What does Business Rate retention mean?
- Other changes – SPARSE Lobbying
Formula grant and Sparsity
Other grants being rolled in
New Homes Bonus
- Risks and Rewards
- Funding based on a structured model and Authorities are scored against the model
- Business rates and pooling

He referred to pooling and mentioned that there are within Devon, the 8 Districts, 2 Unitaries and County were interested in linking together, and that if Torridge submit an expression of interest we still have 28 days following the settlement announcement to pull out.

He explained that the purpose of bringing this to Full Council was to ask Members for approval for the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Accountant to sign up for the pooling arrangements and submit the proposal.

It was agreed by Members that the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Accountant be

delegated power to continue negotiations in relation to the pooling arrangements and to commit to those arrangements.

(Vote: for Unanimous)

69. SCHEDULE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2013/14

The Head of Paid Service advised that the purpose of the report is to seek Full Council's approval of a programme of committee meetings for 2013/2014. There may have to be some changes with regards to the budget setting but this can be adjusted at a later date.

Councillor Lee mentioned that he had received a suggestion from Councillor Redwood whether the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee could start at either 9.00 or 9.30am. He advised that he had emailed Councillor Pennington for his input.

It was proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Eastman and

Resolved:

That the proposed programme of committee dates for 2013/14 be approved.

(Vote: Unanimous)

70. REPORTS BY COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Chair invited each Committee Chair to present their Committee's minutes for noting.

(a) COMMUNITY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 1 October 2012

Councillor Parsons presented these minutes for noting.

The minutes were duly noted.

(b) PLANS COMMITTEE MEETING - 6 September 2012

Councillor Lock presented these minutes for noting.

Minute item 56

Councillor Hicks enquired about the wind turbines that are open for approval, under the scheme of delegation. Councillor Lock explained that at the last Plans Committee it was decided that any Planning applications for Wind Turbines over the height of 25m will be considered at Plans Committee.

The Solicitor advised that the scheme of delegation would not need to change as it was covered under the current one.

Councillor Lock advised Members of the Plans committee that the next PAS training is due to be held on Wednesday at 2.00pm. She also mentioned that the Plans meeting scheduled for 1 November will now be held on the 8 November.

The minutes were duly noted.

(c) OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (EXTERNAL) COMMITTEE –

Councillor Whittaker presented these minutes for noting.

The minutes were duly noted.

(d) OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE –

Councillor Collins presented these minutes for noting.

The minutes were duly noted.

(e) LICENSING COMMITTEE –

Councillor Boyd presented the minutes for noting.

The minutes were duly noted.

(f) JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE –

Councillor S. Inch presented the minutes for noting.

Councillor Collins asked as funds are being paid to the crematorium when would Torridge start to see a profit. The Joint Head of Finance advised that a report is being presented to the next Community & Resources Committee which highlights the extension work due to be carried out on the chapel and waiting room, an increase will start to be seen in 2016.

The minutes were duly noted.

71. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

72. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion.

15/9

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and ended at 8.40pm

Signed:

Date: