

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE

Town Hall, Bridge Street, Bideford.

30 April 2013 at 10.00am

PRESENT:

Councillor P R Collins (Chair)
M Langmead (Substituting for Councillor Watson), P Davies (left at 11.20), T Johns, J Whittaker and B M Edwards (arrived at 10.20.)

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr M Pearce and Mr R Baker

ALSO PRESENT:

J Wallace – Head of Paid Service
S Harding – Chief Accountant
S Hearse – Joint Head of Finance
H Roper – Performance Officer
S Kearney – Economic Regeneration Officer
A Waite – Corporate Property Manager
S Toon – Parking Services Manager
L Inch – Democratic Services Officer

101. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors A Symons, M Footitt, P Watson and Mr Harper

102. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee Meeting held on 26 March 2013 were presented:

It was proposed, seconded and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 26 March 2013 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

Vote: (For 2, Abstentions 7)

103. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

104. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

The Chair informed Members that he had received a question from Mr Baker with reference to a meeting in 2012 where Overview & Scrutiny Internal recommended to present at Community & Resources Committee and then to Full Council the findings from the working group that are looking at Full Council. The Head of Paid Service suggested that an Informal Council meeting be arranged, and that she would speak with the Corporate Service Manager.

It was proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Davies and:

Resolved:

That an Informal Council meeting is arranged to look at Full Council.

Vote: (Unanimous)

106. PARKING

The Chair introduced Simon Toon, Parking Services Manager to give a presentation on Parking Services.

The Parking Service Manager gave an update on the service area. He gave an overview on the following:

- Purpose: Enough, safe quality parking at the right price
- Main Activities: Provision, management and enforcement of off street car parks
- Structure Chart
- How much does the Service cost?
- What do you spend the money on?
- What income do you receive?
- Share of income Generated from parking operations
- Details of Capital Projects – Highway signage – Northam Burrows new car park
- Performance Data Measures
- Performance Data Actions/Projects Progress
- Opportunities and challenges 2013/14

The Parking Services Manager mentioned that there might be a possibility of Torridge District Council and North Devon Council merging the two back office services. Further meetings have been arranged and this will then be presented to Members.

As the agency agreement with Devon County Council is due to expire on in 2014, The Parking Service Manager advised that there had been a couple meetings held with Devon County Council and it has been mentioned to them that Torridge would require information before July so that all options are ready to be presented to Members for their consideration.

The Chair thanked the Parking Service Manager for his presentation.

107. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Chair introduced Andrew Waite, Corporate Property Manager to give a presentation on the grounds maintenance contract.

The Corporate Property Manager gave an update on the service area. He gave an overview on the following:

- Service Structure
- Delivery
- History
- Contract Changes
- New Contract
- New TDC Contract

There were eleven expressions of interest which was shortlisted to seven. The contract was tendered in November 2012 and the new contractors are ISS Facility Services. The contract is for 8yrs plus 2yrs, this will realise a saving of £60,000 per annum. Torridge District Council led on the Procurement and North Devon Council led on Contract Documentation

The Corporate Property Manager explained that across the North Devon contract there are five partners. These are Torridge District Council, North Devon Council, Devon County Council, North Devon Homes and Barnstaple Town Council. Holsworthy and Northam Town Councils have made contact with the new contractors, Tarka have set up their own team.

Following further discussions it was agreed that the Corporate Property Manager puts a piece in the Members Bulletin about the Contractors and who they are, the cutting frequency, a piece about the verges not belonging to Torridge but County Council.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Property Manager for his presentation.

108. UPDATE ON TDC GRANT SCHEME RUN BY ND+

The Economic Regeneration Officer advised that the purpose of the report is to present to Members a progress report on the Seaside Success Grant Fund administered for the Council by North Devon+.

The Chair mentioned that all funds had been allocated and enquired as to whether the Economic Regeneration Officer had any concerns on the way the funds being handled. The Economic Regeneration Officer advised that the scheme operates within our requirements and that there is a business plan in place for the scheme.

Following further discussions, Members suggested contacting the Bridge Trust giving them a briefing paper with all the relevant information in case they wished to support this scheme in future. Members asked if they could have a copy of the unsuccessful applicants and to see which ones were going to the Bridge Trust for funds.

The Chair asked if one case study could be included on the Members Bulletin.

109. WORKING GROUP – TOWN COUNCIL AND USE OF OFFICES

In the absence of Councillors Watson and Footitt and Mr Harper it was agreed to move this item to the next meeting.

110. SCOPING OF FUTURE WORK PROJECTS – APPLEDORE FISHDOCK

It was proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Edwards and:

Resolved:

That this item be moved into Part II.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (as amended)

Resolved:

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 and Paragraph 10 of Part 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Vote: For (unanimous)

A verbal update was given by the Corporate Property Manager. Following which Members discussed matters raised.

It was proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Edwards and:

Resolved:

That the meeting moves back into Part 1

Vote: (Unanimous)

111. PLANNING REVIEW

The Head of Paid Service gave a brief update on planning. She mentioned that there were still issues with emails not being answered and had spoken with the Head of Strategic Development and Planning.

Members mentioned that there were still issues with

- Emails
- Looking at applications on line
- Telephone calls – not returning calls
- Voice messages not updated
- Who is dealing with Officers work load when they are on holiday

The Performance Officer advised that there had been a back log of applications to be entered onto the system but this had now been completed. He also mentioned that on the 15th April the new system had come in to operation and started with the 1st assessment process where the application is looked at by the Senior Officer first, any information required from the applicant is requested at this stage, and then passed onto planning support for processing.

The IT systems have been updated and the Planning Officers are making more use of them.

Councillor Edwards informed Members that once you speak to a Planning Officer they are very helpful so not all negative.

112. MBR BUSINESS REPORT

The Head of Paid Service introduced the Monthly Business Report which covers the period to the end of March 2013.

Development Enabling – The Head of Paid Service advised that a member of staff is leaving and the recruitment process to replace him is underway.

Affordable Housing – During discussions the following issues were raised:

- Applications that are received by Torridge for housing and the amount which are affordable
- The amount of houses built that are not sold are then sold as affordable housing

- Figures agreed within the development for affordable housing are reduced

The Chair mentioned that there were very few projects at the moment. Councillor Johns raised his concern over the Pollyfield Project where the affordable housing was reduced from 40% to 20% and was not happy with this.

The Performance Officer advised that there were no large schemes coming through so Torridge was 50% down from last year on affordable Housing.

Revenues and Benefits

The Head of Paid Service advised that the next newsletter will have all the statistics.

The Chair enquired about the FOI requests. The Performance Officer advised that these and also the complaints were very complex. He mentioned to Members that in the New Financial year a working group could be set up to look at the Monthly Business Report. The Councillors that sat on the working group last time were Mr Baker, Councillor Whittaker and Councillor Footitt. It was suggested that Officers look at the report and bring any ideas to the next meeting.

Following discussions it was proposed by Mr Baker and seconded by Councillor Edwards that the Monthly Business Report is presented to the next Community and Resources Committee.

Vote (Unanimous)

113. ACTION LIST AND WORKING GROUPS

The content of the Forward Plan was noted and amended accordingly.

The Chair advised that Mr Baker had written in with his concerns as the Special Overview & Scrutiny meeting to look at the budgets held on the 15 January only eight Councillors attended plus all the Independent Members. He mentioned that one Councillor who attended the meeting was unable to speak at the Community and Resources Committee as he had been a substitute at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting. There were no Members who sit on Community and Resources Committee attended the Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

During discussions it was mentioned that an informal Community & Resources Committee could look at the budgets and invite all Members to attend. Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee could then scrutinise the budget proposals from Community and Resources Committee.

It was noted that the vacancy created by the resignation of Councillor Murdoch had not been filled. The Chair stated that it had been difficult in the past to fill vacancies to keep the political balance. It was agreed to represent to the Solicitor that the Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee need not be balanced.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 12.20pm

Signed:

Dated: