

DRAFT

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE

Committee Room, Riverbank House, Bideford

16 July 2013 at 6.00pm

PRESENT:

Councillor B Redwood (Chair)

Councillors: P Pennington (Vice Chair), B Edwards, P Watson, D Brenton and H Ratledge.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS:

Mr R Baker, Mr I Harper and Mr M Pearce

ALSO PRESENT:

J Wallace – Head of Paid Service

S Harding – Chief Accountant

S Hearse – Joint Head of Finance

J Walter – Corporate Services Manager

K Little – Head of Strategic Development & Planning

D Green – Development Manager

H Roper – Service Improvement Officer

L Inch – Democratic Support Officer

Also present: Councillor G Tabor - Lead Member for Natural and Built Environment

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor D Fulford.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee Meeting held on 4 June 2013 were presented:

It was proposed by Councillor Watson, seconded Mr Baker and –

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 4 June 2013 were agreed and signed

subject to the following amendments:

Item 7 – should read all Councils and not Town Council.

Matters Arising:

Item 113 – Mr Baker mentioned that Internal Overview & Scrutiny was not politically balanced but this could be reviewed at anytime, and should this be reviewed. The Corporate Service Manager advised that if Members still felt that this was an issue a report can be taken to Full Council or select a Member from another party.

It was proposed by Councillor Watson, seconded by Mr Baker and:

Resolved:

That the membership is left as it is at the moment.

Vote: (Unanimous)

Mr Baker mentioned that Councillor Lewis had resigned so there is a vacancy on the Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Corporate Service Manager advised that Councillor Lewis resigned and the election is to be held on 22 August 2013. The Group Leader will be approached to fill the seat.

The Chair suggested that the Corporate Service Manager nominate a representative for the next meeting.

Agenda item 8

Councillor Edwards the Councillor Community Grants report will be presented at the next Internal Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made as and when the specific agenda item to which they related was under discussion.

4. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items. The Head of Paid Service advised that the meeting may have to move to Part II on agenda item 8.

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

There were no urgent matters to be brought forward.

6. COMMITTEE START TIME

The Chair opened the floor to discussions on start time of future meetings as he was

not able to commit to three hours if the morning meeting start at 10.00am as he needs to leave by 12.30am.

It was proposed by Councillor P Watson that all future meetings start at 6.00pm this was seconded by Councillor D Brenton and –

Resolved:

That all future meetings commence at 6.00pm.

Vote: (For 6, Against 2, Abstention 1)

7.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The Corporate Service Manager advised that there had been some joint training with North Devon. He asked if any Members required any Scrutiny training to contact him. The Head of Paid Service mentioned that a Finance Training Session could be organised if Members were interested.

Following a short discussion members agreed that they would be interested in a Finance Training Session.

8. COUNCIL TAX REBILLING

The Head of Paid Service advised that the Council Tax bills were issued but the amounts due were incorrect. They were then reissued and there was a second error, in relation to amounts shown on the parish precepts and the percentage increase. She advised that legal advice been taken and the second bills were enforceable. Negotiations were on-going with the software supplier.

The Head of Paid Service advised that a bill had been received from the software supplier , a meeting had been held with them on the 9 July the Head of Paid Service advised the supplier this amount was unacceptable.

It was proposed by Councillor B Edwards seconded by Councillor D Brenton 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)

Discussions continued with Members posing a number of questions which were answered by the Head of Paid Service and the Joint Head of Finance, Members considered further actions to be undertaken.

It was proposed , seconded and:

Resolved:

That Officers have further discussions with the Solicitor and to contact the LGA for advice. A report to be bought back to the next meeting.

Vote: (Unanimous)

Following a further brief discussion

It was proposed by Councillor P Watson, seconded by Councillor B Edwards and –

Resolved

A Letter of response to be written making reference to the error and requesting the supplier to compensate the Council by way of a further reduction on the invoice.

Vote: (For 6, Abstentions 3)

It was proposed by Councillor B Edwards, seconded by Councillor D Brenton and:

Resolved:

That the meeting moves back into Part 1

Vote: (Unanimous)

9. PLANNING SERVICE

The Chair introduced Kate Little, Head of Strategic Development & Planning, David Green, Development Manager and Councillor G Tabor Lead Member for Natural and Built Environment. The Head of Strategic Development and Planning mentioned that the purpose of the report was to review the outcome of the Systems Review of the Development Management Service.

The Head of Strategic Development and Planning gave an overview of the following:

- The Check Process
- Redesign - the administrative processes and practices
 - The workflow management
 - The professional culture
- Existing Performance Measurement
- Proposed Performance Data

She mentioned that applications are being received which are not “clean applications”, the applications received from the public are better than those received from the agents. The Development Manager mentioned a need to discuss the quality of the applications received from the agents. The Head of Strategic Development and Planning gave a brief update on the reasons why applications were invalid.

Following further discussions it was proposed by Mr Baker, seconded by Councillor D Brenton and

Resolved:

That the Committee accept the recommendations

- The Committee acknowledges the progress of the Systems Review and the improvements to the quality of service to the customer that are beginning to be achieved.
- The Committee recommends a review of the performance data to better measure success from a customer’s perspective rather than in relation to arbitrary speed targets.

Vote: (Unanimous)

Councillor Tabor - Lead Member for Natural and Built Environment advised Members that she is looking at the review and how it is working within the planning department. She also mentioned that she is spending a day working with planning officers and would report back to the next Internal Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

The Chair thanked the Head of Strategic Development and Planning and Development Manager for their report.

10. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE MONTHLY BUSINESS REPORT

The Chair introduced Harry Roper, Service Improvement Officer who gave an update on the proposed changes to the Monthly Business Report.

The Service Improvement Officer advised that there had been some changes with the different areas, Income, Budget Monitoring, Goals 1 -3, Goal 4, and there is a new section – Customer Satisfaction Surveys.

He also advised Members of the following three general changes:

- Front Page
- Presentation to O & S will follow a Powerpoint presentation
- Reduce text where possible

It was proposed by Mr Baker seconded by Mr Harper and:

Resolved:

That the proposed changes be used for the next Quarterly Monthly Business Report.

Vote: (Unanimous)

Mr Baker asked why the Monthly Business Report had not been produced for this meeting as the last time they were looked at was in April. The Service Improvement Officer advised that the quarterly report for the end of June could not be produced until the 15th – 20th of the following month.

The Head of Paid Service advised that the Income Generation list from the Economic Regeneration Officer will be presented at Management Team. This will then be presented to Members at the next meeting.

11. ACTION LIST AND WORKING GROUPS

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

CONSIDERATION OF FORWARD PLAN 2013/14

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

12. DEVELOP WORK PROGRAM AND SCOPING OF FUTURE WORK PROJECTS

This item was covered during the update of the action list and working groups.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 8.30pm

Signed:

Dated: