



**Torrige District Council
External Overview & Scrutiny**



**ANNUAL REPORT
2015/2016**



Membership of the Committee

Chair: Councillor S Inch

Vice Chair: Councillor P Pennington

Councillors: R Darch
A Eastman
T Johns
J Langton-Lockton
I Parker
A Whittle
K James

Non-elected representatives:
Mr P W Topham

Supporting the Committee:
Verna Green, Strategic Manager (Services)
Susan Squire, Democratic Services Officer



The Role of External Overview & Scrutiny

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

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.

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the performance of external public sector bodies operating within Torridge.

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee is also the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee.

The Council remains committed to its current policy of involving the community in its decision making process and includes community representation on both Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

Introduction by the Chair

We look forward to interesting times ahead with an election for the Police and Crime Commissioner on the 5 May and a Referendum on membership of the European Union on 23 June 2016.

Previously the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee has taken a role in hearing presentations from the Police and Crime Commissioner and putting forward questions. It may be that this is something the Committee will consider repeating when the new Commissioner is in post.

The Committee have received presentations from partner organisations who are in receipt of funds from TDC. We have worked with our partners, scrutinising how funds have been spent and on occasions making suggestions for the way forward.

Healthcare and closure of local hospital beds has been an issue taken up by Committee following concerns expressed by a substantial number of Torridge residents. The Committee have coordinated and managed a number of meetings with healthcare providers and made suggestions regarding future working.

We have covered a wide range of issues and listened to all sections of our community with the aim of helping to improve the quality of life for Torridge residents.

I would like to thank all who have contributed either as invited guests, members of the public, TDC officers, elected and non-elected Members and with particular thanks to the Vice Chair for his support over the past 12 months.

I hope you find the Annual Report interesting.

Kind regards

Simon Inch

Councillor Simon Inch
Chair – External Overview & Scrutiny Committee



A look back at 2015/2016

At the start of the 2015/2016 municipal year the Committee met with a new Chair, Councillor Simon Inch and Councillor Pennington was appointed as Vice Chair. There were significant changes to the membership with six new members taking seats on the committee. Mr Topham provided a valuable contribution to Committee in the role of Non-elected representative and the second Non-elected representative seat remained vacant.

A distinction was made between the organisations invited to attend Committee because they received grant funding from Torridge District Council and those who came as guests, to provide information.

The External Overview & Scrutiny Committee discussed a number of issues and received numerous presentations throughout the year 2015/2016. Working Groups were established to explore specific issues in more detail and make recommendations to the committee.

As part of the process and where necessary, scoping meetings were held to consider questions and issues, in advance of the organisations attending.

The following issues were covered by the External Overview & Scrutiny Committee during 2015/2016:

Crime and Disorder / Safer North Devon



The committee instigated fundamental changes during 2015/2016.

The External Overview and Scrutiny Committee have responsibility as Torridge District Council's Crime and Disorder Committee. Safer North Devon was funded one-third from Torridge District Council and two-thirds from North Devon Council.

The [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#) gave local authorities and police services duties to work together to implement reduction strategies and to work in partnership with other agencies to reduce crime and fear of crime in our community.

Following discussions at committee, it was agreed to set up a Working Group to review the Safer North Devon partnership.

The Strategic Manager (Services) reported back to committee from the Working Group and subsequently Members voted that with effect from 1 April 2016, TDC withdraw from the Safer North Devon partnership. A new Torridge Community Safety Partnership is being established in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The Torridge Voluntary Service (TTVS)



The Committee received a presentation from the Chief Executive of TTVS. The Committee heard of the work being undertaken by TTVS for community groups, including an organisational overview of current projects, support roles and services.

It was noted that TTVS continue to assist with bids for Lottery Funding and that there is no charge for advice but time limits of 3 hours and 5 hours apply.

Over the last year the TTVS had assisted local groups to access £210k funding.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust (NDHCT)



Dr Alison Diamond, Chief Executive NDHCT and Mr Darryn Allcorn, Director of Workforce & Development NDHCT presented to committee on two occasions during the year. Members raised a wide range of issues including the provision of care in the home, changes as a result of the reduction in hospital beds and closer working between health and social care. A number of recommendations were made by Committee including to consult on a wider basis with all healthcare providers.

External Grants



The Committee agreed to form a Working Group comprising Members from Internal and External Overview & Scrutiny Committees to carry out a review into the allocation of external grants.

The Working Group met on a number of occasions. Due to the issues and workload involved, funding for external organisations was continued for 2016-17 and an extension of one year was given for the Group to reach a recommendation.

Westward Housing (Tarka)



The Chief Executive and Director of Operations from Westward Housing (Tarka) presented to committee. The merger of Tarka and Westward Boards had been approved with the legal amalgamation due to be completed by 1 April 2016.

The Committee were advised of the many changes taking place including the effect of the Chancellors Budget giving a 1% rent reduction and also the benefit cap of £20k and the consequences from these.

The Committee recommended that Westward and Torridge District Council seek to make stronger links in preparation for the changes in Universal Credit and learn from each other to minimise the effects on low income working families.

North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve



The Committee received a presentation from the Outreach Coordinator and a number of issues were discussed including the management of the Tarka Trail being amalgamated into the work of the Public Rights of Way Team at Devon County Council.

Following discussions it was agreed to follow-up on a number of issues and in particular, the use of the Tarka Trail in Torrridge. Subsequently the Devon County Council Trails Officer was invited to attend and present to committee.

Healthcare Providers

The Committee invited a number of Healthcare Providers to attend and answer questions regarding the provision of healthcare in Torrridge. This followed on from previous discussions at Committee and concerns regarding closure of community inpatient bed facilities at local hospitals.

A full and enthusiastic debate was held and there was a consensus that it would be beneficial for partners and providers of public health services and Torrridge District Council to work together more closely in the future.

The Committee had concerns about provision of care in the rural Torrridge community and took a role in holding to account the responsible authorities and healthcare providers.

Holsworthy Community Transport



The Committee received a presentation from the Transport Coordinator and Chairman of Holsworthy Community Transport.

Details were given of two new minibuses that had been awarded to Holsworthy Community Transport, and it was noted that these had not been delivered. Confirmation was subsequently received from the Department for Transport that the buses would be delivered by 31 March 2016.

Citizens Advice Bureau



Vicki Rowe, Chief Executive (Torrige, North, Mid & West Devon) gave an informative presentation to the Committee. Members were informed that a total of 1872 clients had been seen in Torrige and that additional income gained from the CAB supported claims was £447,213.

Legal Highs (Novel Psychoactive Substances) / Mental Health Team (Torrige)

Dr Moore, Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director of Adult Mental Health Services, Devon Partnership Trust, provided an update to the Committee regarding recent research into Legal Highs and on mental health issues both locally and nationally. This followed-on from his previous presentation in October 2014. Members were also informed of his work with One Ilfracombe and subsequently he was invited to attend a meeting of One Bideford.

Trails in Torrige District



Following on from the presentation given by North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, the Committee invited the Devon County Council Project Manager to provide further information regarding the Tarka Trail and future proposals for its extension and use.

The Project Manager provided details of the plans to extend the trail. Members considered the potential to generate additional income in the Torrige area from the projects. A follow up presentation was made to the Committee on 13 April 2016.

Water and Environment Issues in Torridge

Officers from the Environment Agency and South West Water Authority were invited to give a follow-up presentation to Committee on water and environment issues in Torridge.

An informal meeting was held in November to discuss progress on a number of specific schemes including long standing issues in Appledore. This scheme was completed in March 2016.

The Wholesale WWS Operations Manager, South West Water Authority and Environment Officers gave a follow-up presentation to Committee on 13 April 2016.

Other items covered by the Committee:

Health and Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing was a standing item on the agenda. Over the course of the year, Members received updates from Councillor Betty Boundy, Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing/Community Safety.

The Council, working with partners on the Health & Wellbeing Partnership produced a Public Health Plan for Torridge and a report was presented to the Community & Resources Committee for endorsement. Members were advised that the key areas highlighted in the health profiles were:

- Smoking – prevention of in public places where children were present
 - Physical activity – to combat obesity including involving the local Women's Institute and walking groups
 - Obesity
 - Mental health
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Actions taken by Committee:

- July 2015

A letter was sent to the Chair of Devon County Council, Health & Wellbeing Board, to seek assurance that the 'care' element be put in place as a complete healthcare package.

- December 2015

A letter was sent to Healthcare Providers regarding implementation of care standards and to underline the necessity of communication between all providers and Devon County Council.

Healthcare Providers were encouraged to build upon the use of consistent Key Performance Indicators to measure the direction of travel and given an indication of the changes and impact on the TDC community.

- March 2016

A letter was sent to Geoffrey Cox MP asking for his response to questions regarding health and social care funding and healthcare services pay structures.

Working Groups:

- A Task and Finish Working Group was formed with the purpose of formulating questions to put to the CCG, Health & Wellbeing Board and NDHCT at the meeting in November. Questions were forwarded to the authorities in advance of the meeting and this enabled them to prepare answers and give a joint response.
- A Working Group was formed to review Safer North Devon. The Group made recommendations which were accepted by Committee in October 2015.
- A Working Group was formed to review the external grants given by TDC. The Group was formed from Members of both External and Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committees. A number of meetings were held. Due to the issues and workload involved, an extension of one year was given for the Group to reach a recommendation. The extension of time also enabled the group to take account of new priorities within the developing Strategic Plan.

Training:

Overview and Scrutiny training was provided in September 2015. An Expert Advisor and Regional Advocate for the South of England, CfPS provided Members with specialist training.