

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (EXTERNAL) COMMITTEE

Town Hall, Bideford, EX39 2HS

13 April 2016 at 4 pm

PRESENT: Councillor S Inch (Chair)  
Councillors: P Pennington, R Darch, A Eastman,  
A Whittle, T Johns (attended at 4.10pm),  
P Hackett (substituting for Cllr Langton-Lockton)

Non Elected Representative: Mr P Topham

ALSO PRESENT: V Green – Strategic Manager (Services)  
S Squire - Democratic Services Officer

Mr Cornish – Project Manager, Devon County Council

Mr Jay Harris – South West Water Authority

Mr Nigel Guy – Environment Agency

Mr Stuart Hunter – Environment Agency

Dr Diamond – Chief Executive, Northern Devon Healthcare Trust

Ms Hartstein – Northern Devon Healthcare Trust

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

72. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors J Langton-Lockton and I Parker.

73. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor S Inch, seconded by Councillor Pennington and –

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2016 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 6, Abstentions 1)

74. ACTION LIST

It was noted that as Cllr James was not in attendance there would be no update on the Holsworthy community minibuses. It was agreed that an email be sent to Cllr James to ask for an update.

75. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

76. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

The Chair advised Members that North Devon Council (NDC) had been in contact regarding reforming the Joint Water Quality Task Team. Following a brief discussion it was agreed the Team should be reformed with the following Members from TDC:

Councillor Pennington  
Councillor Eastman  
Councillor Hackett  
Councillor Whittle

The Democratic Services Officer to feedback details to NDC and a meeting to be arranged.

78. THE TRAILS IN TORRIDGE DISTRICT

Cllr Hackett declared a personal interest as the Devon County Access & Bridleways Officer for the British Horse Society.

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Cornish, Project Manager for Devon County Council.

The following details were included in the presentation:

- Maps were shown of the existing and proposed trails
- There was a long term commitment and support at all levels for opening new sections of the trail
- Visitors come to Devon especially to use the Tarka Trail
- International trails link in with the Tarka Trail
- There were connecting international trails in Brittany and the Channel Islands
- An international partnership is working with 17 partners
- £6000 had been received towards repairs to the bridge at Tavistock
- Land was being acquired to complete the trail between Knowle and Willingcott
- It was advantageous to have the trail go to Market towns
- A policy has been changed to make Meeth a spur off the trail with the trail leading to Hatherleigh
- There are plans for the Tarka Trail to go to Westward Ho!

A discussion followed on the Colesmill viaduct project at Holsworthy which needed sustainable funding. Mr Cornish advised that the preferred funding method would be by a slight increase in local car parking charges. Contributions were needed going forward to maintain the repointing of the bridge. It was noted that Cllr B. Parsons (DCC) was involved and talks were ongoing with Holsworthy Town Council. The benefit to the local economy by the opening the Holsworthy viaduct was discussed. Mr Cornish advised that Colesmill Viaduct requires about £0.5m to restore and complete the work.

It was agreed that Mr Cornish would forward figures regarding the Holsworthy Colesmill viaduct proposals to TDC for consideration.

Examples of local businesses connected to the Tarka Trail were given as Yarde Orchard and the Puffing Billy. There were also nine bike-hire facilities along the route.

Mr Cornish advised that other countries invest in and create a culture of cycling. In response to a question about the involvement of schools with the Tarka Trail, Mr Cornish replied that having cycle routes to schools and educating children about cycling was important.

A discussion followed on the trail being multi-use and only small sections suitable for horse riding. It was suggested that opening up more of the trail to horse riding would bring financial benefits to Torrridge.

The safety aspect of users on the Tarka Trail was discussed and it was suggested that TDC could sponsor Good Guidance leaflets to give out at the cycle hire centres. It was also suggested that 'Etiquette' boards could be erected warning of the need for awareness of disabled/deaf/blind persons also using the trail.

The Chair thanked Mr Cornish for his informative and interesting presentation.

## 79. WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Councillor Pennington declared a personal interest due to his work in farming.

The committee received a presentation from Mr Harris (South West Water Authority) and Mr Guy and Mr Hunter (Environment Agency).

Members were advised that three large bids have been submitted this year for European funding to carry out work in this area including work to improve water quality. Results from the bids were expected to be received at the end of the month.

A discussion followed which included:

- The grants available to assist agricultural business with water issues
- The dangers of spreading manure on flood plains
- Free advice being available to farmers
- The increasing size of slurry pits and that the Environment Agency can serve notices on farmers in breach of legislation
- The reduced funding available to the Environment Agency and reduction in staffing numbers

- Arable anaerobic digesters – maize replacing pasture land and 25 year contracts to put maize into electricity
- Water quality benchmarks and monitoring data now available for the previous year
- That a water-table team are based in Exeter and monitor the levels, with use of observation bore holes

Members were advised that incidents should be reported via the central 0800 telephone number. It was noted that the Environment Agency enforces regulations and will prosecute where necessary.

It was agreed that South West Water would forward written responses to items as detailed in the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee Report

A discussion followed on problems with water holding tanks at Westward Ho! and Appledore with surface water into overflow sewage. Members were advised that this was being investigated by South West Water Authority and involved a complicated water system network.

In response to a question regarding the safety of eating mussels collected and harvested in the Torridge, the Strategic Manager (Services) replied that the mussels were safe to eat and there were regular tests by the TDC Food & Safety Team. If there were any problems, signs were put up.

Water company discharges were discussed and it was noted that both NDC and TDC had recommended that within 18 months Torrington Waste Water Treatment Works be provided with tertiary treatment (UV Filtration) and within the same timeframe phosphate reduction measures should also be implemented at Torrington. It was agreed that an update on this would be provided in writing from SWWA and in particular with any consequential effect on the Torridge mussels being harvested.

A question was asked regarding the Kenwith Valley Dam and whether it had reached its capacity and if not, what the remaining capacity was. The Environment Agency Officers agreed to seek consultation regarding this and forward a response.

A general discussion followed regarding the information provided and it was noted that previously Brett Grosvenor from the Environment Agency had attended these meetings. It was agreed that the reformed Water Quality Task Team would draft questions in advance of future meetings and that these would be forwarded to the Environment Agency and SWWA prior to meeting.

The Chair thanked the Officers for attending.

## 80. HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SOCIAL CARE

- **Presentation from Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust regarding the Success Regime and the Trust's plans for the coming year**

The Chair welcomed Dr Diamond (Chief Executive, NDHCT) and Ms Hartstein from NDHCT.

The following was discussed:

- The follow-up appointment system
- The weighted funding formula which applied to Devon
- That services were being purchased in excess of the finances available
- Costs of procurement and agency staff were being reviewed
- 500 people a day are receiving bed-care who do not need it
- The challenge of providing value for money for patients
- The importance of getting the 'patient journey' correct which saves money
- Problems with recruiting medical staff in North Devon
- The need to have interlinked and consistent IT systems
- The seasonal variances in population numbers in Torridge due to tourism and surges on healthcare demand
- Initiatives to manage the nurse shortages including recruiting from students at Petroc with support worker qualifications and the possibility of NDHCT becoming a satellite university centre

Councillor Johns left the meeting at 6.30pm

In response to a question, Dr Diamond replied that the budget was predicted to have a slight deficit at year end. It was noted that there was now a plan in place to balance future budgets.

In accordance with the Constitution it was proposed, seconded, and -

Resolved: That in view of the fact 3 hours had elapsed since the meeting had commenced, that the meeting should continue.

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

A discussion followed on the amount of spending on primary and secondary care. Members were advised that the Devon County Council public health budget has been reduced. In answer to a question asking how District Councils can assist the NDHCT; Dr Diamond replied that there was a need to build on the current foundations and work together on issues such as combating social isolation.

The Strategic Manager (Services) advised that the Community & Resources Committee had recently agreed a public health plan for Torridge. The Chair advised Members that they could support organisations in their communities with use of their community grant funds.

The Chair thanked Dr Diamond and Ms Hartstein for their presentation and answering questions.

- **2015 Public Health Leaflet – Elderly Isolation**

The Public Health Leaflet was noted.

81. ANNUAL REPORT

It was asked if consideration could be given to completing an impact evaluation on partner organisations. The Strategic Manager (Services) advised that this would be useful information to have.

It was proposed by Councillor Hackett, seconded by Mr Topham and –

Resolved:

That the Annual Report be adopted.

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

The Chair thanked Democratic Services for their work on the report.

82. CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLANS 2015/2016 AND 2016/2017

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Pennington and –

Resolved:

That consideration of the Forward Plan be carried forward to the next meeting

(Vote: For – Unanimous)

Thanks were given to Mr Topham for his contribution 'Framework for Forward Planning 2016-17'.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 7.15 pm

Date .....

Chair .....