

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE

Committee Room, Riverbank House, Bideford

15 May 2012 at 10.00am

PRESENT:

Councillor P R Collins (Chair)

Councillors: H A Martin, T J Johns, J Whittaker, M Footitt A J Symons and D Lausen
(Subbing for Councillor P Watson)

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr R Baker

Mr A Rayner (under the Terms of the Constitution Mr Rayner substituted for the Independent Member vacancy).

ALSO PRESENT:

J Wallace – Head of Paid Service

K Miles – Solicitor

S Harding - Chief Accountant

H Roper – Performance Officer

R Webster – Head of Environmental Health, Housing, Planning & Public Protection

J Edwards – Head of Human Resources

J Walter – Corporate Support Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors B M Edwards, P Davies and P Watson

2. MINUTES

It was proposed, seconded and –

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 3 April 2012 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

(Vote: For 6, Abstention – 3)

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

There were no Part II items.

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

There were no urgent matters.

6. NON-ELECTED MEMBERS REPORT

The Solicitor explained the purpose of the report was to outline the current position and to detail forthcoming action. He updated Members on the current situation with non elected Members. At present there are two vacancies on the Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee and one vacancy on the Overview & Scrutiny (External) Committee.

He explained that Members could decide to re advertise the vacancies and a report would be presented at Leadership or Members could propose not to fill the vacancies which would require a report to Full Council to change the Constitution.

Mr Baker explained that he had received no training since joining in August 2011; he felt that non elected Members should have more involvement within Committees. Mr Rayner explained that he too had received no training and that a greater need for involvement was required. He felt a way forward would be working with other partnerships like the voluntary sector.

It was agreed that a task and finish working group be set up comprising the Solicitor, Mr Rayner, Mr Baker and Councillor D Lausen.

7. SERVICE REVIEW – UPDATE FROM WORKING GROUP

The Chair informed Members that a meeting had been held on the 16 April where Councillors J Whittaker, B Edwards and himself, plus Head of Paid Service and Customer Services and Improvement Manager.

Discussion took place with regard to the budgets and Council Services and the Chairman presented the three proposed recommendations from the Working Group.

The Head of Human Resources was invited to speak with regard to the recommendations. He explained that there was a detailed policy which covers all aspects of redundancies, redeployment etc.

After further discussion:

- it was agreed that the first recommendation be amended, and the Head of Human Resources, Councillors P Collins and J Whittaker have a meeting to discuss amendments and bring back to the next meeting.
- the second recommendation: it was agreed that the Head of Paid Service would consider this recommendation as part of her work.

- the third recommendation: Mr Rayner enquired where the budget was coming from, and whether the staff were being involved. The Head of Paid Service advised that the cost would be between £25,000 and £30,000 for all the lean reviews to take place and the funds would come from the managed underspend. She also mentioned that the Customer Service and Improvement Manager would be leading the process and additional members of staff would be involved.

It was agreed to move this forward to Community & Resources for approval.

(Vote: For 8 – Abstention 1)

8. SCOPING OF FUTURE WORK PROJECTS

The Corporate Support Officer advised that the Action List and Working Groups would be a regular item on the Agenda. He mentioned that the next Working Group on the list to be set up is the Finance and Forward Planning (Priorities – 3/4 year budgets, strategic plan, government changes).

The Head of Paid Service explained that at present the Chief Accountant was working on the end of year accounts. He would be able to work on any updates for the Financial Plan during July/August. The Chair mentioned that Members should be looking at the budgets earlier than last year. The Chief Accountant advised that he would be able to give an overall forecast so Members could start looking at any impact.

Following further discussion the following Members agreed to sit on the working group: Councillors M Footitt, T Johns and P Collins, non-elected Members Mr A Rayner and Mr R Baker, the Chief Accountant and the Head of Paid Service.

9. MONTHLY BUSINESS REPORT

The Head of Paid Service introduced this item she explained that Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee receive the full version of the Monthly Business Report. A shorter version is then presented at Community & Resources Committee. There is a need to look at how much information is required.

The Performance Officer explained that the current Monthly Business Report at the moment is over 40 pages long and would be available on the intranet. He explained that the alternative reports reduce to approx 16 – 17 pages and that a full report would be available if required.

Mr Rayner advised Members that non-elected Members do not have access to the Intranet so would not be able to look at the full Monthly Business Report. The Chair asked that the Solicitor investigate this.

Following further discussions the Chair advised that a Working Group was needed to look at this topic in greater detail. The following Members agreed to sit on this group:

Councillors P R Collins, M Footitt, non elected Members A Rayner, R Baker, Head of Paid Services, Chief Accountant. Customer Services and Improvement Manager and Corporate Support Officer.

The first meeting of this Working Group will be held on 31 May 2012.

10. PLANNING PROJECT UPDATE

CR1

The Head of Environmental Health, Housing, Planning and Public Protection advised Members that David Green had commenced work at Torridge. Kate Little would be starting in the middle of July.

CR2

It was agreed that the lean review on planning would commence on the 11 June for three months. The Customer Service and Improvement Manager would be going to Cornwall Council to discuss their planning process and also their ICT system.

The Head of Environmental Health, Housing, Planning and Public Protection mentioned that officers were keen to move forward.

Regular team meetings were being held.

Preliminary applications advice

Government is to re consult with regard to the preliminary applications advice.

The Head of Environmental Health, Housing, Planning and Public Protection reminded Members of the PAS training to discuss decision making. The first session is to be held on Wednesday 16th May at 2pm. Non-elected Members were also invited to attend.

11. FORWARD PLAN

The Chair informed Members that “cost to the Council in respect of Town Councils” is on the Forward Plan for the next meeting of which the Solicitor, Chief Accountant and Corporate Property Manager will be invited to attend.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 12.25pm

Signed:

Dated: