

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

12 February 2020

-: Present :-

Councillor Howgate (Chairman)

Councillors Brown, Bye, Doggett, Foster, Kennedy (Vice-Chair), Loxton and Barrand

(Also in attendance: Councillors Dart, Barnby, Brooks, Carter, Cowell, Steve Darling, Douglas-Dunbar, Law, Barbara Lewis, Chris Lewis, Long, Mills, Stockman, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas)

33. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Dart in place of Councillor Mandy Darling.

34. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 22 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

35. Urgent Items

The Board considered the item in Minute 36, and not included on the agenda, the Chairman being of the opinion that it was urgent by reason of special circumstances i.e. the matter having arisen since the agenda was prepared and it was unreasonable to delay a decision until the next meeting.

36. Call-in Refreshed Visual Identity

The Board had before them details of a call-in by Councillor David Thomas and Councillor Chris Lewis and eight other Councillors of the Cabinet's decision to approve a refreshed visual identity for the Council.

The Call-in Promoter and Call-in Supporter explained their reasons for call-in to the Board. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services responded to the points raised in the call-in and to the questions raised by members of the Board.

Resolved:

That no further action be taken in respect of the call-in.

37. Unauthorised Encampment

The Board met with the Assistant Director of Customer and Community Services, Tara Harris, the ASB and Noise Lead Officer, David Parson and Inspectors Sally Kingdon and Howard Brugge of Devon and Cornwall Police to gain greater understanding of the Council's approach to unauthorised encampments and the issues unauthorised encampments posed for the Police.

The Board was made aware of the process the Council had to follow to assess welfare needs when a group of travellers arrived, with subsequent legal action to seek possession of the land taking up to two weeks. The Board heard that often the group of travellers would leave before the legal process had concluded. The Council was also responsible for the cost of clearing the vacated land of waste, at a cost to the Council in the region of a few thousand pound per year.

Inspectors Kingdon and Brugge explained the powers they had in asking travellers to move on, adding that negotiated stopping sites in Torbay would make using those powers easier when there were places where travellers could move to. Inspector Kingdon informed Members that the Government were currently consulting on changes to legislation with a view to making trespass a criminal offence and giving police increased powers to move groups on.

The Assistant Director of Customer and Community Services advised the Board that officers had recently investigated three locations with a view to them being used as negotiated stopping sites, however all three locations were ruled out for different reasons. The initial target area was on the outer edge of Torbay but that may have to be widened as no suitable site had yet been found.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet be requested to review the Council's policy on unauthorised encampments, that when reviewing this policy careful consideration be given to the establishment of negotiated stopping areas.

38. Torre Abbey Restoration Project - Phase 3 National heritage Lottery Fund Bid (NHLF)

The Board considered the submitted report on the Phase 3 National Heritage Lottery Fund bid which was due to be presented to Cabinet and Council. The Director of Place outlined the report and responded to the Boards questions.

The Board were supportive of the submission of a bid for funding and welcomed the approach being taken to define Torre Abbey as a quality visitor attraction.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board recommends Cabinet to recommend to Council the approval of the recommendations as set out in the submitted report.

39. How well is Torbay collectively performing for its Children and Young People?

The Board received a report that provided an overview of the current organisation of schools, current attainment and progress and actions that are being taken to champion attainment and progress of children and young people.

The Assistant Director of Education Learning and Skills, presented the report and responded to the Boards questions in relation to attainment levels of children with an Education Health and Care Plan, early year's provision and attendance.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services write to Torbay's Members of Parliament supporting their request for a review of the funding formula for early year's provision.

40. Children's Services - Improvement Plan Quarterly Update and Monitoring Visit

The Board received and noted a report that provided an update on the Children's Services Improvement Plan and latest Ofsted monitoring visit.

The Board were pleased to note that the latest monitoring visit had noted that progress was being made and that there was emerging evidence of a coherent systematic approach to cultural change specific to the needs of Torbay's children. Members focused on and asked the Interim Director of Children's Services questions in respect of recruitment and retention, the senior officer team structure, exploitation and the 'pace of progress' having a maximum risk score despite the latest monitoring visit.

Chairman/woman