

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

10 November 2021

-: Present :-

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar (Chairwoman)

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

(Also in attendance: Councillors Brooks, Cowell, Steve Darling, Long and David Thomas)

25. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Atiya-Alla.

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 October 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

27. Police Update

Chief Superintendent Neil Ralph, South Devon Basic Command Unit Commander from Devon and Cornwall Police provided an overview of staffing levels across Torbay and gave reassurance that the recent changes were expected to be in place for at least the next two years to provide continuity, particularly at senior and middle management levels. He also advised that the Police were finalising budgets to upgrade the Police estate across South Devon and outlined the latest crime figures as set out in the submitted representation and responded to questions in relation to:

- If the people who were recorded under the mental health statistics were also involved in drugs, alcohol and/or domestic violence.
- If there was evidence of an increase in anti-social behaviour events.
- How incidents involving children were managed across agencies, including the police.
- What the statistics were in respect of reoffending and the work to support individuals.
- What acts were classed as stalking and harassment.
- How many times the armed response unit was deployed in Torbay.
- What the figures were for Torbay for fraud.
- How the Police deal with people detained because of mental health issues.

- How staffing levels compared now to previous years, particularly uniformed officers and how many posts were interim.
- The reasons behind the increase in petty shoplifting.
- Response times for dealing with incidents and how this was monitored.
- How could individual Councillors engage more effectively with their neighbourhood Police teams as there was no longer a Police presence at some of the Community Partnership meetings.
- What was being done to support people living in isolated villages.
- How the child centred and trauma informed Policing approaches worked.
- More crimes were being picked up due to improved reporting and understanding, was the increase in rape a follow on from stalking or harassment.

Members noted that comparison data had been provided for the last two years due to 2020 being impacted by Covid-19 and various lockdowns.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Democratic Services Team Leader be requested to add the following key line of enquiry to the next Board meeting considering mental health and wellbeing:

The Police have advised that they are no longer able to use the Haytor Unit at Torbay Hospital as a 'place of safety' and are having to take people detained with mental health issues to Exeter or Plymouth. What is being done to ensure that there is a suitable 'place of safety' within Torbay for the Police to take people detailed with mental health issues?;

2. that the Democratic Services Team Leader be requested to write to all Councillors on behalf of the Board encouraging them to sign up to the Police Advocacy Scheme and highlighting the local Policing area on the Devon and Cornwall Police website;
3. that the South Devon Basic Command Unit Commander be requested to provide the Democratic Services Team Leader with statistics on fraud in Torbay to be circulated to all Councillors; and
4. that the South Devon Basic Command Unit Commander be requested to make better use of social media across the whole of Torbay to raise awareness of the Police work within the local neighbourhoods.

28. Local Environmental Quality - Outline Plan

The Interim Chief Officer SWISCo, Mark Smith, outlined the submitted report which provided the five key principles and three workstreams to be developed into the proposed Local Environmental Quality Action Plan. The Interim Chief Officer and Director of Place, Kevin Mowat, responded to questions and received observations from the Board in respect of the following:

- How would SWISCo engage with the public and also consider local businesses and our tourism sector.
- How would the complications between ownership of land be managed to ensure that action was taken and people were not passed onto other people or organisations to resolve issues of concern.
- What zero tolerance would look like and what sort of breaches this would apply to.
- Issues around fly tipping.
- Concerns about how the Council/SWISCo dealt with unauthorised encampments, homeless people in tents and visitors pitching up tents due to lack of capacity or other options for holidays.
- Query about the tone of the wording in paragraph 1.5 'Activity will emphasise that the local environment is not owned by the Council or other agency and that the people of Torbay are its ultimate custodians.' and how this would be perceived by the public.
- Reassurance that engagement activity would be carried out by officers as well as Councillors.
- How the work around enforcement would link in with the work of the Enforcement Agency.
- What action would be taken by owners of holiday lets who had been using domestic waste and recycling collections instead of organising separate commercial waste collections.
- The adequacy of public bins across Torbay to meet the demands and if they were sited in the most appropriate locations.
- How to make it easier for the community to take action themselves without legal barriers relating to issues such as insurance if they carry out work on Council owned land.
- Issues in connection with enforcement and which Law it falls under.
- Concern over private landowners burning commercial waste and the environmental impact and nuisance of this.
- The outcome of the dual bin trial in Babbacombe – the results of the trial would be shared with all Councillors once finalised.
- What enforcement measures were proposed in respect of our green spaces.

Members noted that the Action Plan would be developed and delivered within finite resources and there would be a need to be open and honest about what could be delivered and to manage expectations working jointly with the public and partners to improve environmental quality within Torbay.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Board endorses the suggested five guiding principles and three work streams identified in the Local Environmental Quality outline proposals and requests that the Interim Chief Officer of SWISCo and the Director of Place consider the feedback highlighted above and raised at the meeting.

29. Strategic Asset Management Plan

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing, Councillor Long, introduced the submitted revised Strategic Asset Management Plan which was currently out to public consultation. The Head of Assets and Facilities Management, TDA, Paul Palmer, responded to questions in respect of the following:

- How many assets were in poor condition and in need of repair.
- What was happening with the Monastery building?
- The wording of the Strategy was very technical in places and would benefit from being reviewed to ensure 'Plain English' was used wherever possible or explanations given where more technical wording applied.
- How many properties were empty and how often this was reviewed.
- How the Marine Conservation Zone was considered in the Strategy.
- The use of Oxen Cove Jetty.
- What action was being taken to consider use of our assets to support accommodation for children and adults.
- What was happening with the Debenhams site.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. that the wording of the Strategic Asset Management Plan be reviewed to ensure that it is easier to understand using Plain English; and
2. to request that the lease agreements for assets on beachfronts be reviewed to tighten them up to address their impact on climate change and the type of take away waste they create and how they manage their waste to ensure they are not polluting our sea and beaches.

30. Budget Monitoring Quarter 2

The Board considered and noted the submitted budget monitoring report for 2021/2022 Quarter 2, which provided a high-level budget summary of the Council's revenue and capital position, based on figures on 30 September 2021. Members noted that the report predicted an overspend of £0.84m but issues such as Covid-19, changes in Universal Credit, end of Furlough, the impact on the Collection Fund and continued demand on Children's and Adult Services were putting unknown increased pressure on the revenue budget.

(Note: Councillor Bye left the meeting prior to consideration of this item.)