



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

29 June 2011

-: Present :-

Councillors Addis, Baldrey, Barnby, Butt, James, Kingscote, Parrott, Pentney and Thomas (J)

(Also in attendance: Councillor Nicole Amil, Councillor Darren Cowell and Councillor Michael Hytche)

98. Election of Chairman

Councillor Thomas (J) was elected Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year.

Councillor Thomas (J) in the Chair

99. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Penny Burnside.

In accordance with the respective wishes of the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended for this meeting by including Councillor Addis instead of Councillor Bent and Councillor Baldry instead of Councillor Darling..

100. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Darling was appointed Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year.

101. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 April 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

102. Appointment of Health Scrutiny Board

Resolved:

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That a Health Scrutiny Board with the terms of reference and membership as laid out in the 'Appointment of Health Scrutiny Board' report be appointed for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year.

103. Update on Bathing Water Quality and the revised Bathing Water Directive

The Board considered an update on the Bathing Water Quality and Torbay's response to the revised Bathing Water Directive. The Council's Resort Services Manager and Nick Smart, an officer from the Environment Agency, were in attendance. The Board was advised of partnership working between the Council, the Environment Agency, and South West Water, with particular reference to the Torbay Project. Members were informed that the Project had been extended to March 2012.

The Board was advised of the requirement for information about water quality and potential sources of pollution to be displayed at beaches designated as bathing waters, including the timeframe for such signage. Members were informed that detailed recommendations concerning the implementation of the Directive, and the funding from DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to assist with compliance were unconfirmed.

In response to members' questions, the Board was advised that potential problems would be addressed after the Torbay Project had finished and a watching brief would be maintained by all partners. Members questioned the possible inclusion of climate change in sewerage system modelling, the decline in Blue Flags likely under the revised Bathing Water Directive, and the sanctions available to the Environment Agency in dealing with misconnections affecting catchments draining into the Bay's bathing water. The Board was advised that nationally the number of Blue Flags awarded was predicted to drop from seventy-three to approximately thirty once the Directive came into force, with Torbay predicted to retain four of its current six.

In response to questions concerning the impact of new housing on water quality, the Board was informed that the adverse affects upon the sewerage system were particularly noticeable with regard to misconnections from home improvements and subsequent extensions rather than the initial build.

Members discussed the possible adverse affects of bathing water signage and the value of disassociating the Council from such signs.

In reply to questions on achieving the highest standard under the new Directive, the Board was advised that the focus of resources was on avoiding any classifications of Torbay's bathing waters as poor.

Members thanked the Council's Resort Services Manager and the officer from the Environment Agency for attending to provide further clarification and information.

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Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board receive a further update on Bathing Water Quality and the revised Bathing Water Directive nine months hence.

104. Revenue Outturn 2010/11 - Subject to Audit

The Board considered the final revenue position for the Council for the financial year 2010/11. The report summarised an underspend of £1.35m. and indicated the main variations in the Council's expenditure for 2010/11. Members were advised of the recommendation to Council to transfer funds to reserves. The Board was advised of the timetable for the statutory auditing of the Council's annual accounts.

In response to questions, the Board was advised that given the financial challenges facing the Council the use of the General Fund Balance was not recommended by the Responsible Financial Officer. Board members discussed the merit of directing some of the underspend for 2010/11 into service provision rather than allocating it all to reserves.

Members discussed whether the £1.35m surplus was attributable to over-budgeting, prudent management, or good fortune. In response, the Board was informed of the Council's vacancy-freeze, the pay-freeze for all staff, and the main variations within each directorate.

Members discussed the Council's past approach toward zero based budgeting and the amount of resource and time necessary to undertake such an exercise. Members suggested the value of time-charging across the Council or for individual teams to both ascertain costs and obtain additional revenue.

Resolved: (i) That a feasibility review of time-charging within the Council be added to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2011/12.

(ii) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board note with approval the Revenue Outturn for 2010/11 and commends officers and all elected members for the position identified on 29 June 2011.

105. Capital Plan Budget Monitoring – 2010/11 Outturn (Subject to Audit)

The Board considered the final Capital Monitoring report for 2010/11 which provided high-level information on capital expenditure and income for the year.

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Members questioned the capital receipt sale target to fund the Capital Budget, completion of the Council's approved disposals, and the Council's rationalisation policy. In response to questions, the Board was advised concerning expenditure on TOR2 and that it was unlikely any dividend would result from TOR2 for the past financial year.

Resolved: That the Capital Plan Outturn report for 2010/11 be noted.

106. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/2012

The Board considered the draft Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2011/12.

Resolved: That subject to amendments proposed by members, the draft work programme set out in Appendix One to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2011/2012 report be approved.