

Tuesday, 30 September 2025

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

A meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Board** will be held on

Wednesday, 8 October 2025

commencing at **5.30 pm**

The meeting will be held in the Banking Hall, Castle Circus entrance on the left corner of the Town Hall, Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Members of the Committee

Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillor Cowell

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar

Councillor Fellows

Councillor Foster

Councillor Johns

Councillor Law

Councillor Spacagna (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Stevens

Councillor Tolchard

A Healthy, Happy and Prosperous Torbay

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Town Hall, Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Email: governance.support@torbay.gov.uk - www.torbay.gov.uk

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence, including notifications of any changes to the membership of the Board.
2. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 September 2025.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
 - a) To receive declarations of non pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda

For reference: Having declared their non pecuniary interest members may remain in the meeting and speak and, vote on the matter in question. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.
 - b) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda

For reference: Where a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest he/she must leave the meeting during consideration of the item. However, the Member may remain in the meeting to make representations, answer questions or give evidence if the public have a right to do so, but having done so the Member must then immediately leave the meeting, may not vote and must not improperly seek to influence the outcome of the matter. A completed disclosure of interests form should be returned to the Clerk before the conclusion of the meeting.

(Please Note: If Members and Officers wish to seek advice on any potential interests they may have, they should contact Governance Support or Legal Services prior to the meeting.)
4. **Urgent Items**
To consider any other items that the Chair decides are urgent.
5. **Call-In of Cabinet's Decision on Community Grant Fund - Funding Awards Tranche 1** (Pages 7 - 32)
To consider a Call-In of the Cabinet's Decision on Community Grant Fund – Funding Awards Tranche 1.
6. **Update on Local Government Association Peer Review** (Pages 33 - 58)
To consider the outcome of the update of the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review and associated action plan and make recommendations to the Cabinet.

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

10 September 2025

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillors Brook, Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Johns, Law, Stevens and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Chris Lewis, David Thomas, Jacqueline Thomas, Tranter and Tyerman)

20. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Cowell. It was also reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Brook in place of Councillor Spacagna.

21. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 August 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. Overview Report for Safer Torbay (Community Safety Partnership)

The Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities, Councillor Tranter introduced the overview report for Safer Torbay (Community Safety Partnership). Sarah Omell, Community Safety Partnership Manager, presented key findings from the strategic assessment and outlined priorities and challenges of Safer Torbay, which included:

- Reduction in reported antisocial behaviour and rape; increase in other sexual offences and shoplifting.
- Need for improved data contextualisation and integration of wider sources of intelligence.
- Focus on Prevent Duty, safeguarding, and community tension monitoring.
- A commendation from Home Office for the Channel programme.
- Emphasis on community engagement and resilience.
- Development of a performance framework and assurance mechanisms.
- Updates on modern slavery, serious violence duty, and violence against women and girls.
- The Strategy for next three years including a new Antisocial behaviour (ASB) priority and broader societal challenges.

Members raised the following Questions:

- Why was the Safer Torbay report not presented to the Adult Social Care and Health Sub-Board?
- The data related to 2023/2024, when will Members receive updated data?
- How do we interpret the rising figures—are they due to increased reporting?
- Is antisocial behaviour as prevalent as it is perceived?
- How can Councillors be informed about rising community tensions?
- Is there a mechanism for community members to report concerns, such as rumours about individuals?
- How is community intelligence gathered and used?
- What is the main source of referrals under Prevent Duty? Are schools actively involved?
- Why are there few referrals from Adult Social Care?
- Who contributed to the Council's modern slavery statement?
- Is there feedback on the Mentors in Violence programme?
- What is SWAN (Safety of Women at Night Charter) and how does it work in practice?
- How can women be made more aware of their own safety?
- Will the Safer Travel App be downloadable via QR code? Is there a communications plan for the App?
- What is the current staffing situation for Town Centre Officers?
- Are Street Marshalls still operating?
- Will the new analyst look at hate crime data?
- Are there plans to expand CCTV coverage, especially around the harbourside?
- Is online extremism monitored?

The following responses were provided:

- The Safer Torbay report is a cross-cutting partnership report, not specific to one service area which was why it goes annually to the main Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board was considering specific topics for example domestic abuse.
- A refreshed dataset will be available by November 2025 and will be circulated to all Members once it is available.
- The rising figures may be due to increased reporting, especially for shoplifting and sexual offences. Reporting mechanisms have changed, and confidence in reporting may vary particularly in respect of sexual offences. ASB data from the Council can show trends, but multiple datasets are needed for full understanding.
- Recorded crime isn't always a reliable indicator. Lived experience and victim feedback are more insightful. Fear of crime also plays a role in perception.
- Councillors should contact the Safer Communities Team for advice if they have any concerns around crime or safety or report it through the portal <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/pais>. Internal communications may be used to alert staff and Councillors when necessary.
- Relevant concerns from the community or Councillors should be directed to Housing or Safer Communities Teams for appropriate handling (e.g. email safercommunities@torbay.gov.uk).

- The Police are good at identifying tensions but need more local intelligence. Council staff and the voluntary sector can help gather and respond to this information.
- Around 50% of Prevent referrals come from schools. Schools are represented on the Devon and Torbay Prevent Board.
- The lack of referrals from Adult Social Care is being reviewed by the Prevent Board.
- The Council's modern slavery statement was a procedural document; future versions will incorporate lived experience.
- Evaluation has been completed on the Mentors in Violence programme and a written response will be provided to Members.
- SWAN is a charter to help businesses and organisation identify ways in which they can help make Torbay safer at night for women. [Torbay's Safety of Women at Night Charter - Torbay Council](#) Initial funding supported training and awareness, but more is needed to expand.
- The upcoming Safer Travel App will include advisory content, guides, and a tracker feature. It is due to be launched at the end of October 2025. Following risk assessments, the App will include a QR code. It will be promoted through the SWAN network and hospitality sector. There is a communications plan working with community and voluntary sector engagement. The Team has editing capability to adapt content in the future.
- 6 FTE Town Centre Officer posts are filled, including 4 experienced officers. Two new officers are starting in September and October.
- Street Marshalls are still operating using funding from the Home Office until the end of the financial year.
- The new analyst will look at hate crime data. It was recognised that there was significant underreporting of hate crime. The Council's Partnership and Inclusion Manager was engaging with minority communities to gather insights.
- There are no plans to expand CCTV coverage, especially around the harbourside, but Members were encouraged to report any concerns to the Safer Torbay Team.
- The Police monitor online extremism. Safer Torbay does not conduct proactive surveillance. Members should report any concerns that they have to <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/pais>.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the 2026 annual Safer Torbay report includes an update on the implementation of the following:
 - Tracking crime, ASB and health data from police and other partners.
 - Gathering feedback from the community and partners through regular consultation and informal engagement including assessing fear of crime.
 - Conducting qualitative assessments of interventions.
 - Maintaining an overarching risk register against delivery of this strategy.
 - Conducting focussed assurance activity based on risk.
 - Carrying out 'deep dives' into emerging issues or areas of concern.
 - Producing quarterly and annual performance reports.

- Carrying out an annual 'health check' on how we are doing as a partnership against our stated principles; and
2. that the Priority and Resources Review Panel be requested to consider recommending funding for a data analyst post to support Safer Torbay with evidence-based evaluation of their work.

Chair

Call-In of Cabinet's Decision on Community Grant Fund – Funding Awards Tranche 1

Reasons for Call-In:

- There was insufficient detail of the successful applications;
- No evidence of a scoring matrix against criteria as identified at 4 of **the Community Grant Fund Policy 2025/26** ([Community Grant Fund Policy 2025/26 - Torbay Council](#));
- Some awards have been made to national or regional charities raising due diligence concerns;
- One award appears to be in breach of 5.1 of the policy;
- No indication as to why unsuccessful applications were rejected;
- Some awards appear to miss the objectives as laid out at 3 of the policy; and
- It is unclear how the applications met condition 7.4.

Process and Options Available for Call-In:

1. The call-in promoter will present their reasons for call-in as set out in the submitted paper.
2. The Cabinet Member(s) will provide a verbal response to the issues raised.
3. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will discuss the issues raised and then has the following options available:
 - A. **Take no further action.** The original decision will take effect from the date of the meeting of the committee.
 - B. **Refer the decision back to the decision maker for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of the committee's concerns.** Within a further ten working days, the decision maker will resolve to either:
 - (i) confirm the decision without modification; or
 - (ii) confirm the decision with modification; or
 - (iii) rescind the decision.

If the decision maker does none of the above within ten working days, the decision shall be deemed to have been rescinded.
 - C. **In exceptional circumstances, refer the matter to the Council for scrutiny, giving reasons for why the matter is being referred to Council.** Upon such request, the proper officer shall arrange a meeting of the Council within 20 working days (excluding the day of receipt or the day of the meeting) or as soon thereafter, as is reasonably practicable, unless:

- (i) a normal Council meeting is scheduled within 30 working days (excluding the day of receipt or the day of the meeting) in which case the matter shall be referred to that meeting; or
- (ii) if a normal Council meeting is not scheduled within 30 working days and the decision-maker confirms to the proper officer that he/she is content for the matter to be referred to the next normal Council meeting.

At the Council meeting, if the Council does not object to the decision, no further action is necessary and the decision will be effective from the date of the Council meeting.

Provided the decision has been made in accordance with the Policy Framework and the Budget, the Council has no power to amend the decision but may refer any decision to which it objects back to the decision maker together with the Council's views on that decision and the Subsequent Action referred to in Option B shall apply.

Proposer: Councillor Cowell

Seconded: Councillor Long

The notice was also signed by Councillors Law, Johns and Fox

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Report to Cabinet

Appendix 2 – Cabinet Record of Decision

Appendix 3 – Community Grant Fund Policy 2025/26

Meeting: Cabinet

Date: 16 September 2025

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Community Grant Fund 2025 – Funding Awards Tranche 1

When does the decision need to be implemented? Immediately following call-in period

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Jackie Thomas, Cabinet Member for Tourism, Culture & Events and Corporate Services, Jackie.thomas@torbay.gov.uk

Director Contact Details: Matthew Fairclough-Kay, Director of Corporate Services, matthew.fairclough-kay@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose and Introduction

- 1.1 Torbay Council introduced a Community Grant Fund for 2025 to further support the voluntary and community sector organisations because we believe that a vibrant Third Sector is vital to our community.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to supporting organisations that deliver projects which have a beneficial impact on the local community and support one or more of the Council's strategic themes from the Torbay Community and Corporate Plan. This grant fund aims to further enable work in Torbay's deprived areas outside of Torquay, which is benefiting from other significant place-based funding.
- 1.3 The Council received 69 applications for funding. All of the applications have been evaluated by the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and their recommendations for the first tranche of awards are enclosed at the Appendix. There will follow a second tranche of awards, to be determined at the Cabinet meeting in November this year, following clarification questions relating to a small number of applicants.
- 1.4 Funding has been allocated above the revenue split expected due to the nature of the applications received and the desired outcomes of the fund.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver the Council's ambition by providing further funding to the voluntary and community sector organisations in support of our long-term objectives for the Bay.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

1. That Cabinet record their thanks to the many organisations and individuals who support the Communities of Torbay and also record their thanks for the significant response that has been received to the Community Grant Fund 2025; and,
2. That the Community Grant Fund 2025 tranche 1 funding awards at Appendix 1 are approved and delegated authority be given to Director of Finance, to enter into funding agreements with the relevant parties in accordance with the Community Grant Fund Policy 2025/26.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Community Grant Fund 2025 tranche 1 funding awards.

Background Documents

NA

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Torbay Council introduced a Community Grant Fund for 2025/26 to further support the voluntary and community sector organisations because we believe that a vibrant Third Sector is vital to our community.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to supporting organisations that deliver projects which have a beneficial impact on the local community and support one or more of the Council's strategic themes from the Torbay Community and Corporate Plan. This grant fund aims to further enable work in Torbay's deprived areas outside of Torquay, which is benefiting from other significant place-based funding.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 This fund was considered in the approval of the budget for 25/26. The option to not spend this allocation has been discounted as it does not meet the aims and objectives.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 This fund is limited to the current budget year; applications will be assessed against the outcomes in our Community and Corporate Plan to ensure that the allocations further the agreed objectives contain therein.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Council will enter into a grant agreement with the relevant organisation to ensure that the grant payments are managed appropriately.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 This fund was included as part of the budget consultation for 25/26. At the Council Meeting of 27 Feb 2025, the Chief Finance Officer 2025/26 Budget Update Report included the following information on this allocation in relation to the receipt of the Recovery Grant:

The receipt of circa £2m 'Recovery Grant' for 2025/26 has been allocated based on a national formula whereby Councils with large pockets of deprivation have received larger sums. Several specific allocations within this budget update paper will help address deprivation issues including funding for:

- Affordable housing;*
 - Child care preventative measures;*
- Page 11

- Youth Justice and Family Assessment Resource Centre;
- Play Parks and
- Sport and Leisure

In addition to this, £200k one-off funding is allocated to enable further targeted support for local communities. This could be in the form of a 'Community Grant Fund' with options for facilitating applications / payments being considered alongside existing grant funding arrangements such as the Household Support and Lottery Funds.

£18k on-going funding is also being added to Community Ward budgets increasing the amount of spend available for each Councillor to £2,500 per annum.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 Not applicable

7. Tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 Grant applications have been assessed using the strategic themes in the Community and Corporate Plan, including those relating to tackling climate change.

8. Associated Risks

- 8.1 Entering into funding agreements with third parties carries inherent risk. Such risk is mitigated through the application process and due diligence. Details on what the Council require from applicants to mitigate financial and delivery risk were provided to Cabinet when launching the fund and are available on the website.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age Page 13	<p>18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old.</p> <p>55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old.</p> <p>27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.</p>	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's older and younger residents.</p> <p>We know that older people face increased fragility as they age and may require additional support to live independently. We also know that young people benefit from having access to good quality education and skills development opportunities and a healthy home environment.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable

		It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.		
Carers	At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these provided 50 hours or more of care.	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's residents who are carers.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents. This includes people with disabilities as we recognise that they face additional barriers when accessing buildings and participating in public life. The Fund may provide opportunities to enhance accessibility.	Not applicable	Not applicable

		<p>To support people with disabilities, reasonable adjustments are available throughout the Community Grant Fund application process to support people with disabilities with applying for the Fund.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>		
<p>Gender reassignment</p> <p>Page 15</p>	<p>In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.</p>	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p>Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.</p>	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable

		It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.		
Pregnancy and maternity	Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely	The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents and promoting equality and community cohesion.	Not applicable	Not applicable

	to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.	It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.		
Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents and promoting equality and community cohesion.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable

Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents. It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Veterans	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously serviced in the UK armed forces.	The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents. It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child		The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes	Not applicable	Not applicable

poverty and deprivation)		<p>supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>		
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)		<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which will contribute to positive public health outcomes.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable
Human Rights impacts		<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's most vulnerable residents. It will operate in accordance with the Human Rights Act despite an eligibility criteria which limits some activity e.g. That of a political nature.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable

		It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.		
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people.	<p>The Community Grant Fund 25/26 will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting Torbay's young residents.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that any adverse impacts will be caused by the implementation of the Fund.</p>	Not applicable	Not applicable

10. Cumulative Council Impact

- 10.1 The Community Grant Fund will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting the broad spectrum of Torbay's residents. It is therefore, anticipated that the cumulative council impact will be positive.

11. Cumulative Community Impact

- 11.1 The Community Grant Fund will help to ensure that the organisation meets its corporate vision and aims which includes supporting the broad spectrum of Torbay's residents. It is therefore, anticipated that the cumulative community impact will be positive.

Appendix 1

Grant Allocations – Tranche 1

Applicant	Brief Description	Award
Children's Week (Torbay)	Mobile PA system	£1,616
Church 180	Flat renovation, cost of materials.	£15,000
Foxhole Community Association	Replacement equipment for young people's free meals	£20,000
Gaia Giving CIC	Gazebo to enable year-round access	£4,122
Great Parks Community Fund	Capital works funding	£35,000
Home Start South & West Devon Ltd	Volunteer recruitment activities	£20,000
Sound Communities	New outreach activity and refurbishment of bus	£20,000
The Music Factory	New equipment and instruments	£4,000
Torbay Citizens Advice Bureau	Capital costs for new pop-up advice surgery - Visibility in deprived wards	£10,400
Torbay Furniture Project CIC	Providing recycled furniture to deprived areas	£10,000

Record of Decisions

Community Grant Fund 2025 – Funding Awards Tranche 1

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 16 September 2025.

Decision

1. that the Cabinet record their thanks to the many organisations and individuals who support the Communities of Torbay and also record their thanks for the significant response that has been received to the Community Grant Fund 2025; and
2. that the Community Grant Fund 2025 tranche 1 funding awards as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report be approved and delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance, to enter into funding agreements with the relevant parties in accordance with the Community Grant Fund Policy 2025/26.

Reason for the Decision

To provide funding to the voluntary and community sector organisations in support of the Council's long-term objectives for the Bay.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 29 September 2025 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

Torbay Council introduced a Community Grant Fund for 2025 to further support the voluntary and community sector organisations. The Council received 69 applications for funding. All of the applications had been evaluated by the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance who made their recommendations for the first tranche of awards. There will follow a second tranche of awards, to be determined at the Cabinet meeting in November 2025, following clarification questions relating to a small number of applicants.

At the meeting Councillor Jackie Thomas proposed and Councillor Tyerman seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

This fund was considered in the approval of the budget for 25/26. The option to not spend this allocation has been discounted as it does not meet the aims and objectives of the Council.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None

Published

19 September 2025

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet

TORBAY COUNCIL

Torbay Community Grant Fund Policy 2025/26

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Torbay Council supports charity, voluntary and community sector organisations because we believe that a vibrant Third Sector is vital to our community. The Council is committed to supporting organisations that deliver projects which have a beneficial impact on the local community and support one or more of the Council's strategic themes from the Torbay Community and Corporate Plan.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies only to the allocation of the Torbay Community Grant Fund 2025/26 to the Third Sector, who may apply for grants of up to £40,000 of the £200,000 fund.
- 2.2 In exceptional circumstances, the panel may consider sums higher than £40,000 and applicants should contact comgrant25@torbay.gov.uk if they believe they have an exceptional case that warrants consideration.
- 2.3 This policy does not apply to any other means of financial support from the Council that may be available under other schemes.

3. Purpose of the Community Grant Fund 2025/26

- 3.1 The Council has introduced this fund to further support the vital work that is undertaken by the communities of Torbay. The fund is primarily designed to provide support for organisations providing projects of a capital nature (Capital expenditure can be defined as expenditure on a physical object, building or asset) but up to 25% of the total grant funding available may be allocated to applications for projects requiring revenue funding. Revenue funding applications will need to demonstrate lasting benefit to residents living in the communities they are designed to support.
- 3.2 Funding will only be provided where it can be demonstrated that a defined impact will be made that supports the ambitions and visions of the Community

and Corporate Plan. Organisations should demonstrate an outcomes focus in applications for funding.

Applicants should demonstrate how the funding will achieve improvements within Bay's most deprived areas that sit outside of Torquay, which is benefiting from other specific place-based funding.

Applications should also highlight where any Council funding will enable further funding and/or support from third parties.

- 3.3 Torbay Council residents will be the main recipients of the funding. The Council will require that all funding awards support the strategic themes of the Community and Corporate Plan, namely:

Community and People:

- ☐ Ensure our town centres are safe and welcoming for all.
- ☐ Keep children safe in their communities and provide safe environments for our young people to thrive in.
- ☐ Ensure early intervention is effective and targeted.
- ☐ Provide the best care and support available so that residents are empowered to achieve what matters most to them.
- ☐ Provide clear signposting for those needing our help.
- ☐ Support and encourage community action.
- ☐ Improve wellbeing and reduce social isolation.

Pride in Place:

- ☐ Draw investment into our towns and breathe life into our town centres, partnering with the private sector to deliver major projects.
- ☐ Maximise heritage and cultural opportunities for the enjoyment and benefit of residents and visitors.
- ☐ Ensure the effective operation of SWISCo to have resources to reinvest in Torbay.
- ☐ Deliver priority capital projects within the Council's Capital Programme.
- ☐ Improve the delivery, affordability and quality of housing (including housing standards) for residents in Torbay.
- ☐ Improve the delivery of our planning service.
- ☐ Protect and enhance our lived, built and natural environments, including our green spaces.

Economic Growth:

- ☐ Encourage aspiration, providing opportunities for everyone to raise their skill level, particularly in high value careers.

- ☐ Drive training opportunities across all sectors to empower people to improve their skills.
- ☐ Improve transport links to and within Torbay.
- ☐ Develop a year-round economy.
- ☐ Increase the amount of full-time employment opportunities within Torbay.
- ☐ Focus on inclusive growth, with opportunities which benefit everyone.

3.4 The Council retains the right to publicise all beneficiaries of the Community Grant Fund 2025/26 and the specific objectives that the funding will be used for.

4. Which organisations are eligible to apply for small grants funding?

4.1 Your organisation must:

- a) provide community activities or services within the Torbay Council area, which support the strategic themes of the Community and Corporate Plan;
- b) demonstrate the services it is providing by giving details of its activities and the number of people it is in contact with;
- c) actively promote equality issues within its structure and operations;
- d) ensure that any previous funding received from Torbay Council has been spent in accordance with the funding award conditions attached to them;
- e) ensure that all funding awards are spent within 12 months of being awarded;
- f) ensure, wherever possible, acknowledgement of the funding award from the Torbay Community Grant Fund in its marking collateral, website and premises;
- g) have a formal constitution or set of rules;
- h) have a bank account requiring at least 2 unrelated signatories;
- i) operate with no undue restrictions on membership; and
- j) have a detailed plan as to how the grant fund will be promoted.

And be either:

- ☐ A constituted group with a volunteer management committee, with a minimum of three unrelated members, that meets on a regular basis (at least 3 times per year).
- ☐ A registered charity, with a board of trustees.

Or:

- ☐ A registered Community Interest Company, and provide copies of your Community Interest Statement, details of the Asset Lock included in your Memorandum and Articles of Association, and a copy of your latest annual community interest report.

4.2 An organisation can only submit one application per year.

5. Which organisations are not eligible to apply for small grants funding?

5.1 We will not permit applications for community grants funding:

- ☐ from groups promoting or lobbying for particular religious or political beliefs or campaigns;
- ☐ from organisations that do not do work within the boundaries of the Torbay Council area;
- ☐ from individuals;
- ☐ from organisations which aim to distribute a profit;
- ☐ from organisations with no established management committee/board of trustees (unless a CIC); or
- ☐ that are incomplete.

5.2 The Council reserves the right to reject any application for any reason.

5.3 The Council reserves the right to cease to license any organisation with a minimum of 7 days notice for any reason. If fraudulent or illegal activity is suspected cessation will be immediate.

6. What will and will not be funded?

6.1 Funding will only be considered for work that will be undertaken in Torbay and will be wholly or significantly for the direct benefit of Torbay residents living outside of Torquay and within areas of deprivation.

6.2 Awards cannot be used for retrospective funding; that is to replace money that has already been spent, or to cover items or services that have already been bought.

6.3 Any funding award must only be spent for the approved purpose i.e. applicants must be able to demonstrate that the funding has been spent on the specific purpose outlined in the funding application form and detailed in the final funding offer letter by providing receipts/evidence.

6.4 Torbay Council does not fund applications for structural purchases.

6.5 Awards cannot be used for funding day-to-day operational costs.

7. Risk considerations in funding awards

7.1 The Council acknowledges that the creativity and innovation of the VCS sector can carry risks for non-delivery, for example where a new idea does not work out as intended.

7.2 The Council uses the general principle of requiring a lower level of risk the higher the amount of funding provided. Maximum levels of funding will only be provided where the risk of non-delivery is very low.

7.3 In order to achieve an appropriate balance between managing risk and supporting innovative ideas or new organisations, any agreed funding may be subject to payment plan linked to agreed milestones.

7.4 Funding awards to VCS groups will be looked on more favourably where applications can demonstrate:

- a) a strong evidence of need;
- b) evidence that the proposed approach is likely to achieve the desired outcomes;
- c) that the application does not contain or produce high revenue costs that cannot be sustained;
- d) that a lasting benefit can be achieved in Torbay's most deprived areas; and
- e) greater impact that may be possible through match funding or enablement of other funding sources.

8. Funding Conditions

8.1 Information of the conditions that will apply to funding awards (as set out in this Policy) will be made available to applicants before they apply.

8.2 All funding offers will be subject to the recipients accepting the funding conditions.

9. Assessment Process

9.1 Applicants must complete a standard application form and provide the supporting documents.

- 9.2 The Council will let you know if you have been successful within 6 weeks of the application deadline – so please take this into consideration when planning your project – payments will be made directly into your BACS account no later than 12 weeks from the date of consideration by the Panel or in accordance with any agreed payment plan.
- 9.3 All funding applications will be assessed by a panel comprising of the Council's Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, their recommendations for funding awards will be presented to Cabinet for their decision.
- 9.4 Appeals against the process used to award funding will be dealt with using Torbay Council's complaints procedure. There is no right of appeal as to the decision outcome itself.

10 Other Relevant Funding

- 10.1 If this grant is not suitable for groups looking for funding, it may be beneficial to review the Torbay Council Community Fund administered via Torbay Communities, which provides smaller organisations grants up to £400.

Whilst this is significantly smaller in terms of value, it does have fewer requirements and may be suitable for smaller groups or individuals with less infrastructure etc.

The criteria for the fund are narrower than those covered in this policy, and are listed here for reference:

- People's health and wellbeing. Helping people get more active or look after themselves better.
- Developing arts, culture and experience of Torbay by providing opportunities to make Torbay a better place to live, work or learn.
- Improving the environment that people live in by caring for, improving and regenerating open spaces, parks, places and buildings.
- Supporting positive ageing and community cohesion through more integrated arrangements with the voluntary and community sector, assets are developed to allow people to feel empowered to stay well in their home and local area.
- Children and young people's experiences in Torbay are improved by becoming or staying healthy, developing skills and experiences, access to clean and secure environments to meet, play and socialise.

The link to the Community Fund is here: [Torbay Communities | Torbay Council Community Fund](#).

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Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 8 October 2025

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor David Thomas, Leader of the Council -
david.thomas@torbay.gov.uk

Director Contact Details: Anne-Marie Bond, Chief Executive - anne-marie.bond@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the feedback from the Local Government Association (LGA) following the Progress Review to consider the progress made against the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge of Torbay Council which was undertaken in April 2024. The Progress Review took place in April 2025. Included within this report is the new action plan to ensure that there remains a focus on continuous improvement.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver our vision of a healthy, happy and prosperous Torbay by ensuring we respond to the LGA's feedback, and the actions proposed enable the Council to continue to improve and strengthen its ability to deliver all of the Community and Corporate Plan themes.
- 2.2 The reasons for the proposal and need for the decision are to make available the LGA's report of the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review and to ensure that an action plan is in place to embrace the recommendations of the LGA.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

1. That the report from the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Review Progress Review and the associated Action Plan be noted.

Appendices

Appendix 1: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review – Feedback Report

Background Documents

None

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) offers all councils a Corporate Peer Challenge once every five years. The Challenge is an effective and well-regarded tool for improvement in local government. At the heart of this is a practitioner perspective who take a 'critical friend' approach to understanding where we are and where we can improve. This isn't an inspection, but it is an in-depth challenge. Importantly it provides an opportunity to reflect on how we are doing and receive the benefit of others experience and perspective.
- 1.2 All Corporate Peer Challenges now include a progress review which takes place approximately ten to twelve months after the original Corporate Peer Challenge. The progress review provides space for a council's senior leadership to report to the peer team on the progress made against the Corporate Peer Challenge recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the action plan.
- 1.3 Torbay Council's Corporate Peer Review took place in April 2024 with our Progress Review taking place in April 2025. The peer team consisted of most of the original peer team, namely:
- Rob Walsh – (Then) Chief Executive, North East Lincolnshire Council
 - Cllr Laura Mayes, (Then) Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, and Deputy Leader of the Council, Wiltshire Council
 - Cllr Gareth Roberts, Leader of the Council, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
 - Kate Martin, Executive Director, City Futures Portfolio, Sheffield City Council
 - Paul Clarke, Principal Advisor, South West Region, LGA
 - Chris Bowron – Peer Challenge Manager, LGA
- 1.4 The team provided a feedback report at the end of their progress review. They recognised that the Council had fully embraced the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge in April 2024 and, in response, had driven forward change and improvement in a range of areas. Whilst the report did not include specific recommendations, elements were highlighted for further consideration by the Council and, to this end, an action plan setting out five overarching actions has been prepared (Appendix 2).
- 1.5 It should be noted that, as part of our continuous improvement journey, work has been undertaken since April 2025 on many of these actions and day-to-day delivery forms part of our "business as usual". This action plan runs until the end of the financial year but it is recognised that many actions may continue past this point. The purpose of the action plan is to ensure that significant progress is made by 31 March 2026, with future activity then forming part of the Council's service plans through which performance management will continue.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 Not to accept the report of the LGA on their Progress Review or the resulting action plan – this is not recommended as implementation of the action plan will enable the Council to continue to improve. Alternative or additional actions could be proposed.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 The action plan will be delivered within existing resources. If additional resources are required the appropriate decision making will be undertaken.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 None

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 All members of the Council were invited to share their views with the Peer Team when they visited Torbay. The Council's Senior Leadership Team and other senior officers also provided views as well as partners.
- 5.2 The Feedback Report will be published on the Council and LGA websites.

6. Procurement Implications

- 6.1 None

7. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 Not applicable

8. Associated Risks

- 8.1 The main risk associated with this report is the failure to respond to the recommendations of the LGA Peer Team. This may result in the Council not responding adequately to the issues and challenges it faces. The resulting action plan helps to ensure that the Council continues to improve.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1 The LGA Corporate Health Check Feedback Report and resulting action plan provides indirect benefits for all its residents through the improvements identified.

10. Cumulative Council Impact

- 10.1 Delivery against the Action Plan will be undertaken alongside other programmes of improvement work. All of these programmes aim to deliver the ambition within the Council's Community and Corporate Plan.

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

- 11.1 None

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Torbay Council

2nd and 3rd April 2025

Feedback

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1. Introduction

The council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in April 2024 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

A Progress Review is an integral part of the corporate peer challenge process and is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's related action plan
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were on-site including any further support needs
- Discuss the early impact and learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank Torbay Council for their commitment to sector led improvement. The Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Torbay Council took place on 2nd and 3rd April 2025. It focused on the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge as follows:

Recommendation 1

- Adopt a council Business Plan agreed on a cross-party basis that outlines a clear set of strategic political priorities

Recommendation 2

- The very small number of elected members from across the council chamber whose behaviours are impacting so negatively must ask themselves what they want their legacy to be and find ways of working effectively in a context of the minority Administration No Overall Control arrangement

Recommendation 3

- Gear up fully to deliver the proposed Combined County Authority arrangements

Recommendation 4

- Dedicate greater time and space for thinking and collaboration across the organisation to inform strategic direction and focus on outcomes and develop a more distributed model of leadership

Recommendation 5

- Ensure the People Strategy is collectively owned and led from the top

Recommendation 6

- Ensure corporate leadership and ownership of the equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda

Recommendation 7

- Reflect on current approaches around process and system to ensure risk is balanced with outcomes and the necessary assurance is received on what matters most

Recommendation 8

- Deliver a 'reset' of Overview and Scrutiny organisationally and politically

Recommendation 9

- Create the space for cross-party consideration of matters relating to Constitutional and elected member governance

Recommendation 10

- Maintain the focus on the nine areas of significant spend and demand pressure

Recommendation 11

- Consider the approach to the council's buildings and accommodation and take stock of the learning, challenges and opportunities around the 'return to the workplace'

Recommendation 12

- Enhance the corporate approach to transformation

Recommendation 13

- Evolve the role and ways of working of corporate services

Recommendation 14

- Undertake the necessary functional realignments in relation to the Torbay Economic Development Company (known as TDA)

Recommendation 15

- Dedicate the necessary resource to develop the housing strategy and ensure the delivery of it is corporately owned

3. Progress Review - Feedback

The following peers were involved in the Progress Review:

- Rob Walsh, Chief Executive, North East Lincolnshire Council
- Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills and Deputy Leader, Wiltshire Council (Conservative)
- Councillor Gareth Roberts, Leader, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (Liberal Democrat) and London Assembly Member
- Kate Martin, Executive Director for City Futures, Sheffield City Council
- Paul Clarke, Principal Adviser, South-West Region, Local Government Association
- Chris Bowron, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

The council has fully embraced the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge in April 2024 and driven forward change and improvement in a range of areas in response.

Organisational and Place Leadership

The council's Business Plan was adopted by Cabinet in June 2024. This represents a positive and constructive development, in a context of the draft of this 'delivery plan' having been caught up in political tensions at the time of the corporate peer challenge. The adoption of the Business Plan had been seen at the time of our original visit as important in establishing a clear set of manageable priorities to enable real focus for the organisation. A revised Corporate Performance Report has been established, aligned with and underpinning the Business Plan, and a new performance management framework is currently being rolled out for the organisation.

Officers that we spoke to at a range of levels reflected the extent of the pressures that are being faced by the council, which largely mirror the situation nationally for local government. These include adapting to national policy changes, legislative change, increasing regulation in a number of areas and devolution. Such types of pressure aren't going to go away or diminish, leaving an organisation that, as with many councils, recognises it is stretched. This means that effort and focus has to be applied much more widely than just on the Business Plan which, whilst acting as a very useful point of reference for the organisation, is not yet being seen to be a key driver of it. We would encourage the council to use the Business Plan to focus its attention as much as possible.

The corporate peer challenge highlighted the positive organisational culture that exists in the council, centred on teamwork, mutual support and trust between colleagues. It is clear from our discussions during the Progress Review that staff hold the council's managerial leadership in high regard and very much value the 'open door' and supportive culture that continues to be engendered.

More 'distributed leadership' is being seen within the council now, although the increase in the sharing of the leadership responsibilities is recognised as a 'work in

progress'. This development is positive in its' own right for all concerned but it is also helping to mitigate the risk that the corporate peer challenge highlighted around so much being vested in the Chief Executive. Directors are felt by staff to be visible, accessible and communicating well.

The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA) came into being in February 2025 and met for the first time the following month. The council's Leader is its' Chair, whilst the council's Chief Executive fulfils that same position with the CCA. Their holding of these key roles is reflective of the regard that the council is held in regionally and across wider local government. Clearly, with the English Devolution White Paper, there is a changing landscape in respect of Combined Authorities. A key question is how the Devon and Torbay CCA progresses in the coming year and beyond and what is required in the way of a 'route map' to navigate what is complex territory.

The housing agenda, and the challenges and opportunities it represents, was highlighted through the corporate peer challenge as one of the key priority areas for Torbay. Progressing the development of a housing strategy was emphasised as being of critical importance to the successful and inclusive regeneration of Torbay, as was driving further progress in the challenges around homelessness. It is therefore positive that the Housing Delivery Plan for Torbay was adopted in June 2024 and a Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Action Plan is also now set for adoption.

Part of our feedback a year ago was that the 'Torbay Story' enjoys the full support of partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Established regeneration partnerships were demonstrating strong support and continued commitment to the next phase for Torbay and the council's then new regeneration partnership with Willmot Dixon and Milligan showed early positive signs. The council has invested time and effort in these strategic relationships over the last 12 months and they have clearly gone from strength to strength.

The corporate peer challenge also highlighted the scale of regeneration in Torbay as being likely to require, and provide the opportunity to establish, additional partnerships and to necessitate regional funding structural support and national agency bespoke capacity. Again, effort has gone into these spheres and the council

sees its relationships with the likes of Homes England, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council having been enhanced significantly as a result.

All of these relationships and the £100m plus of investment that has been secured through the likes of 'Levelling Up', 'Town Deal' and 'Future High Streets' look set to start reaping the appropriate reward in the coming year, delivering a positive difference in the Bay. During the Progress Review we saw what had been delivered on The Strand and the improvements to the public realm around the harbour and we heard of the progress being made with the likes of Union Square, Victoria Square, Crossways and the Debenhams site. Partners highlighted the scepticism that still exists in communities following decades of plans and promises around regeneration that hadn't lived up to expectations. However, they are confident that as 'spades start to be seen in the ground' over the coming months and further tangible difference is made, this scepticism will dissipate and confidence amongst all stakeholders will go from strength to strength. The council is now exploring how additional investment partnering can be achieved in order to help realise the ambitions for the Bay.

Elected members and officers at all levels are very mindful of the significance of local government re-organisation in Devon. Staff appreciate the honest communication to them around this agenda from their leadership and see the council as having adopted a positive and mature approach in this very complex landscape. The plea from staff is for the council to 'keep on keeping on' in seeking to shape the future. Their hope is that reorganisation does not become a distraction, although there is widespread recognition that this will be difficult to avoid.

Governance

A 'Group Leaders Agreement' has been adopted in recent weeks. It was formally signed by the three Group Leaders at Full Council and approved by the wider elected membership in this forum. The Agreement clarifies the respective roles and arrangements of the Administration and the Opposition and is a very constructive and meaningful development. Indeed, it may well act as a helpful template for other councils under No Overall Control to draw upon.

Fundamental in enabling and informing the Agreement was externally facilitated activity across the political leadership of the council exploring the difficulties and tensions that have been demonstrated in councillor relationships over many years. This process is recognised as having been challenging for all involved and great credit goes to everybody for their willingness to participate.

Strong leadership and collaborative working have been shown on a cross-party basis to secure consensus and the Agreement. Key elements have been woven into the Constitution and certain changes have already been implemented following the Agreement, such as the switch to the Opposition chairing the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Audit Committee. The next step should be translating more of the core elements of the Agreement into action. This would usefully include scheduling and commencing the joint meetings of the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet and the meetings between the Leader and Deputy Leader of both the Administration and the Opposition.

The corporate peer challenge outlined a widespread desire both politically and managerially for greater time and space to be dedicated to strategic thinking and for people to have the opportunity to capitalise upon and share knowledge and expertise from across different Portfolios, directorates and services in order to collectively 'problem-solve', inform strategic direction and develop a greater sense of shared endeavour. The council has responded to this by establishing dedicated time for Cabinet to meet informally by themselves and jointly with the senior managerial leadership. The feedback is that this is fostering greater strategic focus and shared understanding. Additionally, 'Think Space' sessions have been established for senior managers and they very much welcome the way in which this has aided strategic discussion and collaboration in the organisation.

The recent changes in leadership positions on Overview and Scrutiny that we referred to earlier are settling and the atmosphere in this sphere feels constructive and positive. Good progress is seen to have been made in the development of the individual and collective work plans for the Committees. Overview and Scrutiny members indicated their desire to develop the Overview element further, including helping to shape key projects and initiatives, inform policy and aid service improvement. They are also keen to have the opportunity to engage constructively

with Portfolio Holders through their attendance at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

The corporate peer challenge highlighted there being many positive aspects to elected member development in the council. This included the induction process, training and development in more technical and quasi-judicial areas such as Licensing and Planning and the council tapping increasingly into provision of elected member training at the national level, in particular through the Local Government Association. We also highlighted the scope to enhance things further, adopting a more personalised and tailored approach to identifying and meeting individual councillor needs. This need to move to a more comprehensive on-going programme, supporting councillors in their development across the wide range of roles that they hold, should be a focus moving forward.

We spoke a year ago of a very small number of councillors impacting negatively on the morale and reputation of the organisation. Unfortunately, elements of this behaviour continue. This has been seen in the stance a very small number of councillors have adopted towards fellow elected members and officers in public forums or through social media. We have heard loudly and clearly, across a wide range and number of people internally and externally, that what is being seen and experienced behaviourally is inappropriate and it risks undermining relationships between councillors and between officers and elected members. Essentially it jeopardises the positive progress made in relationships at the senior political leadership level and by the council more generally. What is occurring is acting as a major distraction, absorbing capacity and damaging morale internally. Partner organisations are cognisant of what is happening and no doubt the general public are also forming a view.

The Group Leaders Agreement outlines core elements already included in, or to be introduced to or amended in, the Constitution. This specifically includes clauses 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 of the Constitution, under 'Political Differences and Personal Criticism', capturing a collective commitment to promoting good conduct and mutual respect between elected members and officers. This includes all elected members adhering to high standards of courtesy, mutual respect and civility in their dealings with one another and with officers and this applying in all council meetings plus any other

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18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ www.local.gov.uk Telephone 020 7664 3000 Email info@local.gov.uk

Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Chair: Councillor Louise Gittins

Chief Executive: Joanna Killian

President: Baroness Grey-Thompson

public meetings and in all dealings with the press and other media including the use of social media. The Group Leaders have a key role to play in ensuring their elected members uphold this.

Managing the Organisation

The council continues to be in a sound financial position. This is due, in no small part, to the hard work on its Financial Sustainability Plans, the strategic approach it demonstrates to its finances and the benefits derived from its investment portfolio. Three of the Financial Sustainability Plans that were in place at the time of the corporate peer challenge have been delivered or mainstreamed, leaving four of the original plans focused on the highest spend areas, including home to school transport and children's social care packages. There are now also new plans, with these relating to the council's proposed locality model for children and young people and Torbay's cultural assets. No savings have been required in the budget for 2025/26 and the council has been able to provide additional investment in certain areas including affordable housing and climate change initiatives.

Financial challenges for the council remain and will continue to emerge. One example is the financial risk posed to the council through the Integrated Care Organisation as a result of the financial challenges in the health sphere. Another is the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) budget plus the implications of the findings of the recent inspection in this area which should be published in the coming weeks and to which the council will need to respond. There are also risks and challenges around the 'Safety Valve' agreement relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant and then there is the question of how the council's financial position would be impacted through any structural changes under local government reorganisation. The council is both recognising and, where appropriate, acting upon such challenges and risks.

The council has established the Capital and Growth Board and the Capital Asset Management Group as part of developing a more strategic approach to, and enhancing governance around, capital funding and resources.

The organisational structure review continues and is a key next step in the incorporation of the Torbay Development Agency into the council. Inevitably, as with any in-sourcing of such a significant previously out-sourced function, challenges exist at both the practical and cultural level.

The corporate peer challenge encouraged the council to consider streamlining some of its processes and its meeting structure in order to increase capacity through making the best use of people's time. The council has reviewed its decision-making framework and increased officer delegation arrangements and this is felt to have delivered positive improvements.

The council's new 'Our People Strategy' has been established. This has helped to develop an increasing focus on equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the organisation. The appointment and work of an officer dedicated to leading the EDI strategic agenda is seen to be being impactful. Also, a number of staff Equality Networks have been established, although these are recognised as being in their infancy still, and the council's inclusion strategy is currently being consulted upon. The need to make EDI much more central is recognised and, as we highlighted through the corporate peer challenge, this area requires clear corporate leadership and ownership.

The introduction of the Staff Awards, which took place in September 2024, is hugely welcomed and saw over 150 nominations. The 'Managers Framework' is a central element of the People Strategy but progress there feels challenging. This comes back to the point about the organisation being stretched, with managers indicating they are struggling to prioritise dedicating the time and effort necessary both to helping design core aspects of the Framework relating to their field and undertaking the training itself. It will be important to the council's continued improvement that people at this level recognise the importance of their role as 'manager' and for the council to support them in being able to prioritise the continued development of their managerial skills.

As is the case with many organisations, there are mixed messages around the 'return to the workplace'. Some people indicated they value the devolving of responsibility to directorates to manage things within the council's overall policy, whilst others are

seeking greater consistency across the organisation. A specific challenge that exists, which we assume can be relatively easily resolved, is in ensuring teams or groups of staff have the space to come together for key scheduled activities, such as team meetings or ‘away days’.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Torbay Council for undertaking the Progress Review. As we outlined earlier, the organisation has clearly embraced the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge in April 2024 and driven forward change and improvement in a range of areas in response.

We appreciate that the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Paul Clarke, Principal Adviser for the South-West region, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Paul is available to discuss any further support the council requires and can be reached via paul.clarke@local.gov.uk

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review (April 2025) Action Plan

Introduction

The LGA's report following their progress review in April 2025 recognised that the Council had fully embraced the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge in April 2024 and, in response, had driven forward change and improvement in a range of areas.

The progress review undertaken in April 2025 provided space for the Council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the progress made by the council against the original recommendations and the council's related action plan
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were on-site including any further support needs
- Discuss the early impact and learning from the progress made to date

Whilst the report from the progress review did not include specific recommendations, elements were highlighted for further consideration by the Council and this action plan sets out five overarching actions for the Council to progress.

It should be noted that, as part of our continuous improvement journey, work has been undertaken since April 2025 on many of these actions and day-to-day delivery forms part of our "business as usual". This action plan runs until the end of the financial year but it is recognised that many actions may continue past this point. The purpose of the action plan is to ensure that significant progress is made by 31 March 2026, with future activity then forming part of the Council's service plans through which performance management will continue.

The aim is to ensure that a consistent and coherent approach is taken so that members and senior officers can focus on the priorities of the Council, as we move toward meeting our vision of a healthy, happy and prosperous Torbay.

Action Plan

Overarching action: As part the move towards our target operating model, enable data-informed decision making.

Responsible officer: Divisional Director – Corporate Services

Detailed actions	Lead Officer	Associated Service Plan	Deadline
1. Agree and implement the Corporate Performance Management Improvement Plan (including tools to be in place to support the actions 2-4, 5 and 21).	Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	Agreement by 31 December 2025 Implementation by 31 March 2026
2. Within meetings of Directorate Management Teams, use the Council Business Plan to focus activity (with Business Plan flowing into Service Plans and 1:1s with Heads of Service).	All Directors	Not applicable	Support tool in place by 31 January 2026 Implementation by 31 March 2026
3. Embed the emerging Local Government Outcomes Framework within our Performance Management Framework to help improve the organisation's focus on outcomes.	Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	31 March 2026
4. Consider how benchmarking can be incorporated into our Financial Sustainability Plans.	Deputy Director of Finance/Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	Finance and Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	31 March 2026

Overarching action: Ensure delivery of Policy Framework and other action plans

Responsible officer: Divisional Director – Corporate Services

Detailed actions	Lead Officer	Associated Service Plan	Deadline
5. Develop a mechanism to enable efficient management of progress against the Policy Framework and other actions plans.	Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	31 January 2026
6. Deliver against the Housing Delivery Plan	Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery	Place Delivery	31 March 2026
7. Deliver against the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Action Plan	Divisional Director – Community and Customer Services	Community and Customer Services	31 March 2026
8. Deliver against the SEND Impact Action Plan	Divisional Director – Education and SEND	Education and SEND	31 March 2026
9. Continue to deliver against the Inclusion Action Plan	Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	31 March 2026
10. Deliver the Financial Sustainability Plans	All Directors	Cross council	31 March 2026

Overarching action: Support the positive progress of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority, including the route map towards a Mayoral Strategic Authority

Responsible officer: Director of Pride in Place

Detailed actions	Lead Officer	Associated Service Plan	Deadline
11. Support the CCA's Director of Operations to be "connected" within Torbay Council and the wider community.	Director of Pride in Place	Not applicable	31 March 2026
12. Ensure that Torbay's priorities and objectives are reflected within the work of the CCA.	Divisional Director – Planning, Housing and Climate Change Divisional Director – Economy, Environment and Infrastructure	Planning, Housing and Climate Change/ Economy, Environment and Infrastructure	31 March 2026
13. Ensure that Torbay's priorities and objectives are reflected in the discussions about creation of a potential Mayoral Strategic Authority.	Director of Pride in Place	Not applicable	31 March 2026

Overarching action: Ensure that the “distributed leadership” model is fully embedded

Responsible officer: Director of Corporate Services

Detailed actions	Lead Officer	Associated Service Plan	Deadline
14. Discussions to be undertaken in each Directorate about the role of Divisional Directors as the senior leaders of the organisation.	All Directors	Not applicable	By 31 October 2025
15. Role and purpose of meetings of the Senior Leadership Team to be agreed.	Director of Corporate Services	Not applicable	By 31 December 2025
16. Using equality, diversity and inclusion as an initial example, work with the Senior Leadership Team so that we can demonstrate The Torbay Way across the organisation.	Director of Corporate Services	Not applicable	By 31 March 2026
17. Review support and development for managers, including the delivery and intensity of the Managers Framework, via Our People Project Board	Chief Executive	Not applicable	By 31 December 2025

Overarching action: Ensure the effectiveness of member development

Responsible officer: Director of Corporate Services

Detailed action	Lead Officer	Associated Service Plan	Deadline
18. Refresh the Member Development Programme with more of a focus on meeting personalised training needs.	Head of Governance Support	Governance Support	31 March 2026
19. Develop project plan for Member Induction Programme for the next Local Government Elections.	Divisional Director – Corporate Services (interim)	Governance Support	31 March 2026
20. Test with Cabinet and Directors whether the revised decision-making framework has created capacity for strategic discussions.	Head of Governance Support	Governance Support	31 December 2025
21. Consider how we can use data from our Performance and Risk Management Frameworks to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.	Head of Governance Support/Head of Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	Governance Support and Policy, Performance and Community Engagement	31 March 2026
22. Keep under review the effectiveness of the meetings of the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet, and Group Leaders.	Chief Executive	Not applicable	31 March 2026
23. Keep under review the effectiveness of the Group Leaders Agreement and the associated elements within the Constitution.	Chief Executive	Not applicable	31 March 2026