

Monday, 27 April 2026

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

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

Wednesday, 6 May 2026

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

Download this agenda via the free modern.gov app on your [iPad](#) or [Android Device](#). For information relating to this meeting or to request a copy in another format or language please contact:

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 - 8)
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 8 April 2026.
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. **Annual Review of the Place Leadership Boards** (Pages 9 - 28)
To consider the submitted report on the annual review of the Place Leadership Boards.
6. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update** (Pages 29 - 46)
To consider the submitted report in respect of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
7. **Terra Firma - English Riviera Geopark Review** (Pages 47 - 60)
To consider the submitted report on the above.

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

8 April 2026

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillors Cowell, Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Johns, Law, Spacagna (Vice-Chair), Stevens and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Billings, George Darling, Mandy Darling, Chris Lewis and David Thomas)

63. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 11 March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

64. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

65. Cockington Court

The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth – Councillor Chris Lewis outlined the submitted report which provided an update on Cockington Court and responded to questions together with the Director of Pride in Place – Alan Denby and Head of Economy - Carl Wyard.

Members raised the following questions:

- Were current uses making the most of the site's potential (e.g. weddings, events)?
- Why was the Business Plan not renewed after 2021?
- How can footfall and income be increased?
- What role should the site play for example heritage asset, events venue, visitor attraction?
- How many events currently take place?
- What opportunities exist to integrate Cockington Court activity with Torre Abbey?
- When will a new Strategic Plan/Business Plan be available?
- How could relationships with village businesses be strengthened?
- What were the long-term options for the café?

The following responses were received:

- The previous Business Plan expired due to significant organisational and operational changes.
- A full review is now underway covering all Council heritage assets.
- Weddings alone were unlikely to make the site financially sustainable so other options were being explored.
- Events were currently limited with Apple Day remaining the largest event.
- Greater collaboration with businesses and the village is planned.
- A new Strategic Plan and Business Plan will address:
 - Footfall;
 - Events;
 - Financial sustainability; and
 - Integration with other assets.

The Board acknowledged the work underway to help promote Cockington as a destination, working with local residents and businesses to ensure that opportunities were explored and realised as well as linking with other tourism and heritage venues to improve the offer available and encourage more footfall and spend.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the draft Strategic and Business Plans for Cockington and Torre Abbey be submitted to the Board on 12 August 2026 to enable Members to have assurance that the Council is working with the traders and community to make the most of Cockington and Torre Abbey.

66. Review of Memorial Bench Policy

The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking – Councillor Billings outlined the submitted report which provided an update on a review of the Memorial Bench Policy and fees following the submission of a Notice of Motion and responded to questions together with the Director of Pride in Place – Alan Denby.

Members raised the following questions:

- How were pricing levels calculated and benchmarked?
- Why was a high initial pricing structure introduced and then revised?
- What maintenance costs were included under each time period?
- How many benches have required full replacement or partial repair? (A written response would be provided for this and condition and maintenance of existing benches.)
- How much did the different benches cost for Zone 1 and Zone 2? (A written response would be provided.)
- What would happen in seafront areas if people do not sponsor memorial benches (it was noted that the new sea walls in Preston and Paignton included a large amount of seating in the designs, but a written response would be provided on how additional seating requirements would be addressed.)
- What happens to older or historic benches?
- Who pays if a bench is vandalised or deteriorates after the initial term?

- How will sponsor contact data be collected and kept up to date?
- How does the Policy differ between conservation and non-conservation areas?
- Why offer a 25-year term if benches are unlikely to last that long?
- How does reuse of benches work in practice?

The following responses were received:

- Pricing reflects location, footfall and conservation area requirements.
- Two pricing bands were used due to varying delivery and maintenance costs for the benches used.
- Five-year sponsorship includes full maintenance and repair or replacement if the bench gets damaged.
- Renewal options include £35 administration fee every five years and an optional guaranteed maintenance at 25% of a new bench cost after the first five years, if the maintenance fee was not paid the sponsor would be responsible for any associated costs (this would be made clearer in the revised Policy).
- Torbay Council currently absorbs the risk of vandalism, damage and decay costs (unlike most authorities).
- Most existing benches are older than 20 years and were likely to require replacement.
- Historical data gaps were acknowledged and will be addressed with new processes in place.
- The cost of the 25 year offer takes into account the likely need to replace benches multiple times over that period but gives certainty of the bench over a longer period.
- Reuse and shared bench options will be clarified in the revised Policy.

Resolved:

That the proposed revised Memorial Bench Policy be presented to a further meeting of the Board, together with detailed benchmarking information, a table showing clear costs and rules around what is covered under each of the time periods proposed, the age and condition of the current benches and assurance that up to date data will be collected and maintained moving forward.

67. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/2026

The Board received the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2025/2026 which celebrated the work undertaken over the past year and would be presented to the Adjourned Annual Council meeting on 14 May 2026.

Members thanked the Democratic Service Team Leader for all her work in supporting Overview and Scrutiny over the past 12 months and drafting the Annual Report on their behalf.

Resolved (unanimously):

That, subject to updating the topic list to reflect the April meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board being cancelled, the Overview

and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2025/2026 be approved and submitted to the Adjourned Annual Council meeting on 14 May 2026.

68. Initial Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2026/2027

The Board received the Initial Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board and the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board for 2026/2027. The Democratic Services Team Leader highlighted some updates to the submitted documents which are detailed in the decision below.

Resolved (unanimously):

That, subject to the below additions, the initial Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for 2026/2027 be approved as set out in the submitted report, and kept under regular review by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the two Sub-Boards and the Democratic Services Team Leader with consultation being carried out with other Scrutiny Members via the monthly informal Overview and Scrutiny Briefings:

1. the following changes to the main Overview and Scrutiny Board:
 - add Review of Policy for Council Tax Premium for Long Term Empty and Second Homes to 3 June 2026;
 - add Local Government Reorganisation Update to 8 July 2026;
 - add Regulation 19 Local Plan Preferred Option to 8 July 2026 (prior to Cabinet on 14 July 2026);
 - add update on Review of Play Parks and areas for bids for the Government's new Playgrounds Fund (date to be confirmed);
 - to confirm the date for review of the Playing Pitch Strategy and Sports Strategy;
2. the following changes to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board:
 - remove the item on Family Hub Sustainability as this has been incorporated into the Best Start in Life;
 - add review end to end fostering including the Mockingbird Pilot and Regional Fostering Hubs (date to be confirmed);
 - add Best Start in Life Plan (six monthly) from November 2026;
 - the Regional Adoption Agency Joint Scrutiny Group Annual Report being moved to November 2026; and
3. the following changes to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board:
 - add Tobacco and Vapes Framework 2026-2031 and Specialist Stop Smoking Service Procurement to 21 May 2026;
 - move Adult Social Care Transformation Programme and new ways of working for 2026/2027 following CQC to 18 June 2026;

- move Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme 2026/2027 to 21 May 2026; and
- add Review of Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) Alliance to 16 July 2026.

Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 6 May 2026

Wards affected: Torbay-wide (Torbay Place Leadership Board) including the Pride in Place areas in Torquay and Paignton

Report Title: Annual Review of the Place Leadership Boards – Torbay, Torquay and Paignton

When does the decision need to be implemented? Not applicable (reporting and assurance item). Any recommendations arising will be progressed through the agreed governance and reporting cycles.

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Cllr Dave Thomas, Leader of the Council.
David.Thomas@torbay.gov.uk

Director Contact Details: Alan Denby, Director Pride in Place Alan.Denby@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

1.1.1 This report provides the annual review of the Torbay Place Leadership Board, the Torquay Place Leadership Board and the emerging Paignton Place Leadership Board. It explains what each Board is for, what it has been doing over the last year, and the key issues and next steps for the year ahead.

2. Reason for Proposal and benefits

2.1 Place Leadership Boards are partnerships that bring together political, business, community and public sector leaders to agree shared priorities and keep work moving. In Torbay, the Torbay board provides the overall, Bay-wide strategic forum. The town boards provide a clear, place-based way to lead and deliver Pride in Place funding. The boards do not replace the Council's decision-making or existing partnerships. Instead, they bring the right people together in one forum to agree priorities for place, track progress, and turn ideas into deliverable projects by working through practical issues such as funding rules, costs, planning and buying goods and services (procurement). Torbay Council supports the boards as an enabler and, as the Accountable Body (the organisation legally responsible for receiving the grant, paying it out, and making sure it is spent properly), has formal responsibilities for managing the funding.

2.2 The boards have different roles, depending on what they cover and where they are in the programme. For the past decade the Torbay Place Leadership Board has provided overall place leadership across the Bay. It helps align priorities across Torquay, Paignton and

Brixham, and links the work of the town/place boards to wider Council and partner plans. It is also the route for identifying and resolving cross-cutting issues (for example, shared risks and things that could delay delivery). In addition, the Board supports Torbay's profile and relationships outside the Bay, including national engagement (for example, the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiif)) and inward investment and regeneration activity. It does this by helping present a clear Torbay offer and supporting a forward list of investable opportunities.

- 2.3 The Torquay Place Leadership Board covers the whole town and leads Pride in Place Phase 1 funding and delivery. Over the past year it has moved from set-up into building and prioritising a deliverable pipeline of projects for Torquay, supported by clear evidence and open decision-making. Torquay has been allocated £19,537,000 over the programme period, split 75% capital / 25% revenue, with funding unevenly spread across the 10 years. The Board has an independent Chair and a broad mix of members. It is politically restricted. Early work has focused on developing proposals (including feasibility work, such as early checks on whether an idea is possible and affordable) while preparing larger capital projects for later-year funding. The Board's work is supported by proportionate delivery assurance (checks that match the size and risk of each project). This helps make sure proposals are viable, deliverable and compliant before funding decisions are taken.
- 2.4 The Paignton Place Leadership Board is being set up following Pride in Place Phase 2 funding. The programme focuses on the Blagdon and Blatchcombe areas of Paignton, covering around 7,000 people. Open recruitment is underway for Board members, alongside the appointment of an independent Chair who will help confirm the final membership. The new Board will then hold its first meeting and carry out a structured listening exercise with people who live and work in the area. It will develop a 10-year vision and a 4-year regeneration plan, setting out priorities and a deliverable project pipeline. Paignton will receive up to £20 million over the next decade, with an initial £150,000 already released to start early activity (including listening and engagement). The Board will produce a business plan for the first £4 million funding period.
- 2.5 Over the past year, Government guidance has continued to change, including updated language for neighbourhood/town boards and clearer expectations on membership, openness and decision-making. This has applied differently to the Torbay Place Leadership Board (the established Torbay-wide strategic board) and the town boards for Torquay and Paignton, which lead local Pride in Place work. Torbay Council and partners have therefore focused on keeping governance clear and compliant, while maintaining momentum and community confidence.
- 2.6 All the boards are bringing together the best of community and stakeholder working to deliver Pride in Place.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That Overview and Scrutiny note the progress made by the Torbay Place Leadership Board, Torquay Place Leadership Board and the emerging Paignton Place Leadership Board, including the steps taken to strengthen governance, transparency and delivery assurance.

- 3.2 That Overview and Scrutiny note the key issues and risks set out in the Supporting Information (including capacity, assurance workload and managing community expectations) and endorses the continued use of a proportionate Delivery Assurance approach to support Board decision-making.
- 3.3 That a new people-focused phase of work around the Torbay Story (“Our Story”) is endorsed to increase understanding and use across the Bay.
- 3.4 Given the independence of the boards, and the critical (and sometimes legal) role that Torbay Council plays in supporting them, Overview and Scrutiny request an interim update if there are material changes to Government guidance, the funding profile (how much funding is available in each year), or Board arrangements. Otherwise, Overview and Scrutiny will receive the next annual review report in line with the established cycle.

4. Appendices

- 4.1 None

5. Background Documents

Torbay Council Pride in Place Programme Memorandum of Understanding.

Business case template for applications for funding for the Torquay Place Leadership Board

Torquay Place Leadership Board 10-year vision and 4-year regeneration plan

Factsheet for Blatchcombe and Blagdon

Supporting Information

6. Introduction

- 6.1 The Place Leadership Boards are groups of local partners who work together to improve places and oversee Pride in Place funding. The Torbay Place Leadership Board is the Torbay-wide strategic board. It brings people together and champions the Torbay Story, the shared narrative about Torbay, so we have a clear and consistent message about what Torbay is and what we want to achieve. This Torbay-wide board came first and helped lead the initial work. The Pride in Place town boards for Torquay (Phase 1) and Paignton (Phase 2) were set up after the funding awards to lead local planning and delivery. Together, the boards bring residents, community organisations, businesses, public sector partners and elected members together to agree priorities, make decisions in an open way, and build a practical pipeline of projects that improve life for people in Torbay.
- 6.2 The Torbay Place Leadership Board provides overall place leadership across the Bay. It brings together people with a strong connection to Torbay and works with Torbay Council and partners to provide leadership, influence and practical action for Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. The Board champions the “Torbay Story” (Torbay’s shared place narrative) and helps build a wider network of residents and partners who want to support Torbay.
- 6.3 The Board has an independent Chair and is designed to be partner-led, with more non-elected members than elected members. It meets in public, with clear standards of behaviour, declarations of interest and published information. The Torbay Place Leadership Board also provides the main partnership forum that links to the Torquay Place Leadership Board (Pride in Place Phase 1) and will work alongside the Paignton Place Leadership Board as it becomes established. Over the last year it has helped strengthen partnership working across Torbay and has given Government and investors a clearer, more consistent Torbay message through the Torbay Story. This has supported Torbay’s national profile and kept momentum around regeneration and investment.
- 6.4 Over the last year the Torbay Place Leadership Board has strengthened, with better partner engagement and growing confidence from external agencies in its role. The Board has moved from meeting in private to meeting in public, and papers are now public and published 10 days in advance. It has also adopted updated terms of reference, shaped through workshops on the Board’s purpose and role for the next phase of work. The Torbay Story has helped Torbay present itself more consistently at a national level, particularly for inward investment. However, local take-up of the story is still low, especially in areas of deprivation where the Torquay and Paignton boards are working. A renewed phase is needed, with a stronger focus on residents and everyday life in Torbay, not just regeneration. The premise is that Our Story is based in truth on the lives of the people and their stories that make up our community. It isn’t marketing – but could be used as a marketing tool as to the ‘why’ of Torbay – Our People and Our Stories.
- 6.5 The Torquay Place Leadership Board is the town-wide Board for Torquay and the neighbourhood board for Pride in Place Phase 1. It gives residents, community groups,

businesses and partners a way to shape priorities and agree which projects should be taken forward, in line with the funding rules. Over the last year it has moved from set-up into delivery, including appointing an independent Chair, confirming a locally based membership, adopting terms of reference and working to the Nolan Principles. A key early focus was listening to the community to help shape a 10-year vision for Torquay and a 4-year delivery plan. Torbay Communities ran an engagement programme for the Board, reaching 1,204 people and organisations. This included an open call for ideas, local conversations through neighbourhood networks, a review of previous consultation, and specific work with young people and groups who are less likely to take part.

- 6.6 The engagement and follow-up workshops helped the Board agree priority themes for the first four years and develop the Torquay regeneration vision, which has now been approved. The Board has an independent Chair and has agreed its membership and ways of working so it can make decisions in public. In 2026/27, £232,000 revenue and £360,000 capital funding has been made available to support delivery. The Board has also agreed to continue using around £40,000 a year in a contract with Torbay Communities to support engagement, communications and helping groups develop proposals.
- 6.7 To support the boards, a Delivery Assurance Framework is in place (a clear set of checks and templates used to review proposals before funding decisions are made). It helps the Place Leadership Boards to make well-informed decisions, while also helping Torbay Council meet its legal, financial and governance responsibilities as the Accountable Body. The framework is designed to improve openness, manage risk and provide consistent advice, while keeping decisions with Board members (not officers). More detail on the Accountable Body role, the checks used, and the decision timetable is set out later in this section.
- 6.8 In practice, the framework brings together officers with relevant expertise (for example, finance, project delivery, governance, procurement, equality and sustainability) to review proposals before they go to the Boards. Officers check each proposal against agreed criteria, including whether it is realistic, affordable, and can be delivered on time, and whether it relies on anything else happening first (for example, planning permission, land agreements or match funding). They then give clear feedback to applicants to help improve proposals where needed. This can include narrowing the scope, delivering in phases, or coming back with firmer costs and clearer governance. This support has helped turn good ideas into stronger, decision-ready proposals. It has also helped the Boards see which projects are ready to start, which need early feasibility work first, and which should stay in the pipeline for later. This reduces the risk of committing money too early and supports staged investment where that gives better value for money and lower delivery risk.
- 6.9 Officers also use the framework to track progress and spending. This helps manage risks, forecast spend, and adjust plans if needed so the programme stays in line with agreed priorities and the funding rules. It also keeps a clear audit trail (a record that shows what was decided, why, and how money was spent) for scrutiny and public reporting. As larger capital projects come forward, more detailed cost checks are likely to be needed. Torbay Council's Accountable Body responsibilities (and how this is managed through the MoU and assurance process) are explained later in this section.

- 6.10 At the first meeting where the Board could approve spending (20 April 2026), it considered applications against a total available budget of £360,000 capital and £232,000 revenue. The Board agreed to allocate £215,927 of capital funding to six priority projects from a shortlist of 16, with a further two projects held back for more development work. The approved spend includes £141,587 for urgent roof repairs and associated works at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, £60,000 to enable the safe and controlled partial reopening of the Ellacombe Community Multi-Use Facility, £10,740 to support shopfront improvements and a short-term community hub on Higher Union Street, and £3,600 of targeted capital support for works at St Mags Church.
- 6.11 In addition, the Board approved £98,500 of revenue funding. This includes £42,500 of revenue-critical support (funding needed to keep an existing service running) to sustain vital community activity. This is £34,000 to prevent the closure of the Living Room at St Mags Church and allow it to continue operating twice weekly for the coming year, and £8,500 to support the running costs of a six-month community hub on Higher Union Street. The Board noted that the St Mags revenue funding is conditional and reflects the immediate pressures faced. Torbay Communities and Torbay Council have been asked to support the organisation, where possible, to help identify longer-term funding solutions.
- 6.12 The remaining £56,000 of revenue funding was allocated to development and feasibility work to support future investment decisions. This includes £35,000 for architectural design, surveys and cost validation work linked to proposals for a new Community, Health, Wellbeing and Sports Hub at Barton Recreation Ground, and £21,000 for a feasibility study into renovation options and community capacity improvements at the Windmill Centre and Windmill Hill.
- 6.13 After these decisions, £144,073 of capital funding and £133,500 of revenue funding remain unallocated. This leaves room for further proposals and helps the Board respond to new priorities at meetings over the rest of the year. It also supports a balanced approach between quick progress, protecting essential community provision, and preparing projects for longer-term investment. At its next meeting in June, the Board expects to review 10–12 proposals. Having funded some quick wins, it will also review its vision against the wider set of ideas received, and consider whether anything else is needed to deliver against the original priorities the residents of Torquay asked for help with.
- 6.14 The Paignton Place Leadership Board is being set up for Pride in Place Phase 2 and will focus on the Blagdon and Blatchcombe area. Compared with Torquay Phase 1, it is: (a) smaller and more tightly defined (one local area, not a whole town); (b) earlier in the programme (set-up and listening first, then a plan and project pipeline), while Torquay is already making funding decisions and moving into delivery; (c) operating to tighter programme rules, including that only one MP can be on the Board and at least 51% of members must live or work in the area; (d) giving the MP a stronger role in helping select the independent Chair (or co-Chairs); and (e) working to a different funding split (63% capital / 37% revenue) and timetable for releasing funds. Phase 2 also has early deadlines, including confirming final membership and any boundary changes to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 17 July 2026 and submitting

the Pride in Place Plan by 28 November 2026. By year 3, Phase 2 expects the Board to move towards a more community-led delivery model (for example, through a local community organisation acting as an anchor organisation, or by the Board setting up a new community body such as a co-operative or community interest company (CIC)).

- 6.15 The Torbay Story is Torbay's shared story about place, and it has been guided by the Torbay Place Leadership Board. So far it has mainly been used to support inward investment and has helped Torbay speak with one confident voice. The next phase will put people in communities first and help the people who live and work here to feel ownership of the Torbay Story, with the aim of building pride in place. The website would be refreshed so it reflects the best of the Bay in a way that feels real and familiar to residents, while also being useful to employers and investors. Content will reflect the distinct identities of Brixham, Paignton and Torquay. The focus would be on more people-led stories, including lived experience and "best kept secrets" from across our communities. The team is building a rolling list of stories with partners.
- 6.16 The Champions Network is also being refreshed so it is easier for people to get involved, through local meetings and pop-up events. It will grow by meeting people in their own areas and by offering simple ways to take part. This approach aims to build trust and strengthen engagement by making the Torbay Story clearer and more relatable. It will give Champions a simple, shared story so messages are consistent across different channels. Most importantly, it will support Pride in Place delivery by using real stories to explain why projects matter and by building local support that strengthens future funding cases for Torquay (Phase 1) and Paignton (Phase 2). It will also offer practical ways for people to help shape community life.
- 6.17 Further detail on Accountable Body and assurance arrangements (Torquay Phase 1). Torbay Council is the Accountable Body. This means it receives the grant, pays delivery organisations, and must make sure spending follows the grant conditions set by MHCLG. In practice, this includes keeping a record of decisions and spending, using the right funding agreements or contracts, and carrying out checks so projects are legal, affordable and deliverable before money is released. Board members decide which projects are funded, but the Council's Chief Finance Officer must be satisfied that the overall approach meets the rules. To support this, the Council uses a Delivery Assurance Framework Committee and a standard business case process (including officer review workshops and a simple viability scoring) so the Board can see deliverability and risk before it votes. The process works to a quarterly decision cycle (April, June, September and December) and uses clear templates and funding routes, with smaller awards managed through invoices and larger awards requiring formal agreements. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MHCLG sets out the relationship between Government, the Torquay Place Leadership Board and Torbay Council, including roles, conditions, reporting expectations, and what must be in place before delivery payments start.
- 6.18 Torbay Council has a contract in place with Torbay Communities to provide practical support to community groups as they develop Pride in Place business cases for consideration by the Torquay Place Leadership Board. This support, which is new in place

from the start of April 2026, is designed to make it easier for groups to take part, improve the quality of submissions, and help ideas become deliverable projects. It includes hands-on help from community builders, support to plan and run engagement activity, and structured support to improve bids between submission windows. The contract mobilised from 7 April 2026 and includes regular performance reporting and clear expectations on reach and inclusion, timely feedback to applicants, and maintaining a pipeline tracker that feeds into Board papers and decision meetings.

- 6.19 Over the last year it has become clear that effective place leadership needs dedicated support, and that this support has real cost and capacity implications. In Torquay, the volume and complexity of community proposals has required sustained officer input to help groups get to a decision-ready standard and to protect the Council's Accountable Body responsibilities. For example, an initial pipeline of around 30 community business cases has been worked through, with structured feedback provided and follow-up submissions required. This has included at least two full-day cross-council officer workshops to review and agree recommendations ahead of Board decision meetings, alongside coordination, report writing and applicant feedback. For the April decision meeting, 16 bids were active, which illustrates the continuing demand on support capacity. The board has responded by putting in place a contracted community support offer through Torbay Communities (mobilised from 7 April 2026) so that community groups have hands-on help to develop proposals, run engagement and improve bids between submission windows. The work of the accountable body however is being progressed as part of business as usual.
- 6.20 Place leadership is particularly important in the context of local government reorganisation (LGR). Whatever the final model for Devon, residents and partners need confidence that there is a stable, trusted forum that can keep focus on local priorities and maintain momentum on delivery. The Torbay Place Leadership Board has already played this role during the LGR process by providing a consistent "one voice" space for partners to understand the options, test impacts and support constructive engagement. For example, LGR has been a standing agenda item at the Torbay Place Leadership Board. Place Leadership Boards help protect local identity and focus during periods of change, because they are rooted in place rather than organisational structures. They also provide practical continuity for Pride in Place delivery, inward investment and community confidence if governance arrangements change, helping ensure that existing commitments, partnerships and what matters locally' are not lost in transition. They will have an increased role in place making if the scope of Torbay changes.

7. Options under consideration

- 7.1. N/A

8. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 8.1 Pride in Place funding is time limited and comes with conditions and fixed funding profiles (how much funding is available in each year). In Torquay (Phase 1), the allocation is £19,537,000 over 10 years, split 75% capital / 25% revenue, with larger capital spend expected later in the programme. In Paignton (Phase 2), up to £20 million is expected over

the next decade, split 63% capital / 37% revenue, and delivered across three funding periods (Period 1: 2026/27 to 2029/30; Period 2: 2030/31 to 2032/33; Period 3: 2033/34 to 2035/36). An initial £150,000 capacity payment (set-up funding) has been released to support mobilisation (getting the programme ready to run) and early engagement. For Phase 2, the 2026/27 revenue allocation is released in two parts, with the second part only released once MHCLG approves the Pride in Place Plan.

- 8.2 The split between capital and revenue funding, and the way funding is phased over time, affects what can be delivered in any given year. Early years are likely to focus more on engagement, feasibility, project development and smaller-scale activity, while larger capital projects come forward as later-year funding becomes available. This means the Boards need to balance visible early progress with realistic delivery planning and ensure that any commitments made are affordable within the profiled budgets.
- 8.3 As Accountable Body for Torquay Phase 1, Torbay Council is responsible for receiving the grant, administering payments, and ensuring that projects and spending comply with the funding conditions. This includes maintaining an audit trail, putting appropriate agreements in place, and carrying out due diligence before funding is released. The Council is also exposed to financial and reputational risk if projects overspend or do not deliver the agreed outputs, so the approach to approvals and grant agreements needs to remain proportionate but robust.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. N/A

10. Engagement and Consultation

- 10.1 Engagement and consultation has been built into the Place Leadership Board approach and has included both formal public meetings and structured community outreach. For Torquay (Pride in Place Phase 1), Torbay Communities led a programme of engagement to shape the 10-year vision and 4-year delivery plan, reaching 1,204 people and organisations. This included an open call for ideas, neighbourhood conversations through local networks, a review of previous consultation, and targeted work with young people and groups who are less likely to take part.
- 10.2 This has been followed by practical, ongoing engagement to help groups develop proposals (including workshops and feedback between submission windows) so that bids are stronger, more inclusive and more deliverable. For Paignton (Phase 2), engagement will be a priority through summer 2026 as the Board is mobilised: recruiting members, appointing an independent Chair, holding initial meetings and running a structured listening exercise with people who live and work in Blagdon and Blatchcombe, to inform a 10-year vision, a 4-year plan and the first business plan.
- 10.3 Alongside this, there is the opportunity to take forward Bay-wide engagement through the Torbay Story (refreshing content so it is more people-led, reflects local lived experience and supports pride in place) and through a refreshed Champions Network, using local meetings

and pop-up activity to make it easier for people to get involved and to share clear, consistent messages about priorities and progress.

11. Procurement Implications

- 11.1. Procurement needs will increase as the programme moves from planning into delivery, especially for larger capital projects. Torbay Council must make sure that any goods, works or services funded through Pride in Place follow the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the relevant procurement law. It also needs to be clear whether something is being funded as a grant (with delivery by a partner) or procured by the Council (buying a service), so the right route is used. Where possible, delivery should use existing frameworks, dynamic purchasing systems or approved supplier arrangements to save time and improve compliance. Project plans also need to allow time for procurement steps such as design, writing specifications, testing the market, tendering, evaluation and mobilisation, as well as any planning permissions or consents. Good contract management and record keeping are essential to keep a clear audit trail and protect the Council's role as Accountable Body. This includes showing how value for money was achieved, how conflicts of interest are managed, and how changes and cost increases are controlled. For projects delivered by external partners, funding agreements should set clear requirements on procurement approach, reporting and evidence of spend. Social value, equality and sustainability should also be built in early and reflected in specifications and evaluation.

12. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

- 12.1 Pride in Place investment provides an opportunity to support Torbay's climate and nature ambitions alongside regeneration. Sustainability considerations are built into the way projects are developed and assessed, including through community engagement, business case templates and the Delivery Assurance Framework (for example, considering carbon impact, energy use, climate resilience, biodiversity and sustainable travel). As the programme moves into delivery, projects will be expected to demonstrate how they minimise environmental impact.

13. Associated Risks

- 13.1 There are several key risks and issues. The programme needs enough officer and partner capacity (including the Torbay Communities support contract) to help groups develop funding-ready proposals, run meaningful engagement and complete the assurance checks as demand grows. The Boards also need to manage delivery pace and expectations, because budgets are fixed and phased over time (meaning different amounts are available in different years), and the capital/revenue split affects what can be delivered each year.
- 13.2 The Council must ensure grant compliance (making sure spending follows the grant rules and can be evidenced). Spending must be lawful, properly agreed and supported by a clear audit trail. As Accountable Body, the Council is exposed if projects overspend, do not deliver what was agreed, or break the MoU and grant conditions. This can include having to cover overspends or repay funding.

- 13.3 It is important to keep a clear separation between officer advice (including assurance checks) and the independent funding decisions made by the Boards. This helps avoid any perception that the Council is checking and approving its own work. Projects also have practical dependencies and lead-in times (such as planning, procurement, building control, land ownership and consents). These need to be identified early so projects can meet decision cycles and delivery timetables.
- 13.4 Finally, reputation and fairness risks need to be managed through transparent reporting, consistent declarations and records of interests, and a clear and fair route for proposals that are not supported. Paignton Phase 2 adds a specific mobilisation risk, because it must meet tight set-up, membership/boundary and engagement milestones and delays could affect funding release and the ability to build a credible early pipeline.

14. 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 20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18% of Torbay residents are aged under 18 years old. • 55% of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. • 27% of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older. | <p>There is no direct service change proposed in this report, but there is potential differential impact if engagement or funded projects do not reflect the needs of different age groups. Children and young people may be less likely to take part in standard consultation, and older residents may face barriers linked to mobility, transport or digital access.</p> | <p>Use a mix of engagement methods (in-person and online) and targeted outreach. Continue to include young people and seldom-heard groups in engagement (as in Torquay Phase 1), and consider accessible venues/times and community-based approaches for older residents. Check age-related accessibility needs when developing and assessing business cases (e.g., access, safety, inclusive design).</p> | <p>Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing through engagement, business case development and funding decisions (2026 onwards).</p> |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Carers</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these carers provided 50 hours or more of care. | <p>Carers may have less time and flexibility to take part in meetings and consultation, and may experience additional barriers linked to transport, cost and caring responsibilities. There is a risk that engagement is skewed towards those with more free time and capacity.</p> | <p>Offer different ways to engage (short surveys, pop-ups, online options and smaller local sessions). Consider meeting times and locations that work for carers and promote opportunities through carers' networks. Encourage funded projects to consider carers' needs (e.g., accessible community provision, timing, facilities).</p> | <p>Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards).</p> |
| <p>Care experienced</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of January 2026, there were 277 former care experienced young people aged 18-24 in Torbay. | <p>Care experienced young people may be less likely to engage through traditional forums and may have specific needs linked to housing, education, employment and wellbeing. There is a risk that plans and projects do not fully reflect their priorities unless engagement is designed to reach them.</p> | <p>Use targeted engagement with youth services and partners that work with care experienced young people, and offer safe, supportive ways to contribute. Build equality prompts into business case development so projects consider access to opportunity and inclusion. Monitor who is taking part and adjust engagement if gaps are identified.</p> | <p>Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards).</p> |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 2021 Census, 23.9% 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. | <p>People with disabilities (including physical, sensory and mental health conditions) may face barriers to taking part in engagement and decision-making, particularly if information is not accessible or venues are not inclusive. There is also a risk that funded projects unintentionally create or worsen accessibility barriers if inclusive design is not considered early.</p> | <p>Ensure engagement and meetings are accessible (venues, step-free access, hearing loops where available, and alternative formats on request). Provide information in plain English and accessible formats. Use the business case and assurance process to test accessibility and inclusion (including compliance with the Equality Act and inclusive design standards) before funding is released.</p> | <p>Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards).</p> |
| Gender reassignment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | <p>There is potential for differential impact if engagement spaces are not experienced as welcoming and safe for trans people, or if communications and behaviour do not meet expected standards. This could reduce participation and confidence in the process.</p> | <p>Apply clear standards of behaviour, respectful language and inclusive engagement practices. Provide routes for confidential feedback and concerns. Ensure funded projects and engagement activity consider safety and inclusion for all users of spaces and services.</p> | <p>Pride in Place team / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards).</p> |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Marriage and civil partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | This report is not expected to create differential impacts related to marriage or civil partnership. Decisions will be based on place priorities and deliverability, not marital status. | There is no specific mitigation required. Continue to ensure engagement opportunities are open and accessible to all residents and community groups. | Pride in Place team / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |
| Pregnancy and maternity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2013 and 2024, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 56.0 per 1,000) than the Southwest (53.4) and broadly in line with England (56.3). For the period 2022 to 2024, rates in Torbay (44.6) have been significantly below England (50.0). | People who are pregnant or have caring responsibilities for very young children may face barriers to attending meetings or events, particularly where venues, times or formats are not family-friendly. Some projects (e.g., community facilities and public realm) may have different usability impacts depending on inclusive design. | Offer flexible ways to engage (including online and short-form options) and consider family-friendly venues/timings where appropriate. Encourage projects to include inclusive design features (e.g., step-free access, toilets and safe access/lighting) and to consider impacts on families in business cases. | Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |
| Race | <p>In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.6% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh 0.3% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African 1.5% as being of Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups | Minoritised ethnic communities may be under-represented in engagement activity if approaches rely on existing networks, written English, or venues/times that exclude some people. There is a risk that priorities and funded projects do not reflect lived experience of all communities, particularly in areas of higher deprivation. | Use targeted outreach and trusted community connectors, and provide accessible, culturally appropriate engagement. Where needed, offer translation/interpretation and avoid over-reliance on digital channels. | Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |

| | | | | |
|---------|--|---|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96.1% as White • 0.4% described their ethnicity another way. • Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England. | | Monitor engagement reach and representation and adjust approaches if gaps are identified. | |
| Page 24 | <p>Religion and belief</p> <p>The 2021 Census showed that the residents in Torbay identify their religion and/or belief as the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48.5% are Christian • 0.4% are Buddhist • 0.2% are Hindu • 0.6% are Muslim • Less than 0.1% are Sikh • 0.1% are Jewish • 0.7% have another religion • 43.2% have no religion • 6.3% did not answer | There is potential for differential impact if engagement activity does not recognise different cultural or faith needs (e.g., timing around religious observance) or if behaviour standards are not consistently applied. Some community facilities linked to faith groups may be involved in proposals, which may increase sensitivities around fairness and perception. | Plan engagement to avoid excluding people due to timing and ensure venues are welcoming. Apply clear governance, declarations of interest and transparent decision reporting for all proposals, including those linked to faith-based organisations. | Pride in Place team / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |
| | <p>Sex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51.3% of Torbay's population are female. • 48.7% of Torbay's population are male. | There is potential for differential impact if engagement or decision-making is not inclusive and participation skews towards one gender, or if funded projects have different safety and accessibility impacts for women and men (for example, lighting, safe routes and design of public spaces). | Monitor participation and membership diversity and use targeted outreach where gaps are identified. Encourage projects to consider safety and inclusive design (e.g., lighting, natural surveillance, accessible | Pride in Place team / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| | | | routes) through business cases and assurance checks. | |
| Sexual orientation | <p>In the 2021 Census, residents described their sexuality as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89% as Straight or Heterosexual • 1.7% as Gay or Lesbian • 1.1% as Bisexual • 0.1% as Pansexual • 0.1% described their sexuality another way • 7.4% of people didn't answer the question | There is potential for differential impact if engagement spaces are not experienced as welcoming and safe for LGBTQ+ people, or if communications do not reflect different communities. This could reduce participation and confidence in the process. | Apply inclusive engagement practices, clear standards of behaviour and routes for feedback. Use a mix of engagement approaches and promote opportunities through a wide range of channels and community partners. | Pride in Place team / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |
| Armed Forces Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. • In Torbay, 5.9% of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces. | Members of the Armed Forces community may have specific needs linked to health and wellbeing, employment, housing, and access to support. There is a risk of under-representation in engagement unless opportunities are promoted through relevant networks. | Promote engagement opportunities through Armed Forces and veterans' networks and partners. Encourage business cases to consider access and inclusion for veterans and their families where relevant. | Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |
| Additional considerations | | | | |
| Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torbay is ranked as the 39th most deprived upper tier local authority in | There is potential for differential impact by socio-economic status. People experiencing poverty or deprivation may face barriers to taking part (time, cost, | Continue to provide hands-on support to develop proposals (Torbay Communities), | Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| poverty and deprivation) | England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025. | digital access), and may be disproportionately affected if investment does not reach the most deprived neighbourhoods or does not address local priorities. There is also a risk that project benefits are captured mainly by groups with more capacity to bid for funding. | simplify processes where possible, and use targeted engagement in deprived areas. Use the assurance and decision process to test who benefits, affordability for users, and whether equality and inclusion have been considered. Monitor take-up and adjust support if some communities are under-represented. | Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |
| Public Health impacts (including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the five-year period 2020 to 2024, data shows there is a 6-year life expectancy gap between males who live in Torbay's least and most deprived areas and, a 3-year gap for females. | Place-based investment can affect health and wellbeing differently across communities. There is potential for positive impact if projects improve community facilities, access to services, safety, social connection and the local environment. There is a risk of uneven benefits if projects do not reach areas with the poorest health outcomes or if accessibility is not considered. | Use engagement and business cases to understand local health and wellbeing needs and who will benefit. Encourage projects to consider accessibility, affordability and inclusion. Monitor the overall pipeline to ensure it supports priorities that can reduce inequalities in health over time. | Pride in Place team / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards). |
| Human Rights impacts | Not applicable (reporting and assurance item). Human rights considerations will be relevant at project level (e.g., | No direct human rights impacts arise from the annual review report itself. Potential impacts will arise through delivery decisions and should be | Use the business case and assurance process to check legal compliance, inclusion | Pride in Place team / Place Leadership Boards – |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| | <p>fair access, non-discrimination and safeguarding in public-facing services).</p> | <p>considered through governance, transparency, safeguarding where relevant, and inclusive access to services and spaces.</p> | <p>and (where relevant) safeguarding arrangements at project level before funding is released. Maintain transparent decision-making and clear routes for complaints and feedback.</p> | <p>ongoing (2026 onwards).</p> |
| <p>Child Friendly</p> <p>Page 27</p> | <p>Torbay has a significant population of children and young people. In Torquay Phase 1, engagement included targeted work with young people and groups less likely to take part.</p> | <p>There is potential for positive impact if projects improve safe, welcoming places for children and families and increase access to activities and services. There is a risk that children and young people are not heard if engagement relies mainly on adult-focused channels.</p> | <p>Continue to include youth-focused engagement in Torquay and build it into Paignton mobilisation activity. Encourage projects to consider child-friendly design and safety (e.g., inclusive play, safe routes, accessible facilities) through business cases and assurance checks.</p> | <p>Pride in Place team / Torbay Communities / Place Leadership Boards – ongoing (2026 onwards).</p> |

15. Cumulative Council Impact

- 15.1 None identified at this stage (reporting and assurance item). However, delivery activity will create additional demand across finance, legal, procurement and capital delivery as the programme moves into implementation.

16. Cumulative Community Impacts

- 16.1 None identified at this stage (reporting and assurance item). However, as Pride in Place moves into delivery there is a potential cumulative impact if pressures in other public services and partner organisations increase (for example, reduced capacity in the voluntary and community sector, cost-of-living pressures, and constraints in health, social care and community provision). These pressures could reduce the ability of local groups to take part in engagement, develop proposals and deliver funded projects, and could increase demand for the programme to fund “urgent” support for community assets. This will be managed through continued engagement, targeted support to groups through Torbay Communities, and by using the assurance process to test deliverability and ongoing running cost implications before funding is committed.

Meeting: Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SEND Update)

Date: 6th May 2026

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update

When does the decision need to be implemented? For information

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Cllr Bye

Director Contact Details: Nancy Meehan, DCS

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides an update to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress and assurance arrangements following the March 2025 Area SEND inspection in Torbay and subsequent Improvement Notice.

1.2 It summarises the partnership's Priority Impact Plan (PIP), governance and monitoring arrangements, and headline progress across the five priority impact areas.

1.3 The report also sets out an update on the most recent DfE/CQC monitoring activity and deep dive (23 February 2026) and proposes next steps for Overview and Scrutiny to consider in supporting and holding the partnership to account.

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 strengthening partnership delivery, improving inclusion and support, and improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

2.2 Providing transparent updates to Members supports effective scrutiny, maintains focus on the Improvement Notice requirements, and supports timely escalation and resolution of barriers across education, health and care.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

3.1 To note the update on Area SEND improvement activity, including governance and monitoring arrangements.

3.2 To consider and agree the recommended next steps for Overview and Scrutiny set out at section 14 (Key issues and recommended next steps), including the requested assurance questions and future reporting cycle.

3.3 To request a follow-up update once the actions and feedback from the 23 February 2026 monitoring/deep dive are formally confirmed and incorporated into the partnership's action tracking and performance reporting.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Priority Impact Plan (PIP) – latest version (as published) – to follow

Appendix 2: Latest SEND performance dashboard / KPI set (where available) – to follow

Appendix 3: DfE/CQC monitoring and deep dive action tracker (including 23 February 2026) – to be provided once formal notes/actions are confirmed

5. Background Documents

- Area SEND inspection report (published 25 June 2025)
- Torbay Priority Impact Plan (approved October 2025)
- Internal quality assurance framework and quarterly QA reporting (EHCP quality)

6. Supporting Information

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Between 17 and 21 March 2025, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the local area arrangements in Torbay to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. This was Torbay's second local area inspection and the first under the 2023 framework.

6.1.2 The inspection report, published on 25 June 2025, judged the local area partnership to have widespread or systemic failings. The partnership accepted the outcome and identified urgent improvements required across education, health and care.

6.1.3 Following the inspection outcome, the local authority received an Improvement Notice and is subject to DfE and NHS England monitoring. A formal Ofsted/CQC monitoring visit is expected from December 2026.

6.1.4 In response, the local area partnership produced a Priority Impact Plan (PIP) setting out the actions and intended impact over the next 18 months.

6.1.5 The PIP was co-produced with stakeholders, including parents and carers, and is the partnership's main SEND improvement plan. Due to the timing of publication

(25 June 2025), development of the plan took place over the summer period, which limited some partners' availability (for example, schools).

6.1.6 On 9 October 2025, the partnership was informed that the plan met the criteria in the Area SEND Inspection Handbook and was actionable and focused on the areas for priority action.

6.1.7 The PIP covers five key priority impact areas:

- Priority area 1: Governance (including co-production and partnership working)
- Priority area 2: Commissioning to meet need
- Priority area 3: Multi-agency working and support for children without an EHCP (SEN Support)
- Priority area 4: Waiting times and support (including health assessments and support while waiting)
- Priority area 5: Preparation for adulthood

6.1.8 Area 5: 'Preparation for Adulthood' was identified as an area for improvement in the inspection report. However, following discussion at the SEND Local Area Improvement Partnership Board (SLAIP), it was agreed that this area required greater focus and scrutiny, so it is presented as a fifth priority area for the purpose of monitoring improvements.

6.2 DfE/CQC Monitoring and Deep Dives (including 23 February 2026)

6.2.1 As part of the Improvement Notice, the local area is subject to DfE and NHS England monitoring. The partnership has been preparing evidence on progress and impact, including quality assurance activity and performance reporting, to support this monitoring.

6.2.3 A monitoring/deep dive session took place on 23 February 2026. Preparation for this included collation of evidence on quality assurance arrangements for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), including audits of appendices/advice, QA of new EHCPs and multi-agency tracking. The partnership will incorporate any confirmed feedback, required actions and timescales from this session into the PIP action tracker and performance reporting once the formal notes are received.

6.2.5 Governance arrangements

6.2.6 Revised governance processes have been put in place to:

- Ensure strong strategic and operational oversight from a multi-agency perspective.
- Ensure that the voice and influence of the child/young person and parents/carers are heard and acted upon at the highest level by their direct involvement.
- Ensure that SEND improvement is firmly cemented within the overall children's strategy and that of the Integrated Care Partnership

6.2.7 A refreshed SEND Local Area Improvement Partnership (SLAIP) Board was established in January 2025 to provide strategic leadership, assurance and oversight for the priority actions; this has been enhanced further following the inspection. The board is using its influence and accountability to set a clear vision, champion change and innovation, and drive improvements across the local area, and is chaired independently.

6.2.8 The Board is committed to ensuring the voice and lived experience of children, young people and their families shape its work. Direct input from children, young people and families feeds into Board discussions and champions extending the participation reach and engagement.

6.2.9 The SLAIP Board sits within Torbay and One Devon's broader governance for children, young people and families and is accountable to Anne-Marie Bond, Chief Executive of Torbay Council and Libby Ryan-Davis, Acting CEO of One Devon Integrated Care Board.

6.2.10 The Board reports to the Children's Continuous Improvement Board (CCIB), not only to seek constructive challenge and support, but to ensure the activity and impact is fully integrated into Torbay's wider strategic vision and governance for children, young people and families. The CCIB has senior representatives from across education, health and care as well as political and corporate representation, which ensures there are clear routes for dissemination and alignment with wider priorities.

6.2.11 SEND Family Voice Torbay, the formal Parent Carer Forum for the local area, gathers information from families and wider parent groups and represents their voices at the board. The voice and lived experience of children and young people with SEND is also heard regularly, and the board is strengthening its work with Torbay's SEND Youth Forum. There are also links to the Local Education and Inclusion Board so that school leaders can be fully engaged in this improvement work.

6.2.12 An operational delivery group has been established to ensure that the actions from both the priority impact plan and board meetings are delivered.

6.2.13 Monitoring arrangements

6.2.14 Local areas are required to implement the DfE's and NHS England's monitoring, support, and challenge arrangements to improve their SEND service delivery. This process involves several key steps:

- **Monitoring:** Continuous oversight of the local area's SEND arrangements to ensure they meet the required standards.
- **Support:** Providing guidance and resources to help local areas address any identified weaknesses.
- **Challenge:** Holding local areas accountable for making necessary improvements.

6.2.15 A comprehensive 'stock take' review was conducted by the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England, in February 2026. The purpose of this visit was to assess the progress made by the local area in addressing the issues identified in the improvement notice. Following this first stock take, a series of 'deep dive' sessions will take place. Each deep dive activity will be a thorough and detailed examination of each priority area, to review actions and assess the difference it is making for children and young people.

6.2.16 Ofsted and CQC will undertake the formal monitoring visit from December 2026.

6.3 Summary of progress since the inspection

6.3.1 The partnership's approach continues to be based on a long-term vision focused on what parents and carers told us matters most: SEND is everybody's business; needs are identified and responded to early; and support is delivered in the right place at the right time, with a focus on the difference made to children and young people.

The partnership's approach to improving support and services to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Torbay continues to be based on the long-term vision, which focuses on the areas parents and carers identified as meaning the most to them:

- SEND is everybody's business – embedding the vision and values into the practice of everyone who works with children and families from 0-25.
- Identify and respond to needs early – in ways that value lived experience and expertise and offer personalised care and support.
- Deliver in the right place at the right time – always asking 'so what difference are we making in the life of children or young people'?

This vision, along with the commitments outlined in the Co-production Charter and Children and Young People's pledge informs and guides the improvement work across the partnership.

6.3.2 Priority area 1 – Governance (work faster and better together; improve co-production and relationships with parents and carers)

- A Review of all governance arrangements has been completed.
- An independent chair is in place and holds the local area board to account.
- A plan for improvement is being delivered at pace with full engagement for all local area partners.
- Arrangements for strong and robust governance is swift.
- A communications plan is a key priority for creation and delivery this term to ensure that these changes are being communicated positively with families.

6.3.3 Priority area 2 – Commissioning (identify gaps and increase support and provision)

- A new Torbay Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has been completed.
- A workshop to share and act on the new JSNA took place on the 27th January and involved representation from across the partnership.
- Following proposals, the DfE have approved the change in designation of Coombe Pafford School to create of 40 ASC special school places for September 2026. Dual designation will run during transition years, with the school becoming fully ASC specialist by 2030. This addresses a critical gap in local specialist provision for autistic children.

6.3.4 Priority area 3 – Multi-agency working and SEN Support (improve support for children without an EHCP)

- Local Authority Statutory SEND Services have been reviewed, restructured, and reshaped. This will lead to improving timeliness for EHCPs and a better quality of EHCPs; improved quality according to our Envision auditing tool has already reached one of our key performance indicators.
- An Intervention Grant has been successfully acquired, which means Support, Information and Guidance is being delivered to 15 mainstream schools to enhance and strengthen inclusion. An uplift in this grant means that a further 10 schools should be supported during 2026.
- The Local Authority has invested in a new Head of Service for Quality First Teaching role to strategically support inclusion across Torbay.
- The DfE RISE Teams have been working across Torbay on three new workstreams which will positively impact SEND children; attendance and behaviour, Y6-7 Transition and a Cradle to Career project.
- A review of the implementation of the Graduated Response has started with a Torbay map of Neurodiversity Support being launched in January 2026.

- A new role has been implemented to quality assure all Alternate Providers and ensure outcomes for children are at the heart of this support.
- Attendance and suspensions and exclusions area wide is still a challenge, but officers and colleagues from across the partnership are continuing to work on these areas.

6.3.5 Priority area 4 – Waiting times and support (reduce waits for health assessments and improve support while waiting)

Reduce waiting times

- Focused waiting list recovery work has resulted in no children and young people waiting more than 18 weeks for an assessment by the Mood, Emotions and Relationships Team (MERS – previously known as CAMHS).
- Community Paediatrics have worked to reduce the waiting time for assessment. There are currently no children or young people waiting over 40 weeks and 40% of those waiting are being seen within 18 weeks.
- An out of hours end of life nursing service began in October 2025, providing a 24 hour on call service for patients who require complex symptom management or who choose to have end of life care at home.

Improve the support available whilst waiting

- The MERS service is piloting an enhanced triage process to extend the support while waiting offer. The aim is that all referrals accepted for getting help will receive a telephone triage assessment from a mental health practitioner within 2 weeks of referral.
- MyWay Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health service, delivered by Young Devon in Partnership, launched in July 2025 and is currently supporting 2000 young people through a variety of wellbeing pathways across Devon and Torbay. Wellbeing sessions have been delivered at South Devon College and two schools, and future delivery plans are being confirmed with partners.
- Luminova - an online therapeutic game designed to support children and young people self-manage worries and build resilience is available to all young people in Torbay. 93% of young people reported a reduction in their anxiety and 97% of young people with SEND showed reliable improvement in their condition following accessing the service.
- The 0-19 public health nursing team has launched regular school drop-ins across all primary and secondary schools in Torbay with good initial uptake by parents. Information and feedback are being collected and will be used to inform future offers of support to families and schools.
- The second year of the Partnership in Neurodiversity in Schools Programme (PINS) began in September 2025, with 4 school benefitting from a support

offer tailored to their needs, as well as 5 schools from last year continuing to receive support through a community of practice offer.

6.3.6 Priority area 5 – Preparation for adulthood (improve transitions into adulthood and outcomes)

- Due to new EHCP processes NEET levels for EHCPs are currently better than Torbay's statistical neighbours.
- Using our NTDi Grant and expertise a family conference for Preparation for Adulthood will take place in March. Five family workshops will also be held at Secondary schools about supported employment and a workshop for colleagues during National Careers week (w/c 2nd March).
- Links have been made with the Connect to Work programme which will deliver a supported employment model for young people aged 18+ with disabilities, health conditions or complex challenges.
- Adult Social Care (ASC) colleagues actively engage in transition planning, attending EHCP reviews and weekly transition panels for young people with known or likely Care Act eligible needs.
- A gap has been identified in the referral routes for schools to be able to refer children with EHCP's who are not known to the additional needs team into transitions panel for consideration and tracking.
- The monthly Commissioning Oversight Group meeting brings leads from Children's and adult commissioning together to share emerging trends and themes. These then inform future agendas for our provider forums.
- Commissioning plans including the Adult Social Care Market Blueprint 2020-2030 provide information on our market supply and commissioning intentions.

Conclusion

Following the SEND Inspection, Torbay's Local Area SEND partnership has worked hard to review and redesign the governance structures and establish strengthened partnership arrangements to deliver the required improvements as set out in the Priority Impact Plan.

It is recognised that much of the work, since September, has been focused on delivering actions to improve the system and as such it is too early to fully measure the impact this will have on the outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Torbay.

It is also acknowledged that it will also take time for these changes to be fully felt by families and the ongoing engagement and co-production with children, young people, parents and carers will be critical to ensure the partnership is making a difference.

7. Options under consideration

This report is presented for information and scrutiny. Options considered include: (a) noting the update and continuing the current cycle of Overview and Scrutiny updates; (b) agreeing a more structured programme of scrutiny aligned to the Priority Impact Plan (one priority area per meeting) to provide consistent challenge, assurance and visibility of impact; and (c) requesting additional assurance reporting on specific themes (for example EHCP quality, SEN Support, health waiting times and preparation for adulthood) where performance and lived experience indicators show the greatest risk.

8. Financial opportunities and implications

There are no direct financial decisions requested in this report. Any actions arising from scrutiny (for example additional reporting, targeted improvement activity or commissioning responses) will be managed within existing budgets where possible. Where further investment is required to deliver the Priority Impact Plan, this will be subject to separate decision-making and governance, including full financial appraisal and identification of funding sources.

9. Legal implications

This report is for information and does not of itself create new legal duties. The local area partnership must continue to meet its statutory responsibilities relating to children and young people with SEND, including duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations and the Equality Act 2010. Any substantive changes to policy, provision or commissioning will be subject to legal review as part of the relevant decision-making process.

10. Engagement and consultation

The Priority Impact Plan has been developed through partnership working and co-production, including engagement with parents and carers via SEND Family Voice Torbay and wider stakeholder input. Ongoing engagement and feedback arrangements (including communications and participation activity) are integral to the improvement approach and will continue to inform priorities, delivery and assurance reporting.

11. Procurement

There are no procurement decisions requested within this report. Where commissioning or procurement activity is required to address gaps in provision, this will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and relevant public procurement legislation and guidance in force at the time.

12. Protecting our naturally inspiring bay and tackling climate change

This report is primarily focused on SEND improvement activity and does not contain proposals that directly impact the natural environment or climate change. Where improvement actions result in changes to service models, estates, transport or digital delivery, environmental impacts (including carbon implications) will be considered through the relevant governance and decision-making processes.

13. Associated risks

Key risks associated with the matters set out in this report include: (a) insufficient pace or impact of improvement activity resulting in continued poor experiences and outcomes for children and families; (b) capacity and workforce risks across partners affecting delivery of the Priority Impact Plan; (c) financial pressures arising from increased demand and gaps in local provision; and (d) reputational and compliance risks linked to the Improvement Notice and future Ofsted/CQC monitoring. These risks are managed through the local area governance and assurance arrangements described in this report.

14. Key issues and recommended next steps for Overview and Scrutiny

1. 14.1 Agree a focussed cycle of scrutiny aligned to the Priority Impact Plan (e.g., one priority area per meeting), including a consistent set of measures of impact (timeliness, quality, experience and outcomes).
2. 14.2 Seek assurance on EHCP quality and timeliness improvement by requesting quarterly reporting of: audit outcomes (including social care and health advice quality), learning actions taken, and feedback from families and settings about whether plans are usable and outcome-focused.
3. 14.3 Request a deep dive update on SEN Support and inclusion, including what is changing for children without EHCPs and how the partnership is addressing persistent challenges such as attendance, suspensions and exclusions.
4. 14.4 Request assurance on health waiting times and the 'support while waiting' offer, including how families are informed, what interim provision is available, and how equity of access is monitored.
5. 14.5 Request assurance on preparation for adulthood: transitions governance, pathways into employment/training, and how gaps in referral routes and tracking are being closed.
6. 14.6 Request evidence of strengthened co-production and improved communication with families (including what has changed as a result of feedback) and how this is being measured.

15. Equality Impact Assessment

15.1 This report provides an update for information and scrutiny on Area SEND improvement activity and does not in itself change eligibility, policy, provision or access to services. However, the improvement activity described aims to reduce known inequalities in experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families, and to strengthen how the partnership identifies, monitors and addresses any differential impacts.

| Protected characteristic / group | Data and insight (local / service context) | Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts) | Mitigation activities | Responsible department and timeframe |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Age | SEND services are for children and young people aged 0–25, with transition points (early years, primary, secondary, post-16, post-18/25) often associated with poorer experience and outcomes. | Positive impact expected through strengthened governance and a clearer focus on preparation for adulthood and transitions. Risk of differential impact if improvement activity focuses disproportionately on one phase (e.g., statutory EHCP processes) and does not address earlier identification and SEN Support. | Use the Priority Impact Plan (PIP) and performance reporting to track impact by age/phase (including post-16 and transitions), and ensure scrutiny requests cover the full 0–25 pathway. | Children’s Services / Area SEND Partnership. Ongoing; reported through agreed scrutiny cycle. |
| Carers (parents and | Families of children with SEND are more likely to be unpaid | Positive impact expected where co-production and communication | Strengthen co-production routes (including SEND Family Voice Torbay), offer a mix of | Area SEND Partnership Comms / Participatio |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| <p>unpaid carers)</p> | <p>carers and to experience increased stress, time demands and financial pressure.</p> | <p>improve, and where “support while waiting” reduces burden. Risk of adverse impact if engagement methods are not accessible (time, digital access, language) or if communications are inconsistent.</p> | <p>engagement methods (online/in-person, varied times), and publish clear, plain-English updates on what is changing.</p> | <p>n leads. From now; reviewed quarterly.</p> |
| <p>Care experienced</p> | <p>Care experienced children and young people are over-represented among those with additional needs and may face instability affecting education and health access.</p> | <p>Potential positive impact if multi-agency working strengthens and if preparation for adulthood pathways improve. Risk of adverse impact if transitions and placements changes are not consistently planned with SEND support and personal advisers.</p> | <p>Ensure PIP actions and local practice link SEND improvement with corporate parenting responsibilities, with clear escalation routes where care status and SEND needs create additional risk.</p> | <p>Children’s Social Care / Virtual School / SEND leadership. Ongoing.</p> |
| <p>Disability</p> | <p>Children and young people with SEND are disabled or have long-term conditions; families report</p> | <p>Core intended positive impact: improved identification, timeliness and quality (EHCP and SEN Support),</p> | <p>Monitor performance and experience by need/type and setting; strengthen quality assurance of plans and advice; ensure reasonable adjustments in communications and</p> | <p>Area SEND Partnership (all agencies). Ongoing; reported routinely.</p> |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| | variable access, long waits and inconsistent inclusion in mainstream settings. | reduced waiting times, better support while waiting, and improved outcomes. Risk of adverse impact if improvements are uneven across conditions (e.g., neurodiversity vs physical/complex needs) or across settings. | participation (accessible formats, interpreters where required). | |
| Gender reassignment | Some children and young people with SEND may also be gender diverse and can face stigma and barriers in education and health support. | No direct differential impact from this information report. Risk of indirect adverse impact if inclusion, bullying prevention and mental health support are not consistent across settings. | Ensure inclusion workstreams (SEN Support, attendance/behaviour, emotional wellbeing) consider protected characteristics and that settings can evidence inclusive practice and safe reporting routes. | Education inclusion leads / Health partners. Ongoing. |
| Marriage and civil partnership | Not generally applicable to children and young people; relevant only to workforce/parents. | No differential impact identified. | None required. | N/A |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Pregnancy and maternity</p> | <p>Relevant primarily to parents/carers and early years (identification and support for very young children).</p> | <p>Potential positive impact where early identification improves and where families can access timely advice and support. Risk of adverse impact if early years pathways are not well-integrated with health visiting, paediatrics and early years settings.</p> | <p>Ensure early years is included within SEN Support and waiting-time work (including communication about routes to support) and that “support while waiting” offers include pre-school children.</p> | <p>Early Years / Health partners. Ongoing; reviewed via PIP reporting.</p> |
| <p>Race</p> | <p>Minoritised ethnic communities may experience barriers to access (language, trust, awareness) and are more likely to live in areas of higher deprivation.</p> | <p>Positive impact expected if co-production and communications are accessible and if monitoring identifies differential experiences. Risk of adverse impact if engagement and complaints/feedback routes do not reach all communities or if services are not culturally competent.</p> | <p>Provide translated/accessible information where needed, use community links to widen participation, and ensure equality monitoring is built into service feedback and QA.</p> | <p>Area SEND Partnership / Participation leads. Ongoing; review at least annually.</p> |
| <p>Religion and belief</p> | <p>Families may have different</p> | <p>No direct differential</p> | <p>Plan engagement and communications in an</p> | <p>Area SEND</p> |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| | faith-related needs that affect engagement and service access (e.g., timing, dietary needs at events, cultural practices). | impact identified from this report. Risk of indirect adverse impact if engagement activities are not planned inclusively. | inclusive way (varied timings; sensitivity to cultural needs) and use multiple channels to reach families. | Partnership Comms / Participation. Ongoing. |
| Sex | Some SEND needs present differently by sex (e.g., under-identification of autism in girls), affecting access to assessment and support. | Positive impact expected if identification improves and if pathways reduce bias. Risk of adverse impact if assessment routes and school SEN processes do not account for differing presentations and masking. | Include learning on differing presentations within workforce development and QA; monitor referrals/assessments/support by sex where possible. | Education / Health / SEND QA leads. Ongoing. |
| Sexual orientation | Some children and young people with SEND are LGBTQ+ and may face stigma affecting wellbeing and school attendance. | No direct differential impact from this report. Risk of indirect adverse impact if inclusion and mental health support are inconsistent across settings. | Ensure inclusion/attendance/behaviour and emotional wellbeing workstreams promote safe, inclusive environments and effective escalation routes for concerns. | Education inclusion leads / Health partners. Ongoing. |
| Armed Forces | Service families can experience mobility and | Potential positive impact where transitions and | Ensure transition and admissions processes promote timely transfer of SEN information | Education admissions / SEND |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| community | transition between schools/areas, affecting continuity of SEND support. | data-sharing improve. Risk of adverse impact if processes for in-year admissions and transfer of SEND information are slow or inconsistent. | and early support planning when families move into the area. | teams. Ongoing. |
| Additional considerations | | | | |
| Socio-economic impacts (deprivation / child poverty) | Families of children with SEND are more likely to face additional costs (transport, time off work, caring) and may be disproportionately affected by gaps in local provision. | Positive impact expected if local provision and inclusion improve and if waiting times reduce. Risk of adverse impact if service access relies on digital channels, travel, or if families need to purchase private support while waiting. | Monitor access and outcomes by deprivation; strengthen “support while waiting” and clear signposting; consider transport and locality impacts in commissioning and placement planning. | Commissioning / SEND / Health partners. Ongoing; review via dashboard. |
| Public health impacts | Long waits for assessment and support can negatively affect mental health and family wellbeing; school absence can compound | Positive impact expected from improved waiting times and improved wellbeing support while waiting. Risk remains if demand continues to outstrip capacity, leading to | Continue waiting list recovery and strengthen early help/wellbeing offers; use equity metrics to identify groups experiencing longer waits. | Health partners / Public Health / Area SEND Partnership. Ongoing. |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| | health inequalities. | unequal access. | | |
| Human rights impacts | Children and young people with SEND have rights to education and to appropriate health and social care support, including participation in decisions. | Positive impact expected where plan quality improves, participation is strengthened and decisions are timely. Risk of adverse impact if delays or poor-quality plans continue, limiting access to support. | Strengthen QA, timeliness and participation; ensure complaints/appeals learning is captured and acted on through governance. | Area SEND Partnership governance. Ongoing. |
| Child friendly | SEND improvement should be shaped by lived experience and be understandable to children and young people. | Positive impact expected through strengthened youth voice and co-production. Risk of adverse impact if participation is not accessible to children/young people with communication needs. | Develop child/young person-friendly communications and participation methods (accessible formats, supported engagement via schools/VCSE) and evidence "you said, we did". | Participation leads / Youth Forum / SEND services. Ongoing; reviewed through governance. |

16.1 Cumulative Council impact: No specific cumulative impacts are identified as this report is for information and scrutiny. Any future decisions arising from the Priority Impact Plan (e.g., changes to provision, commissioning, transport, or workforce models) will require consideration alongside other Council proposals and pressures, including impacts on demand, budgets and capacity.

17.1 Cumulative community impacts: SEND improvement activity depends on coordinated action across education, health and care partners. Cumulative impacts may arise from partner service pressures (for example NHS capacity and waiting lists, workforce availability, or regional commissioning constraints) which could affect

pace and equity of improvement. These risks are monitored through the partnership governance arrangements described in this report, and will be escalated where they pose a risk to equitable outcomes for children and young people.

DRAFT

Meeting: Overview & Scrutiny Board

Date: 6 May 2026

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Terra Firma – English Riviera Geopark Review

When does the decision need to be implemented? No decision required

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Councillor Jackie Thomas, Cabinet member for Tourism, Culture and Events

Director Contact Details: Alan Denby, Director of Pride in Place, alan.denby@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. Terra Firma is a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) supported project intended to strengthen the long-term foundations, governance and delivery capacity of the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark.
- 1.2. The UNESCO designation provides international recognition, but Torbay has historically struggled to fully capitalise on it. Current arrangements are fragmented and rely heavily on goodwill and Council funding, limiting the opportunity the designation offers for Torbay.
- 1.3. The core proposal is to put in place the structure, capacity and approach required for the Geopark to function more effectively over the long term by simplifying and clarifying governance, strengthening leadership and decision-making, improving financial sustainability, and making the Geopark more accessible, relevant and useful to communities, partners and visitors.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1. Terra Firma helps deliver the Council's vision of a healthy, happy and prosperous Torbay by reinforcing Torbay's distinct identity through its internationally recognised UNESCO Global Geopark status and improving how residents and visitors experience, understand and value Torbay's unique natural environment.
- 2.2. By strengthening governance and leadership, the project reduces reliance on informal arrangements and individual goodwill and creates a more resilient organisation able to plan, deliver and demonstrate impact—particularly important given likely pressures on Council capacity and funding.
- 2.3. Terra Firma places strong emphasis on engagement, interpretation and access, including improved digital presence, education and interpretation strategies and targeted activity to

broaden and diversify audiences. This supports Pride in Place by strengthening intergenerational understanding of place and helping younger people feel connected to and invested in, Torbay's natural environment, supporting ambitions to develop rewarding career opportunities in the green and blue economy.

- 2.4. Terra Firma also explores how the Geopark can better support sustainable tourism, partnership working and local business development (for example through themed experiences, packaged offers and more collaborative working between partners). This has the potential to increase dwell time, spread economic benefit across the Bay and support year-round activity rather than seasonal peaks.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1. Overview & Scrutiny Board is invited to note the report and offer recommendations to Cabinet for sharing with the English Riviera Geopark Organisation.

4. Appendices

None

5. Background Documents

None

Supporting Information

6. Introduction

- 6.1. Terra Firma responds to longstanding recognition that the Geopark's arrangements are too fragmented and reliant on informal goodwill and Council support, limiting Torbay's ability to secure the full value of its UNESCO designation.
- 6.2. The project's core focus is organisational resilience: putting in place the structure, capacity and approach required for effective long-term operation. This includes simplifying and clarifying governance, strengthening leadership and decision-making, improving financial sustainability and shifting the organisation towards clear delivery and impact.
- 6.3. A central element is the retention of ERGO Ltd as the Geopark's host entity, alongside work to transition it to a Community Interest Company (CIC) model, ensuring that Geopark opportunities are delivered by a dedicated team rather than one Council employee and voluntary partners. In parallel, Terra Firma proposes a refresh of the Geopark Management Group (GMG) with clearer remit and accountability and stronger links to performance and evaluation.
- 6.4. Terra Firma is funded primarily through an NLHF grant of approximately £250,000 running through to 2027. The papers indicate an anticipated steady-state cost of around £70–75k per annum for core coordination and governance, to be met through ERGO's fundraising and diversified income, with a clear expectation-setting arrangement between the Council and ERGO.
- 6.5. The project is focused on organisational resilience and impact, developing the foundations required for the Geopark to function effectively and structured around three strands of work:
- Organisational Resilience
 - Governance and management review
 - Transition of ERGO Ltd to a more robust legal form (recommended as a Community Interest Company)
 - Board refresh and skills diversification
 - Financial modelling and income diversification
 - Engaging Communities and Audiences
 - Development of a new Geopark website and digital presence
 - Education and interpretation strategy and toolkit
 - Targeted engagement with younger people and underserved communities
 - Developing People and Partnerships
 - Fundraising and revenue resilience beyond the life of the grant

6.6. These strands are supported by commissioned specialist consultants and overseen through a Project Board and Advisory Board with the following activity currently underway:

Governance and Hosting Arrangements

- A governance review has been completed and considered by the Geopark Management Group, with a clear direction of travel agreed:
 - Retention of the Geopark as a standalone entity
 - Transition of ERGO Ltd to a Community Interest Company (CIC)
 - Recruitment of new directors to strengthen skills, diversity and leadership
 - Reform of the Geopark Management Group to improve accountability and delivery focus
- A phased timetable is in place to establish the CIC, initially appointing interim directors and then developing a recruitment strategy and governance handbook.

Project Delivery and Commissioned Work

- A series of themed working groups are actively meeting, covering:
 - Learning and education
 - Volunteering
 - Governance
 - Data and communications
- Interim reports from consultants on volunteering, learning and governance are informing the next phase of delivery, with implementation plans in development.

Digital and Engagement Activity

- The brief for a new Geopark website and user experience design has been published, with shortlisting and interviews scheduled.
- The website is intended to support multiple audiences, from residents and visitors to educators and the scientific community.

Evaluation and Learning

- An independent evaluation framework is in place, with a midpoint evaluation survey live to assess progress and inform course correction.

6.7. The intended end state is expected to be not simply a restructured organisation, but a step-change in how the Geopark functions and contributes to Torbay. Specifically, the project aims to deliver:

- A robust, credible and accountable governance model, with ERGO operating as a CIC capable of entering partnerships, generating income and employing staff.
- Clear leadership and decision-making arrangements, reducing reliance on informal structures and individual goodwill.
- A financially literate organisation with a clear understanding of the true cost and value of the Geopark, and a realistic plan to cover an estimated steady-state requirement of c.£70–75k per annum.
- A Geopark that is more visible, accessible and relevant to residents, particularly younger people, through improved interpretation, education and digital engagement.
- Stronger integration of the Geopark into Torbay’s wider place narrative, visitor economy, and community life, supporting sustainable tourism and year-round economic activity

6.8. Ultimately, Terra Firma is intended to move the Geopark from being a well-regarded but under-powered designation to a confident, delivery-focused asset that actively supports Torbay’s identity, economy and environmental stewardship.

6.9. While Terra Firma is externally funded and Geopark-led, the Council will be asked to provide a clear Service Level Agreement setting out expectations between the Council and ERGO/CIC, including outcomes, KPIs and review cycles. Alongside this there will be ongoing senior officer engagement to ensure the Geopark is aligned with place, regeneration, culture and environment priorities. While no automatic commitment is assumed, there is an implicit expectation that the Council will support transition to a sustainable funding model and consider its role as a strategic partner where this aligns with corporate priorities.

6.10. Terra Firma represents a positive step forward to address long-standing structural weaknesses in how the UNESCO Global Geopark operates. The project is actively progressing and is aligned with Pride in Place and wider corporate priorities such as the deepening relationship with National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and sits alongside Agatha Christie as a globally positioned asset that supports the visitor economy. Handled well, it offers the opportunity to use the designation for tangible community, economic and place-making benefits for Torbay.

7. Options under consideration

7.1. Option 1: Do nothing. This would risk a continuation of the status quo and the under development of the UNESCO Global Geopark as a key contributor to Torbay’s sense of place and improved wellbeing.

- 7.2. Option 2: Support the direction of travel, including the transition of ERGO to a CIC, and agree a clear Service Level Agreement (SLA) that sets out roles, outcomes, KPIs and review arrangements. This option supports stabilisation and improved accountability while keeping expectations explicit.

8. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 8.1. Terra Firma is funded primarily through a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant (c.£250,000) running through to 2027, which supports the programme of work including commissioned specialist support.
- 8.2. Any Council financial implications are expected to relate primarily to (a) officer time to agree and monitor a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and (b) any decisions the Council may take on ongoing support to the Geopark coordination function. No additional budget is sought or committed and any future funding proposals would need to be considered through the Council's normal decision-making and budget processes.
- 8.3. There are opportunities for the Council to work in partnership with ERGO (and the proposed CIC) to strengthen bids to external funders and to develop more resilient income streams. Potential routes include sponsorship, commissioned activity, philanthropic support, trading/earned income linked to visitor experiences, and collaboration with wider place-based programmes (while ensuring any arrangements are legally compliant and represent value for money).

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Legal advice may be required to review the proposed SLA.

10. Engagement and Consultation

- 10.1. Terra Firma has involved the development of themed working groups, co-ordinated by externally funded consultants and including a wide range of local stakeholders and interest groups. Alongside the working groups, an Education & Interpretation Strategy with Enabling Toolkit, focusing on youth and underserved communities is coming to the end of a pilot engagement phase, prior to refinement and implementation.
- 10.2. Throughout the Terra Firma project to date, suggestions and recommendations have been shared with the Geopark Management Group, for feedback and consideration.

11. Procurement Implications

- 11.1. Should the Council be required to procure goods or services for ERGO the commercial services team will be involved to ensure proper process is followed.

12. Protecting our naturally inspiring Bay and tackling Climate Change

- 12.1 Terra Firma supports delivery of the Council's priority to protect our naturally inspiring Bay and tackle climate change by strengthening the Geopark's capacity to champion Torbay's globally significant geodiversity, landscape and coastal environment. The programme's focus on engagement, education and interpretation (including improved digital content) will help residents and visitors better understand climate and nature impacts and encourage

low-impact behaviours. Work to develop sustainable tourism offers and partnership working provides an opportunity to promote greener travel choices, reduce seasonality pressures and manage visitor impacts on sensitive sites.

13. Associated Risks

13.1. Key risks arising from the Terra Firma programme include:

- Failure to secure diversified income streams could lead to renewed pressure on the Council for ongoing support.
- Without a clear Service Level Agreement (SLA), there is a risk of blurred accountability between the Council and the Geopark, particularly given the Council's role as administrator rather than owner.
- As the accountable body for the UNESCO designation locally, any under-performance or governance failure would reflect on the Council's reputation regardless of formal arrangements.

14. 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18% of Torbay residents are aged under 18 years old. 55% of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. 27% of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older. | The project includes targeted engagement activity to broaden and diversify audiences, including work with younger people through the Education & Interpretation Strategy and digital channels. | Ensure engagement and volunteering opportunities are designed to be accessible and age-appropriate (e.g., family-friendly activities, safeguarding where required) and that communications use a mix of channels to reach different age groups, including schools/colleges and older residents. | ERGO / Geopark CIC with Torbay Council |
| Carers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of these carers provided 50 hours or more of care. | No adverse impacts are anticipated. | | |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Care experienced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of January 2026, there were 277 former care experienced young people aged 18-24 in Torbay. | <p>The programme has identified care-experienced young people within its target audience for youth engagement. There is potential for positive impact through confidence, skills development, volunteering and pathways into green/blue economy opportunities. No adverse impacts are anticipated.</p> | <p>Co-design opportunities with youth services and partners; ensure safeguarding, trauma-informed practice and clear support routes; provide low-cost/no-cost participation options and travel/access information.</p> | <p>ERGO / Geopark CIC with Torbay Council</p> |
| <p>Disability</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 55</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the 2021 Census, 23.9% 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. | <p>Without careful design, some Geopark content, events and site-based activities could be less accessible for disabled people due to physical access constraints at outdoor locations, sensory/cognitive barriers in interpretation materials, or digital exclusion. The programme's emphasis on improved digital presence and interpretation provides an opportunity to enhance accessibility and inclusion.</p> | <p>Apply inclusive design to web and digital content; provide accessible formats on request; ensure events consider step-free access, seating, quiet space and clear wayfinding where practicable; signpost accessible routes/sites; involve disability groups in testing materials and experiences.</p> | <p>ERGO / Geopark CIC with Torbay Council</p> |
| Gender reassignment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. | <p>No adverse impacts are anticipated</p> | | |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Marriage and civil partnership</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>No adverse impacts are anticipated.</p> | | |
| <p>Pregnancy and maternity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2013 and 2024, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 56.0 per 1,000) than the Southwest (53.4) and broadly in line with England (56.3). • For the period 2022 to 2024, rates in Torbay (44.6) have been significantly below England (50.0). | <p>No adverse impacts are anticipated</p> | | |
| <p>Race</p> | <p>In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.6% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh • 0.3% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African • 1.5% as being of Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups • 96.1% as White • 0.4% described their ethnicity another way. | <p>The programme aims to broaden and diversify audiences, including through targeted engagement with underserved communities.</p> | <p>Work with community partners to co-design and promote activity; use inclusive language and imagery.</p> | <p>ERGO / Geopark CIC with Torbay Council</p> |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England. | | | |
| Religion and belief | <p>The 2021 Census showed that the residents in Torbay identify their religion and/or belief as the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48.5% are Christian 0.4% are Buddhist 0.2% are Hindu 0.6% are Muslim Less than 0.1% are Sikh 0.1% are Jewish 0.7% have another religion 43.2% have no religion 6.3% did not answer | No adverse impacts are anticipated. | | |
| Sex | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51.3% of Torbay's population are female. 48.7% of Torbay's population are male. | No adverse impacts are anticipated. | | |
| Sexual orientation | <p>In the 2021 Census, residents described their sexuality as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 89% as Straight or Heterosexual 1.7% as Gay or Lesbian 1.1% as Bisexual 0.1% as Pansexual | No adverse impacts are anticipated. | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.1% described their sexuality another way • 7.4% of people didn't answer the question | | | |
| Armed Forces Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. • In Torbay, 5.9% of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces. | No adverse impacts are anticipated. | | |
| Additional considerations | | | | |
| Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torbay is ranked as the 39th most deprived upper tier local authority in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025. | | | |
| Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the five-year period 2020 to 2024, data shows there is a 6-year life expectancy gap between males who live in Torbay's least and most deprived areas and, a 3-year gap for females. | | | |
| Human Rights impacts | | | | |
| Child Friendly | | | | |

15. Cumulative Council Impact

15.1. None

16. Cumulative Community Impacts

16.1. None

This page is intentionally left blank