Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

12 August 2026

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillors Douglas-Dunbar, Fox, Law, Barbara Lewis, Maddison, Stevens and Tolchard

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

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14. Apologies

The Chair thanked Councillor Spacagna for Chairing the previous meetings.

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Independent Group, Liberal Democrat Group and Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Maddison, Fox and Barbara Lewis in place of Councillors Cowell, Johns and Fellows respectively for this meeting only.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillors Bryant and Spacagna and Cabinet Members: Councillors Billings, Bye and David Thomas.

15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 8 July 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

17. Budget Monitoring 2026/2027 Quarter 1

The Board considered the submitted Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report for 2026/27. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance, Councillor Tyerman advised that the most significant budget pressure remained within Children's Services, with a forecast overspend of almost £3.75 million largely attributable to placement costs. It was noted that Senior Officers were meeting regularly to monitor the position and identify and implement mitigation measures.

Members were advised that treasury management arrangements continued to be closely monitored to ensure borrowing remained affordable and that Officers were planning ahead for the anticipated budget deficit in 2027/28. Directorates had been asked to identify potential savings options and vacancy management measures were already contributing to savings.

Members asked the following questions:

- What had caused the underspend within Cemeteries and Crematorium Services?
- Whether savings targets being considered were in addition to addressing the Children's Services overspend?
- What actions were being taken to manage increasing Home to School Transport costs?
- What the Quality Assurance Programme for transport appeals involved.
- What factors were contributing to the overspend within Legal Services?
- Whether regional collaborative working was helping to address Children's Services placement pressures?
- How many appeals had been received following changes to home to school transport arrangements?

The following responses were received:

- The Cemeteries and Crematorium budget had benefited from increased income generated through arrangements with the service provider, resulting in additional payments being received.
- Savings proposals were being developed in addition to actions already underway to reduce the Children's Services overspend. Work included exploring children's homes, transition services and joint commissioning arrangements to reduce placement costs.
- Home to School Transport expenditure was being managed through independent travel training, greater challenge of requests, use of collection points instead of home pick-ups and consultation on personal transport budgets.
- The Quality Assurance Programme reviewed transport appeals to ensure decisions were consistent with the legal framework and to support improved engagement with families.
- Legal Services continued to experience recruitment difficulties and reliance on agency staff, although measures put in place had had a positive impact. Demand was likely to remain high due to major projects, Adult Social Care matters, asset disposals and Local Government Reorganisation work.
- Regional partners were working together through a sufficiency strategy, regional fostering arrangements and commissioning initiatives to address placement costs and availability.
- An increase in transport appeals had been recorded following service changes, although appeal outcomes remained broadly consistent with previous arrangements. A written response would be provided on the numbers of appeals.

Members noted the submitted report and updates to the Capital Investment Plan and the revised budget.

18. Performance Report 2026/2027 - Quarter 1

The Board considered the submitted Performance Report for Quarter 1 2026/27. The Cabinet Member for Tourism, Events & Culture and Corporate Services, Councillor Jackie Thomas advised that 67.5% of performance indicators were at or above target compared with 50% at the same time in the previous year, and that 96.6% of projects were either on track or completed.

Positive progress was highlighted in relation to education and children's outcomes. Areas requiring further improvement included housing, planning and Children's Services performance measures.

Members asked the following questions:

- Why were hostel placement and length of stay performance indicators below target?
- What was being done to improve planning performance and enforcement case management?
- Whether the operation and location of Leonard Stocks Hostel continued to be reviewed?
- Whether planning appeal decisions were helping improve overall planning outcomes?
- What factors contributed to high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)?
- What challenges were affecting delivery of the Connect to Work programme?
- Whether sufficient employment opportunities existed to support programme participants?
- Why one performance indicator relating to employment support remained below target?

The following responses were received:

- Increasing complexity of need and difficulties securing suitable move-on accommodation were affecting hostel occupancy and lengths of stay. Work was continuing through housing needs assessments and delivery groups to identify solutions.
- Planning performance had improved but remained inconsistent due to staff absences and resource pressures. Enforcement caseloads continued to reduce but new cases continued to arise.
- The Leonard Stocks model continued to be reviewed, including consideration of dispersed and smaller accommodation options to meet the needs of the residents.
- Positive appeal decisions were supporting planning outcomes, although housing land supply issues remained a challenge.
- Youth unemployment remained a significant issue across Torbay. A range of initiatives were underway including the Care Experienced Hub, Parkfield support services and engagement with regional partners and Government programmes.

- The Connect to Work programme was performing broadly in line with contractual expectations, although demand significantly exceeded available funding.
- Employment opportunities remained limited in some sectors, particularly for suitable full-time roles.
- The performance target had been set as a stretch target and Officers considered the programme to be broadly performing in line with expectations.

Resolved (unanimously):

That additional information be included in the Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report on the work underway to reduce the number of young people who were considered not in education, employment or training (NEET).

19. Revised Destination Management Plan

The Board considered the revised Destination Management Plan as set out in the submitted report. The Cabinet Member for Tourism, Events & Culture and Corporate Services, Councillor Jackie Thomas advised that the Plan provided a partnership framework for tourism and place management within Torbay and would be supported by a detailed action plan developed alongside businesses and stakeholders.

The Board welcomed the broad approach whilst discussing opportunities around sports tourism, business tourism, visitor markets, culture, branding and alignment with other Council strategies.

Members asked the following questions:

- How opportunities relating to sports tourism and facilities such as water sports and skate parks would be reflected in the Plan?
- Whether current visitor market data remained robust and whether target markets should be reviewed?
- Whether performance data translated into economic growth and visitor spending?
- Whether the number of priority areas within the Plan was achievable.
- How resources would be identified to deliver the ambitions of the Plan?
- How governance arrangements between the various Place Boards operated?
- How the Plan aligned with the emerging Local Plan?
- How relationships with Arts Council England would support delivery of cultural ambitions?
- How the English Riviera brand would align alongside the Torbay Story narrative?

The following responses were received:

- Sports tourism opportunities would be supported through related strategies, including Active Lives and Sports Strategy work.

- Visitor market analysis should be reviewed annually using available tourism data, recognising that national tourism statistics are often reported with significant delays.
- Data collection and intelligence had been identified as a priority area within the revised Plan to better measure outcomes and opportunities.
- Business tourism and conference activity were recognised as growth sectors within the Plan.
- A detailed action plan would be developed collaboratively with businesses, with action-planning sessions commencing during September 2026.
- Delivery would require partnership working and consideration of future funding opportunities through regional and devolved bodies.
- The Plan would be overseen by the Torbay Place Leadership Board.
- The Plan had been reviewed against the revised Local Plan to ensure consistency.
- Positive relationships had been developed with Arts Council England and a shared set of priorities had been agreed.
- The English Riviera would remain the principal visitor brand, while the Torbay Story would support wider place-making ambitions for residents, businesses and visitors.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Cabinet be advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Board supports the revised Destination Management Plan; and

2. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board monitors marketing opportunities and receives an update from the English Riviera Business Improvement District Company (ERBID Co) in twelve months' time.

Chair