

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

14 November 2024

-: Present :-

Councillor Spacagna (Chairman)

Councillors Cowell, Douglas-Dunbar, Foster, Fox, Johns, Barbara Lewis, Long and Tolchard (Vice-Chair)

(Also in attendance: Councillors Chris Lewis and David Thomas)

33. Apologies

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor Hutchings and Councillor Tranter (Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities who was represented by Councillor David Thomas, Leader of the Council).

It was also reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Barbara Lewis and Fox in place of Councillors Fellows and Law respectively.

34. Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation

The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings), and the Service Manager, Strategy and Project Management, Spatial Planning (Adam Luscombe) outlined the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4 Consultation document as set out in the submitted papers and presentation. The Local Transport Plan set out the key priorities for transport for the next 15 years, was a key policy document for the promotion of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport across the Devon and Torbay, and would be supplemented by LTP action plans on how the policies would be implemented. The Divisional Director of Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency (David Edmondson), Principal Planning & Public Health Officer Strategy and Project Management (Andrew Gunther) also attended the meeting and responded to questions.

Members noted that the plan would:

- align with the Peninsula Transport Board's priorities;
- be used to direct the Integrated Transport Blocks of funding from the Government for Devon County Council and Torbay Council, which would be pooled with other funding streams and would be used by the new Devon and

- Torbay Combined County Authority and would also help unlock other funding streams for the benefit of the two areas; and inform the revised Torbay Local Plan.

Members asked questions in relation to would there be improved signage for roads and key buildings and heritage sites; what improvements would be made to electronic bus stops; lots of new housing estates were emerging, would suitable off road infrastructure for pedestrians, mobility scooters and cyclists be provided as part of the planning process; the vision was 'well-integrated, accessible and inclusive transport will improve travel choice and benefit the health and wellbeing of everyone' how would the Plan help residents for example in Barton and Watcombe access Torbay Hospital by bus when the previous 65 bus service was no longer in operation, and how would it support provision for the less profitable bus routes to ensure that people were not isolated in their communities and consider franchising; how did the Bus Service Improvement Plans link with the LTP and when would they be reviewed; did the Plan cover the location of the roads for highways maintenance and how much was the funding gap for this; how did the Plan link to other key Council documents; had consideration been given to operating residential community buses; access to trains was important to Torbay's economy, particularly in Paignton with cuts to previous services, how could this be strengthened within the Plan and also address concerns on overcrowding and access to routes; what was the reason for the contraction in the number of people travelling to work in the area between 2001 and 2011; what action was being taken to ensure that the Edginswell Railway Station was completed and when did the Planning permission expire; where were potential sites for park and ride in Torbay and why was there no reference to a potential park and ride to ease congestion in Brixham; and what was being done to reduce the impact of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on the roads and moving things differently.

Members were informed that the proposals included improving signage to help people find key routes and key attractions through Torbay and also to make it easier to encourage more active travel. This would include directions to car parks, foot and cycle routes as well as heritage trails.

In response to questions around buses, the Board was advised that there were currently six electronic screens on bus shelters across Torbay and work was being done on the flags at bus stops to improve them and make the routes clearer. Members were encouraged to let the Team know if there were any specific areas where they feel the signage needs improving to feed into this work. The current bus contract was for eight years and would be reviewed towards the end of that contract. Members were informed that the document included sufficient reference to good public transport network, including bus routes which would enable further work to be done to support buses in residential areas off of the main A and B roads. Members were informed that funding for the Bus Service Improvement Plan was imminent and there may be a date by which the Government requires the Plan to be updated, otherwise it was proposed to update it in Summer 2025. The bus fleet would start to be electrified from next year with 49 new buses being in place by 2026. It was noted that Stagecoach was keen to maximise solar voltaic panels on the rooves of the bus station. The Transport Advisory Group was looking at bus franchising opportunities. Park and ride options were being explored at Gallows Gate and a potential option around Nightingale Park which would also support staff and visitors to Torbay

Hospital. Torbay was different to Exeter which were publicly run as the only park and ride in Torbay was in Churston and this was privately run.

In response to questions around highways, Members were advised that the Planning Officers try to access routes around proposed new housing estates to check access for all users and where this was not possible the developer would have to pay funding to provide this, the Inglewood Development was given as an example of this which included connections through Whiterock into existing infrastructure connecting schools and supermarkets etc. There was approximately £68m funding gap for highways maintenance with the Council reliant on additional Government funding to cover the shortfall and it was hoped that the new Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority would have the opportunity to bid for significant investment. Members were informed that the Plan was not the appropriate document to include details of the roads covered by highways maintenance as it covered both Devon County Council and Torbay Council areas. It did list main routes, other road and then minor roads with priority identified locally. 20 MPH zones were being implemented but there had not been any additional funding coming through to implement further proposals, this linked to the priority for making greater places for people.

The Board was advised that active travel was acknowledged as a key element of the Plan and was addressed in many of the proposals. The weight given to active travel was a consideration for the decision-maker for each element. It was hoped that the LTP would help secure greater levels of funding to deliver more active travel routes. The Plan supported the Council's Community and Corporate Plan and would also be used to update the revised Local Plan to ensure a golden thread of priorities through all those Policy Framework documents.

In response to questions around railways, Members were advised that concerns had been raised previously in respect of overcrowding but were encouraged to report any incidents to the providers and that CrossCountry were aware of the issues with one of their Directors living locally but had not yet found a solution. They had new carriages which would help with capacity and the cancellations due to driver training should be reduced as the backlog of training had been completed. The Planning permission for the Edginswell Railway Station expires on 24 November 2026 and the Council had written to the Member of Parliament for Torbay outlining the situation and the need for an additional £7m to complete the scheme but was waiting for a decision around the funding. Issues of HGVs on roads had been discussed at a Peninsula level and the LTP provided opportunities to try to aggregate loads and working with the Freight Forum to support greater use of pallets to reduce the number of HGVs using the roads. It was anticipated that there would be Government funding to support this.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking be requested to provide written assurance that there is sufficient links to highways maintenance within the Local Transport Plan 4; and
2. that, subject to 1 above, the Torbay Overview and Scrutiny Board recommends to Torbay Council/Devon County Council's Cabinets that they support the

priorities for Torbay in the Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation document and suggest the following:

- a. to include under 'improving travel choice' the importance of improving bus connectivity in residential neighbourhoods away from the main routes and consider options for residential bus services and bus franchising;
- b. to include securing the long term commitment for national rail services to Paignton;
- c. to include reference to the importance of the need for park and ride in Torbay, particularly to support Torbay Hospital and as a potential solution to parking in Brixham;
- d. to include the strategic importance and need for the Government to provide additional funding in order to realise the Edginswell Railway Station; and
- e. to highlight the opportunities to use the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority to secure additional funding not just for capital infrastructure but for highways maintenance across Devon and Torbay to meet the large backlog.

35. Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) Alliance Review

The Board received an update on the Multiple Complex Needs Alliance (MCNA) Review as set out in the submitted report. The Leader of the Council (Councillor David Thomas), the Consultant in Public Health (Bruce Bell) as well as the Interim General Manager Public Health Services with Torbay and South Devon NHS Trust and member of the Growth in Action (MCNA) Strategy Group (Simon Acton) attended the meeting and responded to questions. The MCNA had been operating for two years (since 21 June 2022) bringing services together and the report highlighted the successes as well as the need for improvements such as a more integrated approach; the importance on focusing on the importance of relationships and the need for service users to work with the same person for continuity of support; cessation of supplementary central Government grant funding; and lack of suitable move on accommodation.

Members asked questions in relation to how the voice of the service user was being heard; the benefit of having more detail about the transformation and culture change; what were the problems around officer capacity; had the MCNA approached charities to support their work; how much was the current grant that was at risk; what action would benefit the MCNA the most; the importance of addressing the lack of suitable move on accommodation and the need to take brave decisions; and if the MCNA works with other local authorities across Devon who may have capacity in their accommodation.

In response to questions around mental health, Members were advised that the inclusion of mental health in the Alliance was explored with the Clinical

Commissioning Group (CCG) at the time of procurement process, but this was not possible. Members were informed of the dual diagnosis function and work within Torbay Recovery Initiatives and the work that the Alliance was doing with mental health services to work better together.

Regarding move on accommodation there were up to 15 residential rehabilitation placements for up to 12 months with around 10 to 15 people successfully completing the programme. There was a wider need for accommodation with the Council having statutory responsibilities for domestic abuse accommodation and staying safe accommodation. Devon experiences similar challenges regarding suitable accommodation. The MCNA work supported the Housing Policies moving forward with outreach being important part of engagement and support. Working with the community, voluntary and faith sectors was well established and there were further opportunities to work with Torbay Community and Community Builders in addition to the work already done with YES Brixham and YES Paignton. It was noted that the MCNA could benefit from being part of a central hub together with wider services e.g. health, education, housing and psychology where users could talk about their housing and other needs without being stigmatised for needing support; as well as inclusive recovery focussed community support.

Members were informed that hearing the voice of the user was fundamental and would be explored in different ways, subject to funding, including surveys, speaking to users and their peers on their experiences on what was good and what they wanted to change and continuing those discussions and involving them in the solutions and telling them what had been done as a result.

The Board was advised that response staff and commissioners across the Alliance were busy delivering and overseeing service delivery with constrained capacity to realise the culture and transformational change required of the Alliance Agreement. While progress had been made looking at lived experience and co-production, further focus and work was needed on certain change elements, including workforce development and support for wider alliance across the Teams to achieve synergies and effective ways of working, working closely with Torbay Council Commissioners to collectively learn from experiences.

Members noted that the total funding for the MCNA was between £2m to £3m with approximately £200,000 (Note: following the meeting it was confirmed that this was £798,000 and not £200,000) of additional funding from the Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant (SSMTR) which was at risk for 2025/2026. At the last meeting of the Board, Members raised concern about the lack of sustainable funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence services and the MCNA report also referred to the lack of sustainable grant funding for drug and alcohol services. Members were concerned over the lack of certainty around the future grant funding and the impact on the MCNA.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the improvements made in the performance and quality of support as well as the positive changes made through the Multiple Complex Needs Alliance (MCNA) be acknowledged;

2. that the attendance of members of the MCNA Oversight Board to offer support and challenge to the Alliance Leadership Team be endorsed;
3. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board seeks assurance over the coming 12-months that the transformational opportunities afforded by the Alliance approach are observable and progressing towards realisation and a report be brought to the Board in Autumn 2025 when the Safer Torbay update comes to the Board;
4. that the Cabinet be advised of the Boards concerns:
 - a. in respect of the lack of suitable, affordable move on accommodation which is compromising the functioning and outcomes of the Alliance. This is adversely impacting on those vulnerable residents being supported but unable to move on with their lives. Consideration of funding and access to accommodation to meet the needs these residents is urgently required to address the impacts being faced; and
 - b. in respect of the risk to delivery and outcomes gained from central government grants for drug and alcohol treatment and domestic violence and sexual abuse support due to these coming to an end on 31 March 2025. This external grant funding has significantly benefited the available support, experience and outcomes for vulnerable Torbay residents and consideration needs to be given to this risk, impact and therefore budget considerations in 2025/26 if central government does not reinstate or mainstream this funding. For domestic abuse specifically, there remains a statutory duty to provide support in designated safe accommodation;
5. that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator be requested to write to the local Members of Parliament to ask them what the proposals are around the base funding for drug and alcohol services from 2025/2026 and raise awareness of the risk of loss of critical services in Torbay; and
6. that the Priority and Resources Review Panel be requested to consider the funding for Drug and Alcohol Services as part of the budget review for 2025/2026.

Chairman