

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

9 December 2020

-: Present :-

Councillor Howgate (Chairman)

Councillors Atiya-Alla, Barrand, Bye, Mandy Darling, Foster, Kennedy and Loxton

(Also in attendance: Councillors Barnby, Brooks, Carter, Cowell, Steve Darling, Douglas-Dunbar, Barbara Lewis, Chris Lewis, Long, Mills, Morey, O'Dwyer, Stockman, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas)

21. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brown.

22. Update on Torbay Hospital and Community Services infrastructure project funded through the national Health Infrastructure Programme

Chris Knights, HIP2 Programme Director, Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust outlined the submitted presentation, which provided the background and an update on the Health Infrastructure Plan (HIP) 2 Project. This included key milestones and responses to key lines of enquiry submitted by Members of the Board prior to the meeting.

The Board noted that, whilst the project would be nationally procured due to benefits which included a guaranteed price with the contractor and any underspend being reinvested back into the project, locally based sub-contractors would be required, with percentage requirements set for local workforce and locally based apprenticeships for key roles. The project would also take account of the socio economic impact including delivering a net carbon build through low carbon infrastructure and making use of alternative energy sources such as solar power.

Members acknowledged that the project would result in changes to the way the hospital operates and how staff work, making more use of digital technology, whilst ensuring that face to face and alternative methods were available to patients where appropriate. The main focus was to enable patients to receive care as close to home as possible working with local communities, learning lessons from the changes implemented as a result of Covid-19.

Liz Davenport Chief Executive of Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, Chris Knights Programme Director and Rob Dyer Project Lead responded to questions in relation to:

- how the HIP2 project would address some of the concerns raised through the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection in respect of the emergency department etc.;
- how the Trust would ensure that everyone was taken on the digital journey, especially those who did not have access to digital technology, or people with a learning disability or needing to access mental health services, to ensure that all patients could access the services they need;
- working and engaging with the voluntary sector to support patients and co-design elements of the Programme;
- digital infrastructure, remote monitoring, use of robots and cyber security;
- the impact on services whilst the building is being developed and the changes needed now to ensure that some improvements can be made immediately to the emergency department, which were aligned with the plans for the new build; and
- the importance of increasing prevention to improve people's health and wellbeing and reduce the need for primary or secondary care.

The Board congratulated the Trust and acknowledged that £350m investment by the Government in the HIP2 Programme was the largest investment in Torbay and would have a huge positive social economic impact on Torbay, through improved services and job creation.

23. Nightingale Hospital Exeter and COVID-19 Update

John Harrison, Chief Operating Officer Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust outlined the submitted briefing report in respect of Covid-19, Torbay Hospital and the Nightingale Hospital. Members noted that Torbay was one of the first areas to experience the second wave of Covid-19 within Devon and needed to use more inpatient capacity which had impacted on the delivery of elective care. The peak number of Covid-19 had now passed and was starting to reduce, enabling the hospital to start stepping up their elective services, which had previously been stood down. There were clear referral and discharge protocols and the Trust was ensuring that anyone admitted to the Nightingale Hospital would receive the same level of care as if they were in Torbay Hospital. The Trust had also been providing digital infection control support to residential homes by offering a virtual assessment within the home to provide expert advice to minimise infection risks going forward.

John Harrison Chief Operating Officer, Liz Davenport Chief Executive and Rob Dyer Project Lead responded to questions in relation to:

- use of community hospitals and their capacity;
- use of staff for the Nightingale Hospital and impact on Torbay Hospital of backfilling the staff;
- the 116 bed capacity of the Nightingale Hospital and impact if referrals were made outside of Devon;
- readiness and preparations for third wave after Christmas and what action was being taken to encourage people to social distance and stay safe over the Christmas period; and

- use of private hospitals such as Mount Stuart and how this was funded.

The Board was reassured that appropriate measures were in place to manage Covid-19 for the people of Torbay and gave their thanks to all of the staff involved for their hard work and dedication to keep Torbay's residents safe and cared for.

24. Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services, Councillor Carter, introduced the draft Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy which had recently been out to public consultation. The Strategy set out how the Council intended to work differently with its communities and partners.

The Board endorsed the principles and aspirations of the Strategy, for example working differently, co-operation of partnerships, building trusted relationships, working with partnerships groups and organisations, but sought assurance that the Strategy would actually make a difference and be delivered in light of the past difficulties with some of the key partnerships.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring that the Council was engaging with the right people, as opposed to those who have always regularly engaged with the Council, for example the Youth Trust and Imagine This who were two lead groups working with children and young people across Torbay. Members were encouraged to advise the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Community Services if they were aware of any other groups or organisations who would like to engage with the Council.

Members highlighted the importance of a culture shift from officers saying no due to lack of resources to working with the communities to see what can be achieved, a community engagement fund was due to be launched to assist with this as well as work being supported through Groundwork South West to help communities set up friends of parks groups and support existing friends groups. Ward Facilitators (previously referred to as Ward Ambassadors) had been appointed to help Ward Councillors unblock some of the barriers between services to help their residents.

It was noted that the Strategy referred to all Wards having a Community Partnership but that this was not necessarily the case and this would need to be checked prior to finalising the Strategy.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board considers the Community Engagement and Consultation Programme at the start of the Municipal Year and makes recommendations to the Cabinet (unanimous).

25. Peer Review of Torbay Council's Control and Influence over the Torbay Economic Development Company Ltd (TDA)

The Board considered the submitted report and action plan following the Local Government Association's Peer Review of Torbay Council's control and influence

over the Torbay Economic Development Company Ltd (trading as TDA). The Leader of the Council Councillor Steve Darling and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing Councillor Long provided the rationale behind the review.

The Chief Executive of the TDA, Steve Parrock, gave a presentation which provided background to the operation of the TDA and responded to key lines of enquiry which had been provided by the Board prior to the meeting. The Board noted that the TDA and Council were supportive of the proposals and had already started to implement many of the recommended action points.

The Director of Place, Kevin Mowat who was the Client Lead for TDA explained the positive action taken to date to improve relationships and communication between the TDA and the Council.

The Interim Chief Executive, Anne-Marie Bond, advised that Members had referred to a Croydon report. Mrs Bond explained that a Public Interest Report had been issued by Grant Thornton in respect of Croydon Council on 23 October 2020 as a result of their deteriorating financial position, significant pressure on children's and adult services highlighted by their Auditors which had not been responded to, significant increased borrowing, concerns over the governance and oversight of investments, wholly owned companies and housing company. Action 7 of the peer review included a review of all Council owned companies due to commence in July, in light of the Croydon report the Council was now working with the Local Government Association to see if this could be brought forward to January 2021.

The Board supported the positive steps proposed within the Action Plan, particularly those relating to Member development and training as they acknowledged the importance of ensuring that Members receive the appropriate training to enable them to carry out their roles effectively as well as the increased communication through briefings, newsletters etc. They also welcomed the proposal to bring forward the review of the Council owned companies as they believed this was a key area for improvement.

Members discussed a number of issues in detail including:

- TORVISTA and its registration as a housing provider;
- governance and Companies House arrangements;
- financial risks to the Council of TORVISTA and other subsidiary companies of the TDA;
- teckal status and TDA delivering contracts on behalf of the Council as well as to external organisations; and
- staffing and outcomes delivered by the TDA.

Resolved:

- (i) that the Local Government Association Peer Review Report (as set out at Appendix 1) and the resulting detailed action plan (as set out at Appendix 2 to the submitted report) be endorsed, subject to action 7 being brought

forward to January 2021, if possible, in light of the issues raised in the Croydon report; and

- (ii) that the implementation of the action plan be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on a six monthly basis (unanimous).

(Note: Councillor Barrant left the meeting during discussion of this item and returned prior to consideration of the recommendations.)

Chairman/woman
