

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

6 July 2022

-: Present :-

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar (Chairwoman)

Councillors Barnby, Barrand, Brown, Bye (Vice-Chair), Johns, Kennedy and Loxton

(Also in attendance: Councillors Cowell and Morey)

4. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Atiya-Alla.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 8 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairwoman.

6. Climate Change Emergency Update

Members considered the submitted report which provided an update on the Cabinet's response to the Board's recommendations following the review of Climate Change Emergency. It was noted that the guidance document for developers on climate change had been drafted and training on climate change had also been given to members of the Planning Committee. 21 homes had benefited from the Heat Devon Scheme and approximately 50 homes would benefit from the Sustainable Heat Programme. The Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture, Councillor Morey, and the Service Manager – Strategy and Project Management Team, Adam Luscombe, responded to questions in respect of the following:

- A lot of work was being carried out with the wider Devon area, what does our community want to do in Torbay and what ideas have arisen from the climate conversations.
- Brixham have been protecting their sea grass, what was being done in other areas of Tor Bay to protect and improve our sea beds.
- What was the ITrees concept.
- What engagement was being carried out in the communities to speak to the people who do not come to the climate conversations or formal meetings.
- Has consideration been given to replacing some of the grass areas which have not been cut with wildflowers to reduce the number of areas requiring cutting.

- A new recycling fleet was ordered a while ago, have they all been received and what was the timescale for moving to electric vehicles.
- A number of people in Torbay do not have access to the internet and schemes such as Cosy Devon need to be applied for online, what action and support was there for people who were not computer literate to ensure that eligible people have access to relevant grants.
- How were we communicating grants and opportunities.
- What progress has been made on the LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans).
- What support was available to help people on low incomes to insulate their homes.
- Were libraries and GP surgeries being provided with leaflets raising awareness of climate change and available support.

The Board requested that officers share the ideas arising from the climate conversations with the board and that a briefing note be circulated to all Councillors on the ITrees initiative.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Climate Emergency Officer and Divisional Director for Community and Customer Services be recommended to work with Cosy Devon to explore what support they provide to eligible people who do not have access to the internet to apply for grants through the Cosy Devon scheme to enable them access to these grants.

7. Budget Monitoring Outturn 2021/2022

The Board considered and noted the budget monitoring outturn report for 2021/2022 which provided a high-level budget summary of the Council's revenue and capital position, based on figures on 31 March 2022. The report would be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 12 July 2022 and then be presented to the Council meeting on 21 July 2022 for final sign off. The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Cowell, and the Deputy Head of Finance, Sean Cremer, responded to the following questions:

- What assurance can be given that SWISCo costs would not increase further in 2022/23.
- What action was being taken to recruit and retain additional staff as there was still problems in some areas with waste collection and grass cutting.
- How had the figures for Children's Services changed since the budget was set.
- What was the reason for the overspend in post and printing.
- Had the Empty Homes Officer been appointed.
- Was the Council meeting its legal requirements with Grant Thornton not yet signing off the Statement of Accounts.
- Legal Services had a large overspend due to agency staff, do officers work together to share experiences and ideas on recruitment and retention.
- Where did the money come from to cover the TORVISTA loss.

- Could future reports include an addition column so that they show the base budget plus any grants received during the year.
- How the capital monitoring outturn report worked compared to the quarterly reports.
- Were we paying an agency to undertake recruitment.
- What was needed to ensure we could provide more affordable homes and ensure the success of TORVISTA.
- How could officers predict future budgets with the uncertainty around increases in cost of living.
- What action was being taken to address the huge deficit for the Higher Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Members requested a Councillor briefing be held prior to the next budget monitoring report being presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board to raise awareness of the capital programme.

Chairwoman