

## **Meeting of the Council, Wednesday, 20 September 2023**

### **Members' Questions Under Standing Order A12**

A member may only submit three questions for consideration at each Council Meeting. Each member will present their first question in turn, when all the first questions have been dealt with the second and third questions may be asked in turn. The time for member's questions will be limited to a total of 30 minutes.

#### **First Round**

##### **Question 1**

##### **Councillor Steve Darling to the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator (Councillor Twelves (subject to confirmation of appointment by Council))**

Over the weekend of 15-16 July 2023, a Devon Live report identified 37 beaches across Devon listed by Surfers Against Sewage as either storm sewage having been discharged from a sewer overflow in this location within the past 48 hours, or there was a potential for sewage in this area. Beaches that fell into these two categories in Torbay were: Meadfoot, Beacon Cove, Torre Abbey, Hollicombe, Preston Sands, Paignton Sands, Goodrington and St Mary's Bay.

This was reported at the beginning of the school holidays, it is a shame that the government allows such reporting to be possible. This was poor publicity that Torbay could do without at the start of the school holidays. Residents and visitors should be confident that our waters are clean to enjoy.

In light of the above, do you agree that it was a poor judgement not to agree on the 5th of July at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting to undertake a bespoke spotlight review this summer to hold Southwest Water to account on the perception of pollution in our seas?

##### **Question 2**

##### **Councillor Johns to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

My residents in Clifton with Maidenway are starting to get a bit concerned about the Torbay Road and Station Square project and the lack of progress since the change of direction in plans. Please can you confirm when the deadline is to use the £13.36 million Future High Streets Funding?

##### **Question 3**

##### **Councillor Law to Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The road junction of Avenue Road, Falkland Road, Chestnut Avenue, Walnut Road and The Kings Drive does not have a single safe pedestrian crossing. Some people using Torre Valley Car Park to access the Abbey, events on the Meadows and the seafront have reported to me that they feel unsafe to get to Torre Abbey gates.

Indeed from my perspective the current wide layout of the junction seems to encourage drivers to take chances they wouldn't normally take at other junctions, making it even more perilous for pedestrians to cross. Nearby residents and people who use this crossing daily (both drivers and pedestrians) have reported to me that they worry that it is only a matter of time before one of the near misses results in a tragedy.

The Partnership Administration had committed to look at this crossing as part of its wider highways and road safety campaign. Can this Administration give me assurance that they will look at pedestrian road safety at this junction as a matter of priority?

#### **Question 4**

##### **Councillor Fox to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

Since before the pandemic the Council have been consulting on the implementation of a 20 mph zone on and around Higher Fore Street, Barton. When is this project set to be implemented?

#### **Question 5**

##### **Councillor George Darling to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Finance and Corporate Services (Councillor Tyerman)**

Torbay Council are undertaking a 'Have your say' survey with two Roadshow sessions set to be held in Torquay, Paignton and Brixham each and an online survey. Please can you advise what the costs of undertaking this survey and the associated roadshow, including the cost in officer hours of manning the stalls?

#### **Question 6**

##### **Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Finance and Corporate Services (Councillor Tyerman)**

What is the population of the three main towns in Torbay (Paignton, Brixham and Torquay), how many sessions of the 'Your Say!' Residents Survey took place in each town and where did each session take place?

#### **Question 7**

##### **Councillor Harvey to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)**

It was hugely disappointing to find Torbay (in particular Paignton) overlooked in the recent announcement from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner of six new police enquiry desks being opened across the Devon & Cornwall force area - these were Ilfracombe, Honiton, Kingsbridge, Okehampton, Devonport & Looe. It therefore concerns me as to whether the current administration are strongly representing the need for investment of Devon & Cornwall police force resources across Torbay. Can the Cabinet Member provide any assurance of how they are raising such issues?

#### **Question 8**

##### **Councillor Joyce to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Councillor Bye)**

Can the Cabinet Member for Children's Services share with us details about future campaigns to try to increase and promote the number of Foster Carers/Families in the Bay.

#### **Question 9**

##### **Councillor Cowell to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

Can the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking confirm when the Bin Infrastructure Plan is due to be published?

#### **Question 10**

##### **Councillor Douglas-Dunbar to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

In light of the growing evidence of climate change, rising ocean temperatures and wildfires across the globe, how does the Council propose to strengthen the Local Plan to enable it to provide a balanced and sustainable framework for sound decision making whilst ensuring developers are adequately demonstrating their green credentials?

#### **Question 11**

##### **Councillor Virdee to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

In a recent Guardian article dated 25 August 2023, I was not surprised, as a Torquay town trader myself, to see concerns being raised by businesses in Torquay town centre. One business owner described this summer as the "worst in 14 years", with the town looking "deserted". Another estimated that "without support from the government, within the next 12 months, at least another third of the remaining businesses will close". In light of this, over six months ago, Torbay Council agreed in the 2023-24 budget for £100,000 to be allocated to introduce of a new role within the

Council to act as a force for positive change in our town centres. Can you please explain why no appointment has been made?

#### **Question 12**

##### **Councillor Pentney to the Leader of the Council (Councillor David Thomas)**

On the 25 August 2023, Members received a Devon Plymouth and Torbay devolution deal update from officers of Torbay Council. In it, it advised them that a draft deal should be published in early September, for Cabinets in Devon Plymouth and Torbay to consider. Can you please explain why on my submission of this question on the 5 September no such proposals have been shared with members? Where do these further delays lie, is it with Torbay Council or Central Government?

#### **Question 13**

##### **Councillor Carter to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Why did the Conservative administration not have a clear alternative way forward before announcing to residents that the current scheme for Crossways was unviable. What assurances can you give me that the local authority continues to have discussions with those who provide affordable housing, such as registered providers for social housing to ensure that whatever appears on that site will help with the housing crisis in Torbay.

#### **Question 14**

##### **Councillor Penny to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

I understand that over the summer the Local Authority have undertaken a fundamental review of the workings of the TDA, including their subsidiary TorVista Homes. Such reviews can be very supportive of new organisations as they grow into their roles, balancing social, commercial and financial issues.

Accordingly, can you please explain why a representative of TDA/TorVista Management, charged with achieving the Organisation's Goals and fully aware of the challenges involved, was not included on the Review Team?

#### **Question 15**

##### **Councillor Mandy Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The provision of double yellow lines on Old Woods Hill and Briwere Road was advertised some months ago can you please advise when these works are due to be undertaken?

## **Question 16**

### **Councillor Nicolaou to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)**

Ellacombe Park on Market Street has experienced significant amounts of anti-social behaviour including drug paraphernalia, conflict amongst individuals and unauthorised camping. Do you agree with me that part of the solution to this challenge is to enhance surveillance both in person and by CCTV at this location. How is Torbay Council able to work in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police to tackle these matters?

## **Question 17**

### **Councillor Atiya-Alla to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Many local residents tell me breathing new life into our town centres is something the Council should be undertaking. Can you please explain why, at the time of writing this question on 4 September, there has been no meeting of the town deal and future high street steering group?

## **Second Round**

## **Question 18**

### **Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member Children's Services (Councillor Bye)**

I understand that a foster carer at a recent fostering forum put forward this question: young people in 6th form whose birthdays fall early in the school year, when they are 18 years old, may have to move into independent living as the carer/s may live in rented accommodation or have large mortgages and the staying put allowance won't cover it. Will the Council consider enhancing the staying put payments in such situations to help reach the financial cap in the interests of stability for our cared-for young people? Can the Cabinet Member please advise how he is progressing this proposal?

## **Question 19**

### **Councillor Law to Cabinet Member for Place in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

The Partnership Administration had identified 6 further locations for the creation of 20 mph School Zones and in February this year we were assured that we would get an update on the developed locations and estimated costs of the work.

Clearly the summer holidays would have been the ideal time to undertake such work, however as yet none of the necessary public consultations have taken place.

Can you please confirm that the 6 identified 20mph School Zones will still go ahead, and if they are to confirm when the public consultations will commence and when the work is programmed to actually take place?

#### **Question 20**

##### **Councillor Fox to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

Torbay's residents continue to suffer from lower levels of bus services since the pandemic, when does the Torbay Bus Forum next meet?

#### **Question 21**

##### **Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

How regularly are drains/gulleys on Torbay's road network checked by the Council?

#### **Question 22**

##### **Councillor Joyce to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

Can the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking please confirm the budget for each town for Christmas 2023 decorations and lights?

#### **Question 23**

##### **Councillor Johns to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

In my ward Clifton with Maidenway, I have had many complaints relating to dangerous driving and speeding especially on Marldon Road by Maidenway Road.

The speeding has been reported to Highways. The outcome of this reporting did not address mine and the resident's concerns. Please can you share with me what powers the Council has to address dangerous driving and speeding?

#### **Question 24**

##### **Councillor Mandy Darling to the Council's Appointed Outside Body Representative on the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel (Councillor Tyerman)**

To ensure that there is an appropriate level of support to guide dog partnerships, has Devon and Cornwall Police signed up to a Service Level Agreement with Guide Dogs for the Blind?

### **Question 25**

#### **Councillor Harvey to the Chairwoman of the Planning Committee (Councillor Jackie Thomas)**

Some months ago, officers of Torbay Council advised that a viability assessment would be undertaken by an independent expert in respect of the fragrance group stating that the planned for destination hotel on the former Palace Hotel site, Babbacombe Road, Torquay, is now economically unviable. Many months have now passed, and it is reasonable to believe this report has been undertaken. Can this report now be shared with all members of the Council and the public?

### **Question 26**

#### **Councillor Nicolaou to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Finance and Corporate Services (Councillor Tyerman)**

In an Institute of Public Policy Report, it stated that a private sector-funded investment of £13bn in the NHS will actually cost a total £80bn by the time that all interest is paid with interest rates rocketing since the Liz Truss premiership. I understand that Spires College and Homelands Primary School have benefitted under the Private Finance Initiative. Can you please confirm what the Council are predicting the projected total costs of these schemes to be, what the payments have been over the past 5 years, and what the initial investment was?

### **Question 27**

#### **Councillor Virdee to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

Liberal Democrat Councillors have been raising issues around the inappropriate use of the highway for vehicles. On Westhill, we have had some vehicles for sale on the highway. In Plainmoor, there have been hobby vehicles stored inappropriately on the highway, yet officers have advised that Torbay Council does not currently have the resources to investigate and use the Council's powers to tackle this antisocial behaviour. I would welcome your thoughts on how we can address this issue?

### **Question 28**

#### **Councillor Penny to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

I understand that nine Torbay schools were built when the – now acknowledged – defective material Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was being used to construct public buildings.

Given the serious risks involved, can you please advise me:

- A) How many and what type (e.g. Community Centres) of other public buildings were constructed during this period within Torbay; and

B) What investigations the Local Authority have undertaken into their current state of structural safety and repair?

### **Question 29**

#### **Councillor Pentney to the Council Appointed Director on the Torbay Economic Company Ltd, known as TDA (Councillor Brook, Fox and Maddison)**

The TDA recently asked for contributions from the Torquay Neighbourhood Planning Forum totalling £200,000.00 from its Community Infrastructure Levy fund to help with the redevelopment of The Strand project. I understand that this fund should be used to support community grassroots projects, can you as a Council appointed Director of the TDA please explain who authorised the above application.

### **Question 30**

#### **Councillor George Darling to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)**

At the previous full council meeting I enquired about the Premier Resort Fund, whether it could be used in part for the Babbacombe Core Tourism Investment Area in resurfacing the Oddicombe Beach causeway and improving signage in the area. It was kindly agreed for officers to explore the affordability of this, could you please advise on the outcome?

## **Third Round**

### **Question 31**

#### **Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking (Councillor Billings)**

A few weeks ago, I exchanged emails with SWISCo about a broken lock on a gate at the Windmill playing fields in Torquay off of Higher Audley Avenue. When I reported this to the out of hours team on 4 June, I was advised that this would be emailed to officers so it would be dealt with on Monday morning even though I was calling the out of hours team as residents were concerned that the lock had been deliberately broken by travellers who intended to gain access to the site over the weekend. Can you please explain why Torbay Council have adopted this approach to what many would see as an urgent issue?

### **Question 32**

#### **Councillor Long to the Council's appointed Outside Body Representative on the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (Councillors Fellows and Tolchard)**

You were appointed to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority four months Ago. Can you please explain why you have failed to keep all Torbay members up to date in respect of this body in the last few months?



### **Question 33**

#### **Councillor Law to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)**

As the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities can you assure me that you would lobby against the privatisation of the collection of outstanding adult social care debt?

### **Question 34**

#### **Councillor Mandy Darling to the Chairman of the Planning Committee (Councillor Jackie Thomas)**

At August's Planning meeting a scale model had been constructed by an objector to assist myself as a visually impaired member of the committee, this had previously been agreed with officers. Can you explain why you failed to make reasonable adjustments to allow me to access the scale model as part of my consideration of this application?

### **Question 35**

#### **Councillor Fox to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Councillor Bye)**

On 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023, Kevin Foster issued the following statement in respect of the £629,000 being awarded to the Acorn Centre, Torquay to support and encourage young people to socialise, develop new skills and better their physical and mental wellbeing: 'This investment from the Government into our youth services is very welcome. I now look forward to Torbay Council rapidly moving forward to deliver this project as it is vital when we receive such national funding support, residents and the Government promptly see it making a difference for the next generation.' In light of the above, can you please advise the progress of these funds to help facilitate enhanced youth services in Torquay?