

## **Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/2025 – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board – Final Draft**

### **Report to Cabinet to be considered as part of the budget consultation**

#### **Background**

1. The Cabinet's Draft Revenue and Capital Budget proposals for 2024/2025 were published on 9 January 2024 and available on the Council's website at <https://yoursay.torbay.gov.uk/project/0a725c08-c77b-455a-804c-cf64d695c38bhttps://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/finance/budget/budget-202223/>. The Panel also considered the following documents as part of the consultation process:
  - Revenue Report:
    - Budget Overview;
    - Chief Finance Officer Statement;
    - Fees and Charges;
    - Financial Reserves policy;
    - Service changes and savings plans;
    - Equality Impact Assessments;
  - Capital Report:
    - Capital Strategy;
    - Treasury Management Strategy;
    - Grant Funding Pending List;
    - Capital Investment Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27;
  - Review of Events, Culture and Tourism – Draft Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board;
  - Amendment to budget consultation papers; and
  - Key Lines of Enquiry/Questions and Answers.
2. The background papers to the Review can be found at:  
<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/DemocraticServices/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=1960>

3. The Priorities and Resources Review Panel 2024/25 was established to scrutinise the proposals and to make comments, observations and recommendations as necessary. The Review Panel comprised of the Councillors on the Overview and Scrutiny Board, as they had developed a strategic and overall knowledge of the Council's revenue and capital budgets through quarterly monitoring meetings held throughout the year, namely, Councillors Bryant, Brook, Cowell, Steve Darling, Fellows, Joyce, Law, Long, Strang and Twelves (Chaired by Councillor Steve Darling).
4. The Review Panel met (via hybrid arrangements) in public on 23 and 24 January 2024 to hear evidence and on 30 January 2024 in private to agree the key findings and recommendations to the Cabinet. At its public meetings the Panel heard from the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Members as well as from Directors and the Chief Executive.

## Key Findings

5. The Panel considered the proposals for investment in services, efficiencies and income generation for 2024/2025 and the Capital Plan Budget and the findings from their meetings are set out in this report. **The report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 7 February 2024 and approved unanimously and will now be submitted to the Cabinet as part of the consultation process (to be updated after Board on 7 February).**

## Revenue Budget

### 6. Budget Overview

- 6.1 Members acknowledged the excellent work by Members and Officers over the past few years in respect of managing the Council's finances and that this approach had contributed to Torbay Council being awarded the Most Improved Council of the Year in April 2023 by the Local Government Chronicle. This improvement resulted in no specific proposed cuts to services for 2024/2025, however, savings or additional income of £300,000 would need to be identified through the budget consultation process. There were 9 areas identified for efficiencies or savings included within the consultation papers for further development. This was in the context of several Local Authorities issuing Section 114 bankruptcy notices.
- 6.2 The proposals included investing:
  - £300,000 in Operation Brighter Bay;
  - £300,000 in Operation Town Centres;
  - £1m one off investment to the Events Reserve over a four-year period (£250,000 per year);
  - £500,000 of increased discount through the revised Council Tax Support Scheme:

- £1.1m (funded through the Social Care Grant) increase in contract fee for Adult Social Care;
- £1.9m (funded through the Social Care Grant) to meet service demand and inflationary increases to pay and provider costs for Children's Services;
- £900,000 to meet the pressures of temporary accommodation and preventing homelessness;
- £200,000 on residents discount scheme;
- £200,000 for repairs and maintenance;
- £150,000 allocated to fund the management and operation of activities previously undertaken by Tor Vista Homes; and
- £1m investment into Oldway.

6.3 The proposals would set a Council Tax rate of 2.75% plus the 2% for adult social care. With each 1% of Council tax generating £840,000 of additional income to deliver services.

6.4 In relation to an increased emphasis on affordable housing Members questioned how more affordable homes would be provided through the budget proposals. It was suggested that most of the investment in affordable housing was contained within the Capital Programme with projects such as the redevelopment of St Kilda's being brought forward shortly, and the Council was working with its regeneration partners on four key projects (2 in Paignton and 2 in Torquay) which were in their early phases, some of which may include affordable housing. There were also challenges through the Planning process where developers were demonstrating that previously approved schemes would no longer be viable if the agreed affordable housing contributions were required.

6.5 Members were advised that the Director of Pride in Place had tasked the new Head of Housing Delivery to review all the options for delivery of affordable housing and bring them forward to Members so that this could inform the revised Housing Strategy and future delivery of housing options, including affordable housing. Members felt there should be Revenue Budget investment to help facilitate the delivery of affordable housing in Torbay and that the options being explored should include improving relationships with housing providers and consideration of creating a Housing Revenue Account to show the Council's commitment to increasing the number of affordable housing units available and shaping the market for the delivery of more affordable housing and particularly social rented housing.

6.6 It was noted that the Government had announced additional funding for local authorities, although it was not yet known how much or where this money would need to be spent. Members suggested that, once the additional funding had been confirmed the Cabinet should review how this could be used to free up funds to create an enabling fund to assist with provision of affordable housing in Torbay, to be used through the Housing Delivery Group as part of the 2024/2025 delivery plan, to include activities such as:

- progressing Torre Marine;
- work on temporary accommodation which could include considering potential for temporary uses on some of the Council owned sites and/or acquisition of stock from market housing;
- continuing to engage with Homes England and use the Levelling Up Partnership and the new Homes England Strategy, which is more place focused, as a way to deepen the Council's connection; and
- considering as part of the review of Council assets opportunities for disposal or development of a range of sites which may require further funding to support development of the sites.

6.7 Members questioned how priorities for affordable housing had been communicated with officers and were advised that key worker, affordable and temporary housing had been raised with the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities as part of the Levelling Up discussions for additional Government funding. Children's Services colleagues were also aware and focussed on delivering housing to care experienced young people.

6.8 The proposals referenced working towards an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating for Children's Services and Members questioned what needed to be done, how this was addressed within the budget and what targets had been set for officers. It was noted that this would involve embedding best practice already underway and the Cabinet Member for Children's Services gave credit to the previous Administration for the progress in Children's Services moving from 'inadequate' to 'good' making sure children are safe as well as implementing the recommendations from the Joint Area Targeted Inspection (JTAI). There was an ambition to go beyond children feeling safe, to ensure they thrive and achieve more uniformity across services. More work was needed for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), training, accommodation and youth service accommodation. The whole Council, including both Members and Officers, were supportive of the objective to work towards 'outstanding' and Members noted that updated targets would be set once the Council's Community and Corporate Plan had been approved.

6.9 Members questioned the definition of investment and if the additional £1.9m for Children's Services would meet the needs of the service and young people. It was noted that the Service was looking at different ways of working for our young people, for example working with partners such as South Devon College, the Council and other employers to take on care experienced young people as well using the Family Hub model, which the Council was a trailblazer for.

6.10 Members challenged the delivery of the proposed savings in respect of school transport as the wording was the same as last year and no young people had successfully moved to independent travel so far and children had a statutory right to transport for their school career once granted. It was noted that the

proposal for school transport needed to be developed further before it was taken forward and that the budget did not rely on making savings in 2024/2025 and that this was one of 9 key areas being explored to inform longer term savings once all options had been developed and agreed.

## **7. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

- 7.1 The Chief Finance Officer advised that this was the first year he had been in post and that the budget had been developed in the context of future challenges and the savings plans identified were big areas which would have a significant impact on the Council in the future if the issues were not addressed and savings made. Torbay Council was in a better financial position than other Councils, which was a testimony to the work done to date. 2025/2026 would be a challenging year with the new contract for the Integrated Care Organisation for Adult Social Care and Health, a drop in the allocation of Business Rates compared to the settlement, cost of social care going up above the level of funding provided, issues around homelessness, housing and temporary accommodation. Therefore, the Council was looking at three-year proposals taking into account the medium-term financial position of the Council.

## **8. Fees and Charges**

- 8.1 Members noted that the fees and charges had generally been increased by 4% inflationary costs with a few areas increasing more as set out in the submitted papers.
- 8.2 Members noted the written responses to the key lines of enquiry as set out in the published document. It was noted that the webpage 'check what items can be taken' to the Household Waste Recycling Centre regarding charges for DIY waste was out of date and officers would be requested to update this to reflect that there were no longer charges for this waste, up to specified limits.

(Note: at the start of the meeting Councillor Fellows declared a pecuniary interest as a self-employed taxi driver, but did not need to leave the meeting as the fees and charges were not discussed relating to this).

## **9. Financial Reserves policy**

- 9.1 The Director of Finance had undertaken a review of the Council's Reserves and had consolidated many of the 50 reserves which had been held for a number of years, where there had been no financial movement over a period of two years or more, and those without a clear future spend commitment had been absorbed into the General Fund Reserve or Comprehensive Spending Review Reserve following consideration of the purpose of the reserves and had included the use of one off reserves for Tor Vista, Schools/Westlands Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Oldway, dissolving some of the smaller

reserves and creating the table of reserves set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

- 9.2 The Financial Reserves Policy identified the use of reserves for one off spend. The Collection Fund was high and it was proposed to reduce this to £3m and the General Fund was proposed to be increased to £7.6m which equated to 5% of the Council's NET budget.
- 9.3 Members noted the written responses to the key lines of enquiry as set out in the published document.
- 9.4 Members supported the General Fund Reserve being maintained at 5% of the Council's NET budget but questioned the reduction in the Housing related reserves from £1.809m to £1m. It was noted that this reduction was due to grants from the Government being handed out. The Housing Reserve included housing benefit and discretionary housing allowance.
- 9.5 Members acknowledged that the Council Tax collection rate for those in receipt of Council Tax Support was lower at around 59% but that it was hoped the new banded Council Tax Support scheme would help to alleviate this, but officers would need to closely monitor collection rates moving forward.
- 9.6 It was questioned whether the £100,000 identified in the motion (set out below) submitted to the Council to drive forward more 20 MPH zones had been included within the budget. It was noted that this had not been included but that the Director of Finance had written a report which would be presented to the Council meeting on 1 February 2024, which suggested that additional funding for 20 MPH Zones should be considered as part of the budget setting process and Members supported the Cabinet identifying additional funding to support this as part of this review.

Motion: "There continue to be high levels of concerns over road safety which have been expressed to us by residents in many parts of Torbay about the excessive speed of traffic in residential areas particularly on arterial routes near or outside schools.

We believe that this is putting the safety of pedestrians at risk, including parents with young children in prams and buggies, as well as for wheelchair users, the frail and elderly, and anybody attempting just to cross a road.

We believe that some of the roads in greatest need of urgent action to control vehicle speeds include our older ex-Council estates and high density areas, which often have a predominance of terraced housing.

The principle has already been agreed by the Council to introduce 20mph neighbourhoods especially in close proximity to our schools and in relation to areas which have a high concentration of accidents. At the 22 February 2023 Transport and Parking Working Party, it was stated that there was strong

support from schools across Torbay suffering from speeding traffic impacting on their pupils for such 20mph neighbourhoods. The following schemes were earmarked for action:

### **Phase One**

Hayes School (Totnes Road & St Michael's Road) (Hayes Road already has permanent 20mph zone)

Cockington School (Avenue Road & Mill Lane areas)

Sacred Heart School (Cecil Road area)

Barton Academy (Barton Hill Road)

Torquay Academy (Barton Road & Cricketfield Road areas)

St Cuthbert Maine (Teignmouth Road & Westhill Road areas) (could include St Margaret's and Homelands Schools)

### **Phase Two**

Roselands Primary School (Roselands Drive area)

White Rock Primary School (Davies Avenue/Gibson Road areas)

Sherwell Valley Primary School (Upper Cockington Lane/Drake Avenue/Hawkins Avenue

areas)

Curledge Street Primary School (will be included within the proposed Fisher Street zone

but consideration to expanding zone into Dartmouth Road area)

Ilsham Primary School (Ilsham Road and Babbacombe Road areas)

Eden Park Primary School (in quiet residential area, no 20 limit in place)

St Margaret Clitherow School (in quiet residential area, no 20 limit in place)

Chestnut Primary School (in quiet residential areas, no 20 limit in place)

As at the 19 October 2023 we note with concern that the above schemes which have been earmarked for action are not being delivered at pace. One particular example where the need for reduced traffic speeds is overdue is Barton Hill Road, from the Barton shopping centre, to Hele roundabout, via Barton Academy, where there is an urgent need to reduce traffic speeds. We are also aware that accidents continue to happen in the neighbourhood of St Cuthbert Maine with a motorcycle accident where the motorcyclist was hospitalised in early October.

In light of this and in the interests of community safety, therefore the Council is recommended:

That the Director of Finance be instructed to identify £100,000 of one-off money to provide the capacity to take these schemes (as set out above) forward within the next 12 months."

## **10. Service changes and savings plans**

10.1 Members were advised that the Cabinet had not included the savings proposals in the Revenue Budget for 2024/2025 but the 9 areas included

within the consultation were proposals of what would be developed further and discussed with Members.

- 10.2 Members challenged the approach taken as in previous years star chambers had been held with tangible outcomes on how much savings or additional income would be realised. It was explained that the focus had been on how the Council could develop a more sustainable financial position over the medium term. The previous approach resulted in a number of savings targets being placed against budgets where, ultimately, actions were not subsequently delivered resulting in legacy budget pressures..
- 10.3 Members questioned when the Council would know what the impacts were on our communities as a result of the emerging savings plans and were advised that Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) would be developed once the proposals had been worked upon further. A new Partnership and Inclusion Officer was now in post and was working on how to improve our EIAs.
- 10.4 In response to questions it was explained that the high, medium and low related to the initial estimated impact of the proposal and the range of figures was an estimate of the proposed savings which had been put forward to be worked on further. Members sought additional engagement with Overview and Scrutiny as the savings plan proposals develop to enable them to monitor any identified savings.

## **11. Equality Impact Assessments**

- 11.1 Members were informed that the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) did not fully assess the savings plans for each department and that a specific EIA would be developed as part of the governance arrangements for each proposal.
- 11.2 Members noted the written responses to the key lines of enquiry as set out in the published document.
- 11.3 The Cabinet had passed the following motion, at its meeting held on 21 March 2023, around supporting the campaign for care experienced young people to be included under the criteria for protected characteristics and Members requested a proactive approach in that this should be included within the EIA information.

Motion: "That the Cabinet resolves:

- To formally support the Show Us You Care Too campaign which calls for care experience to be made a protected characteristic as part of the Independent Review into Children's Social Care;
- For the council to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views; and



- To continue to build apprenticeship opportunities for care experienced young people.”
- 11.4 It was questioned as to what provision was available for the LGBTQ+ community if they wanted to receive care that may not be available from their provider. Members were advised that each person was dealt with on a case-by-case basis and if a provider was unable to give this support, the person was offered direct payments and was assisted in purchasing care themselves by a social worker. Work was also being carried out to encourage people with protected characteristics to enter the care market.

## Capital Report

### 12. Capital Strategy

- 12.1 Members noted the background to the revised Capital Strategy which sought to provide greater focus each year as to the progress of projects, milestones, approved budgets and deliverability. The Capital Strategy currently proposed that £22m would be spent in 2024/2025 but this was expected to increase as more business cases are approved and new projects added. A number of documents formed part of the Capital Strategy which included Treasury Management Strategy, Grant Funding Pending List, and Capital Investment Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27.
- 12.2 Members noted the written responses to the key lines of enquiry as set out in the published document.
- 12.3 Members discussed the public perception around the investment properties which had been purchased several years ago for properties outside of Torbay and what the policy was to review them and determine if or when it would be appropriate to dispose of any of them or any of the Council's other assets. It was noted that the Council had borrowed £211m to buy the investment properties which generates around £13m which funds the cost of borrowing, contingency costs and provides £4.1m for the Revenue Budget per year. Any decisions would be based on a business plan at the time to enable all options to be evaluated to determine if disposing or keeping an asset was appropriate. Members were advised that as a result of prudent treasury management it was unlikely that the Council would need to borrow further money for the next two years. However, the holding of commercial assets would need to be reviewed before the Council undertook any further borrowing. In light of a lack of a strategy to deal with the disposal of any investment property that has reached a position where it has become financially advantageous to sell off. Such a strategy should be developed within the next 6 months which would address the review of commercial assets and disposal of investment property where financial benefit was identified.

- 12.4 The 4 Year Capital Investment Plan provided an overview of the projects by category that the Council was trying to deliver. There was also a list of projects identified as feasible and developing projects which would be moved to the Plan once they had their business cases and funding approved.
- 12.5 Members had previously received a draft template for monitoring the Capital Plan and suggested that it would be useful to see the date when the project was first added to the Capital Plan, when a decision was made to move it forward and indicative costs approved to measure the speed of development and financial impact of delays to the projects.
- 12.6 Members went into private session to discuss some additional funding which had yet to be announced.

### **13. Key Lines of Enquiry/Questions and Answers.**

- 13.1 Members questioned if the additional £900,000 for homelessness included investment in Leonard Stocks and were advised that there was a separate business case for the Leonard Stocks which was self-funded and due to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2024. The additional money was partly to deal with pressures on temporary accommodation and investment in prevention work. There had already been some success in reducing numbers in temporary accommodation and as this drops it would enable more investment to be directed towards prevention. The aim was to reduce the reliance on temporary accommodation and to focus more on helping people to be successful in their lives moving forward.
- 13.2 Members acknowledged the importance of supporting people with their social care and housing needs within the Adult Social Care budget and recognised that careful consideration would need to be given as the draft savings plans were developed, together with learning from successes such as reablement and focussing on supporting working age people and working with consultants to identify the best options to take forward. Approximately £400,000 had been spent on consultants which was expected to realise £10m recurrent savings.
- 13.3 Members asked how services were joining up on the upgrade/replacement of the Paris IT system. A joint options appraisal was being developed with service users to ensure that any replacement did not disadvantage frontline staff and it would replace an out-of-date system which only one other local authority uses. The new system would also present the opportunity for equality data to be collected.
- 13.4 The written response to Q1, did not mention any budget to tackle deprivation, and Members questioned how this was being addressed. A verbal response was provided that whilst there was no specific budget allocated, key issues were being addressed through the Economic Strategy to enable people to earn more. The Council continued to work with partners around employment and skills, growing jobs and upward skills and helping people to change their

careers. However, it was recognised that the Council and its partners needed to improve targeting some opportunities with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), NHS Mental Health and South Devon College including apprenticeships and improving the way it collects data around this. Transport was another big area affecting household budgets, and the Council was encouraging active transport through 'Torbay on the Move' as this had benefits for climate, health and reduced expenditure. The Council was working in partnership around a sustainable food partnership to provide a more sustainable approach to reduce dependence on food banks and food supermarkets.

- 13.5 Torbay has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest rates of suicide in the country and Members questioned why there was no specific budget or reference to suicide awareness training in the paperwork. Members were informed that training on suicide awareness such as SAFETALK was being rolled out. This activity was co-ordinated by the Public Health Team who leverage funds and this was also a key priority area for partners and the NHS through the Integrated Care Board. There was a commitment to Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Awareness training as well as supporting families and survivors of suicide via peer support etc. Members felt that this offer should be more widely communicated to enable more people to access support and help each other.
- 13.6 Arising from Q21 Members asked how much money was left from the 2023/2024 Household Support Fund (HSF) and if it was likely that the Government would not provide this fund for 2024/2025. It would not be known until 6 March 2024 if the HSF would be continued and Members were concerned over the impact that this would have on vulnerable residents with increasing numbers of people finding themselves in poverty. It was anticipated that all the Household Support Fund would be allocated by the end of 2023/2024. Members were advised that the Council Tax Support Scheme which added an additional £500,000 would help to mitigate this but the main risk was around food banks. The Council was working on creating a sustainable food partnership working with the food banks and food supermarkets to become more self-sufficient moving towards a social supermarket model which was better for Torbay residents. Help was also provided to reduce rents for those who were statutory homeless. Members suggested the need for assurance that further funding would be made available by the Council to replace some of the funding previously provided through the Household Support Fund. If HSF funding was not available for 2024/2025 funding provided directly by the Council could, for example, be used to support foodbanks/food supermarkets, care leavers, Family Hub issued food vouchers and debt advice etc.
- 13.7 Members were concerned about funding to support community centres and questioned what was being done to help support these valued community hubs. It was noted that most of the Council's assets, including community centres, operated under a fully repairing lease otherwise the costs would fall to the Council and additional funding would need to be found for this. The

Council has a role to support the community centres and help them access external funding which the Council is not able to access (for example Parkfield House was looking for grants to help with their maintenance costs). Members were concerned about the future viability of the community centres if the Council and other partners were unable to provide further support to them and suggested the need for a strategy to be put in place to address that concern.

- 13.8 It was raised as to whether there was funding in the budget to support Council play parks and skateparks, particularly Victoria Skatepark and what the timescale there was for this. Members were advised that Victoria Skatepark had been closed following an inspection and it was not able to be repaired and would require a wholesale replacement. With alternative skateparks in the local area, a decision would need to be made as to what would be the best use of resources. Members highlighted the importance of exploring options for Victoria Skatepark as a valued starter venue as neighbouring Skateparks supported more experienced users and skateboarding was likely to be a legacy sport with the forthcoming Olympics. A review of play parks was currently underway looking at the best options on a ward-by-ward basis. This was expected to be completed by Easter 2024 and Members requested that a copy of this be shared with all Councillors. There was no reduction in the budget for this area, but the Council was exploring how to find better ways of providing good services within existing budgets. Members sought assurance that resources would be appropriately targeted to meet the outcome of the review, taking into account the condition and lack of maintenance of play parks.
- 13.9 Members discussed difficulties in accessing Section 106 contributions towards parks in Shiphay whereas schemes had been implemented in other wards. Members were concerned over the reduction in value of the funding as a result of delays.
- 13.10 Members questioned the approach to prioritisation for highways lining etc. as previous lining seemed to have focussed on some wards and not others. It was noted that heavy duty lorries were initially used but were not suitable for many areas and a 7 tonne truck and 3 ½ tonne lining trailer had been commissioned but that this was also too large for some of the smaller roads. The Cabinet Member for Place, Transport and Parking advised that prioritisation was carried out via a matrix, firstly looking at safety, then most urgent for enforcement and then for reasons around visibility. Members sought written clarity on the prioritisation for highways lining.
- 13.11 Members questioned the split between support and enforcement for the additional £300,000 for Operation Town Centres. This was split 55% for enforcement 45% for support through partnership working with the Police, Mental Health and Homelessness Teams working from the Town Hall via a one stop shop.

- 13.12 It was noted that Community Ward Funds were included within the budget at £2,000 per Member but there was an ambition as part of the Administration's manifesto to increase this in the future.
- 13.13 Members discussed the reasons as to why no specific funding was included in the budget for Sport. It was acknowledged that this was an oversight and previously £225,000 had been included in the budget over four years (£50,000 per annum increased to £75,000 in 2023/2024) but that this had not been carried forward for 2024/2025. It was noted that 40 projects had benefited from £70,000 Back to Sports funding and individuals had also been funded through 'Believe to Achieve' funding for national sports etc. administered through Sport Torbay. It was noted that there was a need to help sports clubs to improve the quality of their bids in order for them to receive funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Members suggested that the Cabinet should identify £75,000 Revenue funding be added to the base budget to support sports in Torbay working in partnership with Sport Torbay.
- 13.14 Members questioned if there was a breakdown on each element of the proposed Residents' Discount Scheme. It was noted that proposals were still being developed to ensure the most cost effective solutions are realised. It was proposed that something should be done around parking and toilets, potentially through an app or card. Members questioned if the temporary Portaloo's would be provided during the season at Corbyn Head and if this was included within the budget. It was confirmed that they would be in place and were included within the budget proposals.
- 13.15 Members noted the written responses to the key lines of enquiry as set out in the published document.

#### **14. Draft Report on the Review of Events, Culture and Tourism**

- 14.1 Members heard about the importance of heritage to Torbay's economy and the ability to unlock additional funding from outside Torbay working with organisations such as the Arts Council and English Heritage and the ongoing work building relationships and working with the Place Board to secure benefits for Torbay. They also received an update on key events such as the English Riviera Airshow and the different community approach being taken this year. The Cabinet Members were confident that the Airshow would be delivered within the £100,000 match fund budget target and that this would ease pressure on the £1m reserve put in place to support events over the next four years. Members questioned the tone of some of the communications surrounding the Airshow. However, those present expressed their support and passion for the Airshow as well as supporting heritage projects, key events and the aspiration for Torbay to be The Premier Resort, working in partnership with the community, voluntary and business sector as well as key partners such as Torbay Culture and the English Riviera Business Improvement District (ERBID).

- 14.2 Members questioned if the intention was to bring forward other events in addition to headline events such as the Airshow. It was noted that potential events were set out through the Destination Management Plan with their Management Group working closely with the ERBID on a shared aspiration for events. The Bay of Lights Illumination trail was proposed to be an annual signature event from 1 December to 2 January so that businesses could prepare for this regular event and help to promote it, with the aim of increasing footfall during the Winter period. There was also an opportunity to explore more activity on and around the water of Tor Bay so that we could use all of the offer to attract more international, higher spending and longer staying visitors.
- 14.3 The Council had run free music events on Torre Abbey for the Jubilee and Coronation and Members questioned if it was proposed to run similar free events again. It was noted that these were one off free events to commemorate these two major national celebrations.
- 14.4 Members questioned if there was still a plan for a Town Centre Manager following a request from traders in Torquay, who could help put events on and help promote the Town Centre. It was confirmed that there was funding within the budget, however, focus had initially been around making the Town Centres cleaner and tackling antisocial behaviour which would be picked up through the additional funding identified through Operation Town Centres and Operation Brighter Bay. Early conversations had taken place about a Torquay Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID) but it was not known if there were sufficient businesses to take this forward.
- 14.5 Members noted the submitted draft report of the Review of Events, Culture and Tourism and endorsed the following recommendations which would be put to the Cabinet meeting on 19 March 2024:

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review how local businesses can become more involved to help promote cultural activity within Torbay, to ensure that local businesses feel connected into UNESCO Global Geopark Status and cultural assets;
2. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review the activities around education and raising the profile of the UNESCO Global Geopark, exploring how to maximise opportunities for education, particularly encouraging national geologists to use the Geopark and Devonian Period etc. and to include increased signage and boards with a particular focus on attracting more out of season opportunities;
3. That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review the resource and capacity of the Events and Culture Team, including administrative

support, and to explore how the independent, voluntary, community and business sectors could contribute to ensure that there is sufficient capacity and resources to deliver:

- a. the Cultural and Heritage Strategies;
  - b. projects where the Council has received significant external funding;
  - c. future ambitions of the Council and its key partners, including the continuation of the £100,000 match funding from the Council to mirror the funding that the English Riviera Business Improvement District Company puts towards the delivery of the Events Strategy and Destination Management Plan;
4. that the Director of Pride in Place and Chief Executive of the English Riviera Business Improvement District be requested to review the communication around how to advertise events taking place in Torbay through <https://www.englishriviera.co.uk/whats-on>, including signposting approved event's organisers to the website, to ensure greater take up especially of smaller events;
  5. that the Director of Pride in Place reviews whether the Torre Abbey pitch and putt contract remains the most appropriate use of the space to meet the Council's cultural and heritage objectives, especially in light of the ongoing damage and annual repair costs to the roof of the Spanish Barn; how the risk of damage to the Spanish Barn can be reduced in future and explore alternative uses for the area, maximising the archaeological history of the site;
  6. that the annual Business Plan for Torre Abbey be reviewed and presented annually to the Overview and Scrutiny Board together with details of performance against the previous plan;
  7. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to ask the Destination Management Group to explore options for working more collaboratively with attractions across Torbay to establish how they can work together to encourage and incentivise visitors to multiple attractions to help increase footfall;
  8. that Members support the proposed revisions set out in the Events Strategy Suggested Updates document which ensures that it is in line with the Destination Management Plan and consider that the Events Strategy remains relevant;
  9. that a report on implementation against the Events Strategy and Destination Management Plan is submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board to review and monitor performance on an annual basis or earlier if budgetary or capacity concerns are identified, to ensure that delivery of the Strategy and Plan remain achievable;

10. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to develop and implement a criteria and application form for headline and feature events based on the Events Strategy and Destination Management Plan to enable the Council to assess applications against that criteria, particularly during the shoulder seasons to ensure that the events taking place on Council land are compliant with the Events Strategy;
  11. that the Director of Pride in Place and the Events Team be requested to assess the effectiveness of the Torbay Events Advisory Panel and whether working with the ERBID and English Riviera Events Collective as an alternative would release capacity within the Team;
  12. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to explore the costs of a feasibility study to assess whether Torbay's meadows and green spaces could be utilised as show grounds; and
  13. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review the information on the Council's website and documents relating to events such as the 'Events in Torbay A Guide for Organisers' and 'Apply to Hold an Event' to make them more accessible.
- 14.6 Members noted the written responses to the key lines of enquiry as set out in the published document.
- 14.7 Members noted the additional funding for Events of £250,000 per year over the next four years and suggested that recommendations 3 and 12 above should be highlighted to the Cabinet to consider as part of the budget setting process, to help alleviate the pressures facing the Events Team, should additional funding be identified as part of the budget setting process.

(Note: at the start of the second meeting, Councillor Jackie Thomas declared a non-pecuniary interest as a former member of the Review Panel and now being the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Events, and Corporate Services.)

## **15. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 15.1 The Priorities and Resources Review Panel reflected and debated the information provided to them, both in writing and orally, following which, recommendations were formed (as set out below). Members welcomed that due to prudent management of the Revenue Budget over the past few years, there were no specific cuts to services identified within the proposals. They also supported a more streamlined Capital Plan focussing on projects with approved funding showing where money would be spent over the next four years to enable better monitoring against delivery of projects.
- 15.2 Members were concerned over the uncertainty in respect of the future of the Household Support Fund and the impact on those in poverty and sought



assurance that alternative provision would be made through identification of further reserves. Whilst recognising the Capital projects and work around temporary accommodation, Members did not feel that the housing crisis and provision of more affordable homes had been sufficiently addressed through the budget and that more funding needed to be identified as well as a clearer steer on how the Council intends to deliver against the Housing Strategy. **On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously (to be updated after the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 7 February 2024).**

15.3 That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. that if further funding through the Household Support Fund for 2024/2025 is not announced or provided by the Government, that additional reserves be identified, in addition to the £1.8m Housing Reserve, to replace some of the funding previously provided through the Household Support Fund by the Government to be used, for example, to support foodbanks/food supermarkets, care leavers, Family Hub issued food vouchers and debt advice and to request the Director of Adult and Community Services to work with the third sector to help identify where the support is most needed;
2. to consider allocating one off funding of £100,000 to implement the 20 MPH Zones identified through the submitted Motion set out at paragraph 9.6;
3. that the Cabinet be requested to work with the Head of Housing and Director of Pride in Place to progress this work as a matter of urgency and once the additional Government funding has been confirmed the Cabinet should review how this can be used to free up funds to create an enabling fund to assist with provision of affordable housing in Torbay, to be used through the Housing Delivery Group as part of the 2024/2025 delivery plan to include activities such as:
  - progressing Torre Marine;
  - work on temporary accommodation which could include considering potential for temporary uses on some of the Council owned sites and/or acquisition of stock from market housing;
  - continuing to engage with Homes England and use the Levelling Up Partnership and the new Homes England Strategy, which is more place focused, as our way to deepen the Council's connection; and
  - considering as part of the review of Council assets opportunities for disposal or development of a range of sites which may require further funding to support development of the sites;

(Note: the Review Panel found that there was no evidence within the Revenue Budget on how affordable housing would be delivered, what options have been considered, including the potential for the Council to further develop its own housing stock and create a

Housing Revenue Account as well as exploring opportunities to work further with registered housing providers).

4. that the new approach to service change and savings plans, lacks a clear timeline and details of the process for the development of the 9 areas and this should be provided to Overview and Scrutiny so that they can schedule the relevant areas into one of the three Boards/Sub-Boards as part of their Work Programmes for 2024/2025

(Note: progress on Savings Plans would be reviewed as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Monthly Briefings so they can identify which ones need to go to which Board/Sub-Board);

5. that, following the motion agreed at Cabinet on 21 March 2023 where the Cabinet agreed to support the Show Us You Care Too campaign which calls for care experience to be made a protective characteristic as part of the Independent Review into Children's Social Care, the Cabinet to take a proactive approach and locally recognise care experience within future Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) information;
6. that a policy on asset retention and disposal of assets be developed and included within the Capital Strategy;
7. to include within the quarterly monitoring and 4 year Capital Strategy, the date when project was first added to Capital Plan, when the Council made a decision to move forward and indicative costs at that time to measure the delivery against the speed of project development;
8. that a plan be developed to address how the Council and its partners can work with Torbay's community centres, to help support them with their maintenance so that they don't end up in crisis and this is brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration;
9. that all Councillors be provided with details as to how the repainting of yellow and white lines on the highways are prioritised and what revenue consideration is given in respect of enforcement;
10. that £75,000 Revenue funding be included in the base budget to support Sport in 2024/2025 and future years;
11. to ensure that the review of play parks secures their future sustainability and additional funding options be explored such as Olympic legacy funding, existing funding opportunities and grants which could help replace assets such as the Victoria Skatepark working in partnership with organisations such as Sport Torbay; and

12. that the following recommendations from the Review of Events, Culture and Tourism be considered as part of the budget setting process, should additional funding be identified through the process:
  - “3. That the Director of Pride in Place be requested to review the resource and capacity of the Events and Culture Team, including administrative support, and to explore how the independent, voluntary, community and business sectors could contribute to ensure that there is sufficient capacity and resources to deliver:
    - a. the Cultural and Heritage Strategies;
    - b. projects where the Council has received significant external funding;
    - c. future ambitions of the Council and its key partners, including the continuation of the £100,000 match funding from the Council to mirror the funding that the English Riviera Business Improvement District Company puts towards the delivery of the Events Strategy and Destination Management Plan; and
12. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to explore the costs of a feasibility study to assess whether Torbay’s meadows and green spaces could be utilised as show grounds.”