

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

13 August 2025

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chairman)

Councillors Atiya-Alla, Cowell, Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Johns, Spacagna (Vice-Chair), Stevens and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye, Mandy Darling (virtual), Fox, Chris Lewis, Penny (virtual), David Thomas, Jacqueline Thomas and Tyerman)

12. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Atiya-Alla in place of Councillor Law.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 9 July 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. Urgent Items

The Board considered the item in Minute 19, and not included on the agenda, the Chairman being of the opinion that it was urgent by reason of special circumstances i.e. the matter having arisen since the agenda was prepared and it was unreasonable to delay a decision until the next meeting.

15. Annual Review of Key Performance Indicators for the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Area Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services - Councillor Bye and the Director of Children's Services - Nancy Meehan provided an overview of the Area SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Inspection of Torbay Local Area Partnership Report and responded to questions. The Director of Women and Children's Improvement NHS Devon - Su Smart, the Strategic Lead of Education and SEND - Hannah Baker and the Divisional Director of Safeguarding - Becky Thompson also responded to questions. The Strategic Lead for Social Care NHS Devon - Sadie Hall was also in attendance.

Councillor Bye highlighted that the SEND Inspection in March 2025 which judged partnership working for SEND was disappointing and similar to other South West Councils. The report did include positive highlights such as the family hubs, youth justice, mental health in schools and SEND Family Voice. A number of improvements had been made since March, including the locality model pilot, speech and language support, capital investment in schools and improving attendance and reduced numbers of exclusions and suspensions, with elected home education still being a challenge.

Members raised the following questions:

- Is Parkfield being used for the sixth form for Mayfield?
- Is there a date for the priority action plan submission?
- How often will the Care Quality Commission (CQC) monitor progress?
- Are teachers trained to support SEND or are experienced teachers recruited?
- Why is there no commissioned learning disability partner?
- What is the waiting list situation for ADHD and other diagnoses?
- Are Torbay's waiting lists average or worse?
- Why was the ICB absent from the recent Children's Continuous Improvement Board?
- How many children are in unregistered alternative provision?
- What is being done to improve transition to adulthood?
- Will children waiting for CAMHS (child and adolescent mental health services) be assessed individually?
- Is it too early to assess work on reducing NEETs (not in education, employment or training)?
- How are children and young people involved in shaping services?
- Are NHS pressure affecting SEND progress?

The following responses were provided:

- Mayfield is expanding and part of the provision is moving to Parkfield and Mayfield has been commissioned to provide additional SEND places.
- The Draft Action Plan has been sent to the Department for Education (DfE) with the final submission due by 2 September 2025.
- The CQC have an initial visit on 18 August 2025 with a formal revisit in 18 months and full inspection in 3 years.
- A new Head of Service for Quality Teaching has been appointed who will oversee training and a peer-to-peer support network is being developed.
- Inspectors misunderstood the local delivery model for learning disabilities; professionals are in place but communication needs improvement.
- There were long waits for ADHD and other diagnosis, which was the same nationally; investment is needed in pathways.
- Waiting lists for mental health are improving; neurodiversity and autism wait times are worse than average.
- The ICB was unable to attend the recent Children's Continuous Improvement Board due to restructuring but an extraordinary meeting was held with the ICB to discuss health issues; the ICB remains committed to partnership working.

- The number of children in unregistered alternative provision had reduced from 72 to 36 with a new model commissioned. Quality assurance for the new model would start in September.
- Support for young people transitioning into adulthood starts at age 14; this includes activities such as tenancy management and life skills.
- Children waiting for CAMHS will be assessed individually, focussing on broader emotional wellbeing support whilst they are waiting.
- There were bespoke programmes in place to support people NEET; for example supported internships were showing success, the Council was also providing support itself for young people with SEND and care experienced young people.
- Children and young people's voices were being heard through Torbay SEND Family Voice and the Youth Forum was actively involved; youth voice is a standing item on the SEND Local Area Improvement Partnership Board (SLAIP). Members were encouraged to signpost people to SEND Family Voice ([Family Voice Torbay](#)).
- The NHS is experiencing a lot of pressures; however, SEND is a priority at Executive and Chair level, and they are committed and have an oversight of the work in Torbay and provide assurance that it is a priority.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board acknowledges the areas highlighted in the submitted report where the Torbay Local Area Partnership was working effectively but recognises that further action is required in order to meet the needs of our children and young people with SEND;

That the Torbay Local Area Partnership be recommended:

2. to provide assurance that Torbay's specialist provision in education can meet our overarching needs for Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and medical needs through existing provision both within schools and through alternative provision and that appropriate reviews are carried out on alternative providers to ensure that they are meeting the needs of our children and young people;
3. to urgently invest in waiting well initiatives for families who are waiting for formal assessment for their SEND to ensure that they are receiving available support and signposting and communicate this widely, as it is recognised that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) will not be able to reduce waiting lists the short term;
4. that details of the pathway for learning disabilities be communicated to the Members of the Board at the earliest opportunity; and
5. to share their action plan on how and when they will address the areas for priority action and areas for improvement identified in the Report on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Area Inspection with all Councillors as soon as it is available and present an update against the action

plan to the Children and Young People' Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board meeting on 19 January 2026.

16. Performance Report 2025/26 - Quarter 1

The Board scrutinised the submitted Performance Report for Quarter 1 2025/2026 which provided an overview of the performance of the Council working towards the ambitions and priorities within the Community and Corporate Plan and the Council Business Plan. 132 performance indicators had been identified and 32 projects.

The Board raised the following questions:

- BP11 – Can you clarify the number of people receiving support via Family Hubs? Will we see accurate figures moving forward?
- Planning performance is still showing red. What are the next steps for monitoring and improvement?
- When do you expect to see a tipping point in performance improvement for Planning?
- Can we have more information on economically inactive people and efforts to get them into work?
- Is youth unemployment the main issue?

The following responses were provided:

- Data collection improvements was underway for Teams to record support via the Family Hubs. The true figure was closer to 11,435. Updated data is expected in Quarter 2.
- Improvements are ongoing within the Planning Service. Enforcement is challenging due to staffing and complex cases with a single case taking up a lot of officer time. The backlog has reduced and more pre-applications have been received. Monthly performance reviews are in place which are showing some improvements. Sustained improvement is expected throughout the year, though there will be some variability (e.g. enforcement).
- UK Shared Prosperity funding has been withdrawn, and it is not clear if this will be replaced in order to support people to get back into work. Work is ongoing with partners such as Eat That Frog and South Devon College. The focus is on NEETs and care-experienced young people. The Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority are prioritising this area.
- In terms of unemployment in Torbay, issues exist at both ends of the age spectrum. This is impacted by seasonal and part-time work dominating the market. There is a need to increase demand and job variety in Torbay.

Resolved (unanimously):

That a detailed report be provided on the performance indicators for the Planning Service for Quarter 3 so that Members can be assured of continuing improvements being made.

17. Budget Monitoring 2025/26 Quarter 1

The Board considered the submitted report which provided a high level summary of the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets for the 2025/2026 Financial Year. The forecasts were based on information at the end of Quarter 1 and showed a predicted overspend of £0.785m mainly due to children's placements and legal services staffing mitigated by underspends in Adult Services and increased income through Treasury Management. There was a revised forecast of the Capital Investment Plan of £76.643m for the period up to 2027/28 with £52.239m planned spend in 2025/26.

The Leader of the Council – Councillor David Thomas outlined a revised Officer recommendation and update in respect of the grant of a capital loan to SWISCo for fleet modernisation which proposed that this be reduced from £4m to £2.5m restricting the purchases up to 31 March 2028 rather than the original six years proposed as a result of the uncertainty around Local Government Reorganisation.

Members raised the following questions:

- Q1 outturn suggests overspend due partly due to ongoing challenges in recruitment in Legal Services, which is a national issue, what action is being taken to address this?
- The monitoring report was changed to only include approved Capital Projects. If so, why are projects such as Edginswell station included?
- What about visibility of pipeline projects?
- Why is the original budget values for some service areas different from the budget digest? (a written response would be provided.)
- Is the £49k for Edginswell capital or revenue?
- Torre Abbey overspend was due to low café/wedding use – has this improved?
- What is the highways road closure income?
- Adult social care budget is positive – could this be lost with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)?
- What caused the £95k overspend in HR and Payroll?

The following responses were provided:

- Additional money was put into the budget for Legal Services this year but there continues to be challenges which is the same nationally. The focus has been through the sustainability plan focussing upon what needs to be done to recruit and retain staff. The Chief Executive gave assurance that Directors had asked to review this area more quickly than previously planned with an additional lens focussing on where the demand is coming from and assure Directors that the demand is being appropriately managed and mitigated against.
- Edginswell figure is a holding figure as there were certain actions required to keep the Planning permission live.
- Usage may have picked up but the income was still below budgeted levels due to ongoing works at Torre Abbey.
- The highways road closure is income the Council receives when roads are closed e.g. from utility companies.
- The positive results in Adult Social Care was due to tailored packages, the risk of LGR was acknowledged.

- The £95k overspend in HR and Payroll came from small additional staffing costs, occupational health, and a range of projects requiring additional resource, this was being reviewed to see what action can be taken to balance the budget in-year.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Director of Finance be requested to ensure that future Budget Monitoring reports include an appendix of capital pipeline projects so that Members can keep an overview of them.

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. that the Cabinet notes the forecasted revenue outturn position and amendments made to the published 2025/26 Capital Investment Plan;
2. that, subject to Council approving the additional capital as set out in paragraph 4 below, the Director of Finance be given delegated authority to agree appropriate terms and grant capital loans up to £2.5m to SWISCo for fleet modernisation.

Recommendations for Council

3. that Council approves the revisions to the Capital Investment Plan, set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report; and
4. that Council approve the additional borrowing of £2.5m to facilitate capital loans to SWISCO to enable them to modernise their fleet.

18. Torquay Town Centre Place Vision

The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth – Councillor Chris Lewis and the Director of Regeneration – David Carter outlined the submitted report on the Torquay Town Centre Place Vision document which aimed to attract external investment into Torquay and responded to questions.

Julie Brandon made representations welcoming the inclusion of items within the document that had been taken from the Torquay Neighbourhood Plan, which had been previously consulted on and developed by the community. Ms Brandon suggested the merits of including Cary Green as part of the list of green spaces within the document.

Members raised the following questions:

- Why was there no consultation with Neighbourhood Forums and Ward Councillors?
- Will areas outside the Town Centre benefit from the £20m funding?
- Is this a planning document?
- When will Paignton be considered?
- Is retail still viable in town centres?

- Will the vision be published for small businesses?
- Are investors interested in Debenhams?
- Will the Town Centre regeneration discourage investment in areas like Torre and Upton?
- Why was Paignton Harbour referenced if it discourages investment?

The following responses were provided:

- Consultation occurred in various formats with most of the sites previously subject to consultation.
- The Vision is a marketing and investment document and not a planning document and therefore not subject to any statutory consultation requirements.
- The £20m funding was different funding as part of the Plan for Neighbourhoods which was being managed separately by the community via the Torquay Place Leadership Board ([Committee details - Torquay Place Leadership Board](#)).
- Paignton and Brixham Town Centre Vision documents are due in the Autumn 2025.
- It was proposed that the retail footprint would be reduced with focus on quality and sustainability.
- The Vision document will be published as a PDF on the regeneration website, which can then be shared.
- Two investors have visited the Bay so far, and it is planned to seek a decision on this by the end of 2025.
- Plan for Neighbourhoods will allow suggestions for investment in other areas of Torquay.
- Officers will revisit Paignton Harbour with Ward Members; no decision has been made yet on that area.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. that, subject to the following, the Board supports the document and that Cabinet approve the use of the Torquay Vision document (as set out at Appendix 1) to steer both the delivery of current regeneration sites and the development of future proposals for the sites and areas of public realm identified by the vision as suggested priorities:
 - a. to consider including reference to Cary Green as a green space and that it is a public realm investment opportunity, as well as including the Town Hall, Electric House and Town Hall car park as potential development sites; and
 - b. to consider consulting with the Torquay Neighbourhood Forum prior to sign off by the Cabinet;
- 1.2 that delegated authority be given to the Director of Pride in Place to make minor amendments to the vision in consultation with the Leader of the Council, noting that any proposed substantial amendments will be presented to Cabinet for approval; and

- 1.3 that the Cabinet engage with the Ward Councillors for the emerging Brixham Town Centre Vision and Paignton Town Centre Vision documents prior to them being submitted.

19. Report of the Local Government Reorganisation Task and Finish Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator introduced the submitted report of the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Task and Finish Group following their workshop held on 5 August 2025 in respect of an options appraisal for LGR, which was before the Board for sign off.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the report of the Local Government Reorganisation Task and Finish Group summarising the discussions on strengths and weaknesses of the options under consideration be forwarded to the Council's Project Team to help to inform the Council's Options Appraisal.

Chairman