

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

10 September 2025

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillors Brook, Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Johns, Law, Stevens and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Chris Lewis, David Thomas, Jacqueline Thomas, Tranter and Tyerman)

20. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Cowell. It was also reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Brook in place of Councillor Spacagna.

21. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 August 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. Overview Report for Safer Torbay (Community Safety Partnership)

The Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities, Councillor Tranter introduced the overview report for Safer Torbay (Community Safety Partnership). Sarah Omell, Community Safety Partnership Manager, presented key findings from the strategic assessment and outlined priorities and challenges of Safer Torbay, which included:

- Reduction in reported antisocial behaviour and rape; increase in other sexual offences and shoplifting.
- Need for improved data contextualisation and integration of wider sources of intelligence.
- Focus on Prevent Duty, safeguarding, and community tension monitoring.
- A commendation from Home Office for the Channel programme.
- Emphasis on community engagement and resilience.
- Development of a performance framework and assurance mechanisms.
- Updates on modern slavery, serious violence duty, and violence against women and girls.
- The Strategy for next three years including a new Antisocial behaviour (ASB) priority and broader societal challenges.

Members raised the following Questions:

- Why was the Safer Torbay report not presented to the Adult Social Care and Health Sub-Board?
- The data related to 2023/2024, when will Members receive updated data?
- How do we interpret the rising figures—are they due to increased reporting?
- Is antisocial behaviour as prevalent as it is perceived?
- How can Councillors be informed about rising community tensions?
- Is there a mechanism for community members to report concerns, such as rumours about individuals?
- How is community intelligence gathered and used?
- What is the main source of referrals under Prevent Duty? Are schools actively involved?
- Why are there few referrals from Adult Social Care?
- Who contributed to the Council's modern slavery statement?
- Is there feedback on the Mentors in Violence programme?
- What is SWAN (Safety of Women at Night Charter) and how does it work in practice?
- How can women be made more aware of their own safety?
- Will the Safer Travel App be downloadable via QR code? Is there a communications plan for the App?
- What is the current staffing situation for Town Centre Officers?
- Are Street Marshalls still operating?
- Will the new analyst look at hate crime data?
- Are there plans to expand CCTV coverage, especially around the harbourside?
- Is online extremism monitored?

The following responses were provided:

- The Safer Torbay report is a cross-cutting partnership report, not specific to one service area which was why it goes annually to the main Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board was considering specific topics for example domestic abuse.
- A refreshed dataset will be available by November 2025 and will be circulated to all Members once it is available.
- The rising figures may be due to increased reporting, especially for shoplifting and sexual offences. Reporting mechanisms have changed, and confidence in reporting may vary particularly in respect of sexual offences. ASB data from the Council can show trends, but multiple datasets are needed for full understanding.
- Recorded crime isn't always a reliable indicator. Lived experience and victim feedback are more insightful. Fear of crime also plays a role in perception.
- Councillors should contact the Safer Communities Team for advice if they have any concerns around crime or safety or report it through the portal <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/pais>. Internal communications may be used to alert staff and Councillors when necessary.
- Relevant concerns from the community or Councillors should be directed to Housing or Safer Communities Teams for appropriate handling (e.g. email safercommunities@torbay.gov.uk).

- The Police are good at identifying tensions but need more local intelligence. Council staff and the voluntary sector can help gather and respond to this information.
- Around 50% of Prevent referrals come from schools. Schools are represented on the Devon and Torbay Prevent Board.
- The lack of referrals from Adult Social Care is being reviewed by the Prevent Board.
- The Council's modern slavery statement was a procedural document; future versions will incorporate lived experience.
- Evaluation has been completed on the Mentors in Violence programme and a written response will be provided to Members.
- SWAN is a charter to help businesses and organisation identify ways in which they can help make Torbay safer at night for women. [Torbay's Safety of Women at Night Charter - Torbay Council](#) Initial funding supported training and awareness, but more is needed to expand.
- The upcoming Safer Travel App will include advisory content, guides, and a tracker feature. It is due to be launched at the end of October 2025. Following risk assessments, the App will include a QR code. It will be promoted through the SWAN network and hospitality sector. There is a communications plan working with community and voluntary sector engagement. The Team has editing capability to adapt content in the future.
- 6 FTE Town Centre Officer posts are filled, including 4 experienced officers. Two new officers are starting in September and October.
- Street Marshalls are still operating using funding from the Home Office until the end of the financial year.
- The new analyst will look at hate crime data. It was recognised that there was significant underreporting of hate crime. The Council's Partnership and Inclusion Manager was engaging with minority communities to gather insights.
- There are no plans to expand CCTV coverage, especially around the harbourside, but Members were encouraged to report any concerns to the Safer Torbay Team.
- The Police monitor online extremism. Safer Torbay does not conduct proactive surveillance. Members should report any concerns that they have to <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/pais>.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the 2026 annual Safer Torbay report includes an update on the implementation of the following:
 - Tracking crime, ASB and health data from police and other partners.
 - Gathering feedback from the community and partners through regular consultation and informal engagement including assessing fear of crime.
 - Conducting qualitative assessments of interventions.
 - Maintaining an overarching risk register against delivery of this strategy.
 - Conducting focussed assurance activity based on risk.
 - Carrying out 'deep dives' into emerging issues or areas of concern.
 - Producing quarterly and annual performance reports.

- Carrying out an annual 'health check' on how we are doing as a partnership against our stated principles; and
2. that the Priority and Resources Review Panel be requested to consider recommending funding for a data analyst post to support Safer Torbay with evidence-based evaluation of their work.

Chair