

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

14 January 2026

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillors Bryant, Douglas-Dunbar, Foster, Harvey, Johns, Law, Spacagna (Vice-Chair), Stevens and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye, Cowell, Barbara Lewis, Chris Lewis, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas)

44. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Independent Group and Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Harvey and Bryant in place of Councillors Cowell and Fellows for this meeting. However, Councillor Cowell was present in the virtual meeting room but was not part of the decision-making process.

45. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 4 December 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

46. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harvey declared Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to her in respect of Minute 49.

47. Annual Review of the Events Strategy as aligned with Destination Management Plan

The Cabinet Member for Tourism, Events & Culture and Corporate Services – Councillor Jackie Thomas outlined the submitted report which provided an annual review of the Events Strategy as aligned with the Destination Management Plan. Councillor Jackie Thomas responded to questions together with the Director of Pride in Place – Alan Denby and Head of Culture and Events – Phil Black.

Members asked questions in respect of the following:

- What does the English Riviera Business Improvement District's (ERBID's) £20k contribution look like in practice, and how does it support events?

- Were local businesses contributing more to the Airshow, and how was engagement being improved?
- Do businesses value other community events like Pirates Festival, and how do they contribute?
- How will items marked “to be progressed next quarter” be driven forward?
- Why does the Airshow overspend figure appear inconsistent, and could it be clarified?
- The Bay of Lights income was not final, what was the status of ice rink, bar, and reinstatement costs?
- What impact did the extra £31,500 allocation to the Airshow have on other events?
- Was merchandise for the Airshow (e.g., bears, T-shirts) worth continuing?
- Could the Bay of Lights offer be expanded into Paignton, and what would it cost?
- Should the Council buy hostile vehicle mitigation (HVM) equipment instead of paying hire fees, with opportunities to lease it out to others?
- Was there a sponsorship template, and how was sponsorship structured?
- How wide was the sponsorship net, Bay-wide or beyond?
- Would the Friday Airshow night run again, and what factors affect this decision?
- How was the Bay of Lights footfall measured, and does it account for children?
- Was the ice rink fully booked, and if so, how often?
- How much did the ice rink contribute to overall footfall increase?
- Do we track social value of events, not just economic impact?
- The report focussed on £800,000 spent on two events, how would future reports include wider town centres?
- How would Children’s Week and Airshow adapt to sea defence works?
- Was the Council tracking high street impact during events, especially the Bay of Lights which focuses around the harbour and seafront area, and could security costs be reduced?
- What was the timeline for ERBID3 ballot and revised Destination Management Plan?
- How would resourcing issues (e.g. Torbay Pride delays) be addressed given Team capacity?

The following responses were provided:

- ERBID mainly supports marketing and contributes £20,000 to an events fund covering five events, including the Airshow. ERBID3 consultation was ongoing; future investment profile was not known at this time.
- Businesses now better recognise economic benefits of events; some contribute, and efforts would continue to increase participation.
- Visitor economy broadly agrees events are important; Pirates was strongly community-supported with minimal Council input. Harbourside businesses funded fireworks, boosting attendance this year.
- Items for next quarter were tracked via a matrix circulated before the meeting.
- Airshow overspend figures changed after adjustments; the final breakdown in the report was accurate.

- Bay of Lights report was written before final figures; updated estimates now include reinstatement and trader income.
- Extra £31,500 for Airshow came from contingency; fewer smaller events may have been delivered as a result.
- Merchandise unsold stock from the Airshow could be reused this year;
- Bay of Lights aims for economic uplift, not profit, overnight stays had increased significantly this year.
- Expansion to Paignton would cost £140,000–£180,000; the Council was exploring Arts Council funding and other opportunities. However, the implications of Martyn's Law add security costs, with vandalism and reinstatement costs also rising.
- Buying HVM equipment was under review; acquisition was expensive, but the Council could offset costs by renting to others.
- Sponsorship app developed over years; currently under review with Milligan to leverage contacts and marketing expertise.
- Sponsorship outreach would be as wide as possible, with tiered levels for affordability; concentrated push planned over next six months.
- Friday Airshow night will run again if flying attribute (e.g., Typhoon sunset flight) was secured; decision expected mid-March.
- Footfall measured via HUQ Industries mobile signal data; reliable for trends but excludes those without phones; year-on-year comparability maintained.
- The ice rink was fully booked for 18 of 28 days, with around 17,000 attendees; it was a trial this year and was considered successful and likely to return.
- The ice rink contributed significantly to footfall uplift; movement patterns were tracked when visitors left the rink.
- Social value not currently tracked; future reports would include high-level social value calculations.
- The £800k spend was noted at it was agreed that future reports would cover full events portfolio, not just headline events.
- Children's Week and Airshow would adapt and the compounds had been relocated to minimise impact from sea defence works on Paignton Green.
- There was no current work on non-event area impacts. Security costs were procured via tender; rates were standard; a review was planned to explore cost reduction.
- An all Member briefing was held in October 2025 on ERBID3 and DMP with the DMP coming to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in August 2026.
- Recruitment was underway to address Team capacity; Riviera Collective forum was used for events to raise issues.

Members noted the submitted report and agreed the following actions for the Director of Pride in Place:

1. To provide a finalised Bay of Lights income and expenditure spreadsheet to the Board.
2. To include high-level social value calculations in all future event reports.
3. To arrange an updated all Member briefing on ERBID3 and DMP.
4. To include updates on all major events in future reports.

48. Torbay Economic Development Company - Closure and re-integration into Torbay Council

The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth – Councillor Chris Lewis outlined the submitted report which provided an update on closure and reintegration into Torbay Council of the Torbay Economic Development Company known as TDA. Councillor Chris Lewis responded to questions together with the Director of Pride in Place – Alan Denby.

- When would “reduce service delivery costs” move from Amber to Green?
- Was there a plan for streamlining operational delivery, and how was it tracked?
- How were projects monitored, what governance was in place?
- Why was there still no assurance on TUPE numbers, redundancies, and handling of TDA businesses?
- What happened to TDA sub-committees and governance arrangements?
- What were the transition costs, and why hasn’t the summary been published?
- Were previous external customers and income streams retained under Council control?
- Why were former TDA staff not handling planning applications like Debenhams?
- The Senior Leadership Team seemed larger—where were the efficiencies?

The following responses were received:

- Savings were difficult to isolate due to budget complexity; full integration was expected by 2026/27;
- Amber status reflects reporting clarity. A streamlining plan was included in the project documents; the Pride in Place restructure and Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery changes underway would score Green now.
- Projects were monitored by the Cabinet Regeneration and Capital Working Party. It was noted that Members could request focus on specific projects at those meetings.
- No redundancies had occurred but some officers chose to leave the Council (a written response would be provided on TUPE numbers).
- The Council aims for quicker delivery under single unit.
- Governance shifted from full Board plus sub-committees to main Board; articles of association need adjustment; TORVISTA Homes dissolved, others remain.
- Transition costs include HR advice, IT adjustments, contract termination (a written updated summary on transition costs would be provided to the Board).
- Some external work continues (schools, education trusts); other local authority work had ceased; the Council could still trade directly with other organisations and can also trade through CASE Consultants.
- Planning applications were previously commissioned externally with reports submitted by TDA; the model continues (e.g. Willmott Dixon).
- The increases to the Senior Leadership Team were not at as a result of this work, only one senior TDA manager transferred with others at lower grades.

Resolved:

1. that the Chief Executive be recommended to ensure any trading companies or arms length structures are supported by robust governance mechanisms to minimise risks and maintaining both effective delivery and a focus on the Council's vision; and
2. that a report on the costs and efficiencies arising from the transfer of the TDA to Torbay Council be brought back to the Board in July 2026, and Members of the Board to work on the details of what they wish to be included within the report.

49. Revenue and Capital Budget 2026/2027 - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Board considered the draft report which had been prepared following the meetings of the Priorities and Resources Review Panel 2026/2027 held during December 2025 and January 2026. The Review Panel had considered the Cabinet's Revenue and Capital Plan Budget proposals for 2026/2027 and the report set out the Panel's views, conclusions and recommendations.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the report to the Cabinet on the Revenue and Capital Plan Budget 2026/2027 be approved.

(Note: prior to consideration of the item in Minute 49, Councillor Harvey declared Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to her and withdrew from the meeting.)

Chair