

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

8 April 2026

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

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

(Also in attendance: Councillors Billings, George Darling, Mandy Darling, Chris Lewis and David Thomas)

63. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 11 March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

64. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

65. Cockington Court

The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth – Councillor Chris Lewis outlined the submitted report which provided an update on Cockington Court and responded to questions together with the Director of Pride in Place – Alan Denby and Head of Economy - Carl Wyard.

Members raised the following questions:

- Were current uses making the most of the site's potential (e.g. weddings, events)?
- Why was the Business Plan not renewed after 2021?
- How can footfall and income be increased?
- What role should the site play for example heritage asset, events venue, visitor attraction?
- How many events currently take place?
- What opportunities exist to integrate Cockington Court activity with Torre Abbey?
- When will a new Strategic Plan/Business Plan be available?
- How could relationships with village businesses be strengthened?
- What were the long-term options for the café?

The following responses were received:

- The previous Business Plan expired due to significant organisational and operational changes.
- A full review is now underway covering all Council heritage assets.
- Weddings alone were unlikely to make the site financially sustainable so other options were being explored.
- Events were currently limited with Apple Day remaining the largest event.
- Greater collaboration with businesses and the village is planned.
- A new Strategic Plan and Business Plan will address:
 - Footfall;
 - Events;
 - Financial sustainability; and
 - Integration with other assets.

The Board acknowledged the work underway to help promote Cockington as a destination, working with local residents and businesses to ensure that opportunities were explored and realised as well as linking with other tourism and heritage venues to improve the offer available and encourage more footfall and spend.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the draft Strategic and Business Plans for Cockington and Torre Abbey be submitted to the Board on 12 August 2026 to enable Members to have assurance that the Council is working with the traders and community to make the most of Cockington and Torre Abbey.

66. Review of Memorial Bench Policy

The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking – Councillor Billings outlined the submitted report which provided an update on a review of the Memorial Bench Policy and fees following the submission of a Notice of Motion and responded to questions together with the Director of Pride in Place – Alan Denby.

Members raised the following questions:

- How were pricing levels calculated and benchmarked?
- Why was a high initial pricing structure introduced and then revised?
- What maintenance costs were included under each time period?
- How many benches have required full replacement or partial repair? (A written response would be provided for this and condition and maintenance of existing benches.)
- How much did the different benches cost for Zone 1 and Zone 2? (A written response would be provided.)
- What would happen in seafront areas if people do not sponsor memorial benches (it was noted that the new sea walls in Preston and Paignton included a large amount of seating in the designs, but a written response would be provided on how additional seating requirements would be addressed.)
- What happens to older or historic benches?
- Who pays if a bench is vandalised or deteriorates after the initial term?

- How will sponsor contact data be collected and kept up to date?
- How does the Policy differ between conservation and non-conservation areas?
- Why offer a 25-year term if benches are unlikely to last that long?
- How does reuse of benches work in practice?

The following responses were received:

- Pricing reflects location, footfall and conservation area requirements.
- Two pricing bands were used due to varying delivery and maintenance costs for the benches used.
- Five-year sponsorship includes full maintenance and repair or replacement if the bench gets damaged.
- Renewal options include £35 administration fee every five years and an optional guaranteed maintenance at 25% of a new bench cost after the first five years, if the maintenance fee was not paid the sponsor would be responsible for any associated costs (this would be made clearer in the revised Policy).
- Torbay Council currently absorbs the risk of vandalism, damage and decay costs (unlike most authorities).
- Most existing benches are older than 20 years and were likely to require replacement.
- Historical data gaps were acknowledged and will be addressed with new processes in place.
- The cost of the 25 year offer takes into account the likely need to replace benches multiple times over that period but gives certainty of the bench over a longer period.
- Reuse and shared bench options will be clarified in the revised Policy.

Resolved:

That the proposed revised Memorial Bench Policy be presented to a further meeting of the Board, together with detailed benchmarking information, a table showing clear costs and rules around what is covered under each of the time periods proposed, the age and condition of the current benches and assurance that up to date data will be collected and maintained moving forward.

67. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/2026

The Board received the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2025/2026 which celebrated the work undertaken over the past year and would be presented to the Adjourned Annual Council meeting on 14 May 2026.

Members thanked the Democratic Service Team Leader for all her work in supporting Overview and Scrutiny over the past 12 months and drafting the Annual Report on their behalf.

Resolved (unanimously):

That, subject to updating the topic list to reflect the April meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board being cancelled, the Overview

and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2025/2026 be approved and submitted to the Adjourned Annual Council meeting on 14 May 2026.

68. Initial Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2026/2027

The Board received the Initial Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board and the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board for 2026/2027. The Democratic Services Team Leader highlighted some updates to the submitted documents which are detailed in the decision below.

Resolved (unanimously):

That, subject to the below additions, the initial Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for 2026/2027 be approved as set out in the submitted report, and kept under regular review by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the two Sub-Boards and the Democratic Services Team Leader with consultation being carried out with other Scrutiny Members via the monthly informal Overview and Scrutiny Briefings:

1. the following changes to the main Overview and Scrutiny Board:
 - add Review of Policy for Council Tax Premium for Long Term Empty and Second Homes to 3 June 2026;
 - add Local Government Reorganisation Update to 8 July 2026;
 - add Regulation 19 Local Plan Preferred Option to 8 July 2026 (prior to Cabinet on 14 July 2026);
 - add update on Review of Play Parks and areas for bids for the Government's new Playgrounds Fund (date to be confirmed);
 - to confirm the date for review of the Playing Pitch Strategy and Sports Strategy;
2. the following changes to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board:
 - remove the item on Family Hub Sustainability as this has been incorporated into the Best Start in Life;
 - add review end to end fostering including the Mockingbird Pilot and Regional Fostering Hubs (date to be confirmed);
 - add Best Start in Life Plan (six monthly) from November 2026;
 - the Regional Adoption Agency Joint Scrutiny Group Annual Report being moved to November 2026; and
3. the following changes to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board:
 - add Tobacco and Vapes Framework 2026-2031 and Specialist Stop Smoking Service Procurement to 21 May 2026;
 - move Adult Social Care Transformation Programme and new ways of working for 2026/2027 following CQC to 18 June 2026;

- move Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme 2026/2027 to 21 May 2026; and
- add Review of Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) Alliance to 16 July 2026.

Chair