

Lessons Learned from the Call-in of the Cabinet's Decision on the Implementation of the English Riviera Beach Standards – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Report to Cabinet on 12 May 2026

Background

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board met on 11 March 2026 to consider details of a call-in by five Members of the Council of the decision of the Cabinet regarding the implementation of the English Riviera Beach Standards (ERBS). The Call-in Promoter, Councillor Law explained her reasons for the call-in as set out in the submitted call-in notice. Members discussed concerns over lack of consultation and engagement in the development of the ERBS, evidence around zones for different activities and potential impacts on safety, and what benefit the ERBS had over the current Blue Flag scheme in terms of water quality and testing.
2. The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking, Councillor Billings responded to each of the questions raised by the call-in notice – a detailed written response has been published on the website see [\(Public Pack\)Implementation of English Riviera Beach Standards Call-in Response Agenda Supplement for Overview and Scrutiny Board, 11/03/2026 17:30](#).
3. The key points included that the ERBS:
 - Would apply to all beaches in Torbay, whereas the Blue Flag scheme only applied to six beaches, namely Breakwater, Brixham; Broadsands, Paignton; Meadfoot, Torquay; Oddicombe, Torquay; Preston, Paignton; and Torre Abbey Sands, Torquay. This did not include the most popular beach which was Goodrington.
 - Would be used as a tool to promote all of the Council's beaches and include visual inspections by SWISCo and Harbour staff in addition to the formal water quality tests carried out by the Environment Agency.
 - Would enable the Council to invest the funding previously allocated to Blue Flags to be spent locally on improvements to the beaches and facilities.
4. The Board heard representations from Ms Julie Brandon (member of the public) and Ms Grace Clifford (Ocean Conservation Trust). Ms Clifford welcomed working with the Council in the future to help promote Torbay's beaches and encourage use by as many people as possible utilising the expertise from the Ocean Conservation Trust.

5. The Board following recommendations to the Cabinet. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously.

6. Recommendations

That the Cabinet be recommended:

6.1 that no further action be taken in respect of the call-in of the Cabinet's decision on the implementation of the English Riviera Beach Standards; and

6.2 that Cabinet be recommended to consider the lessons learned from the call-in of the Cabinet's decision on the implementation of the English Riviera Beach Standards regarding communication and engagement and review their approach to future decisions; and to include the Ocean Conservation Trust in the stakeholder panel.

For information only:

The Overview and Scrutiny Board will receive an annual update on the effectiveness of the implementation of the new English Riviera Beach Standards.