

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

8 July 2026

-: Present :-

Councillor Spacagna (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Cowell, George Darling, Fellows, Fox, Harvey, Johns, Barbara Lewis, Spacagna (Vice-Chair) and Stevens

(Also in attendance: Councillors Billings, Bye, Law (virtually), Long (virtually) and Chris Lewis)

7. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bryant. It was also reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors George Darling, Harvey and Fox in place of Councillors Long, Law and Douglas-Dunbar for this meeting only.

Councillors Law and Long attended the meeting virtually and took part in the discussion but did not vote as they were not Members of the Board for this meeting. The Vice-Chair, Councillor Spacagna Chaired the meeting.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 3 June 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair.

9. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Cowell declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 Torbay Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication as a Member of the Torquay Neighbourhood Forum.

10. Torbay Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication

The Board considered the submitted report on the Torbay Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication, together with the responses to key lines of enquiry and a letter from the Torquay Neighbourhood Forum, which were circulated prior to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chris Lewis outlined the work undertaken by the cross-party Local Plan Working Party and emphasised the importance of submitting the Plan by December 2026. Members were advised that failure to meet this deadline could delay adoption by up to three

years and leave Torbay vulnerable to development pressures due to the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan and five-year housing land supply.

The Board heard a representation from the Chair of the Torquay Neighbourhood Forum, Dr Horder, who expressed concerns regarding the Forum's involvement in the Local Plan process, the treatment of consultation responses and the inclusion and exclusion of specific development sites.

Members discussed the need for a balanced approach to the Plan, the housing target requirements set by Government, the constraints facing Torbay, the treatment of individual sites and the importance of presenting a united position to support progression of the Plan.

Officers advised that the Plan had been developed using an evidence-led approach, that Torbay's environmental and geographical constraints limited the number of deliverable housing sites, and that consultation responses had influenced revisions between Regulation 18 and Regulation 19. It was agreed that the consultation responses received during Regulation 18 and action taken would be shared with Dr Horder and all Councillors.

It was noted that progressing to Regulation 19 remained important regardless of Local Government Reorganisation, with opportunities to review matters following consultation before final submission. Representations on the Regulation 19 consultation, and any resulting recommended modifications, will be considered by the Local Plan Working Party and Full Council, prior to being submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination (Reg 22 stage).

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board supports the Cabinet recommending to Council:

1. that, subject to 2 below, the Torbay Local Plan: Publication Plan (attached as Appendix 2 to the submitted report) be approved for publication for a 6-week consultation under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended);
2. that the Director of Pride in Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth, be delegated authority to make final minor editorial amendments to the Plan and publish supporting technical reports as part of the consultation; and
3. that, in discussions with neighbouring authorities, the Council's position is that Torbay's unmet housing need should be addressed at a sub-regional level, through the Spatial Development Strategy.

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 10, Councillor Cowell declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of the Torquay Neighbourhood Forum.)

11. SWISCo Annual Report 2025/2026

The Board considered the submitted SWISCo Annual Report 2025/26, together with responses to key lines of enquiry which were circulated prior to the meeting. The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking, Councillor Billings highlighted continued progress in service delivery and operational performance.

Members welcomed improvements achieved since SWISCo's establishment, particularly investment in parks and public spaces, whilst raising concerns regarding recycling collections, grass cutting, communication with residents, staffing pressures and highway maintenance.

Members asked questions in respect of the following:

- What proportion of Torbay's total footpath and bridleway network is maintained by SWISCo? (Details on the full rights of way would be provided in writing.)
- What were the current recycling rates and what challenges were affecting performance? (A breakdown of recycling figures would be provided in writing.)
- How can residents access better information about grass cutting and maintenance schedules?
- Can reporting systems provide acknowledgements and completion updates for residents and Councillors reporting on behalf of residents?
- How does SWISCo manage access issues caused by parked vehicles?
- How are staff recruited and supported?
- How are weeds, potholes and road maintenance being managed in residential areas?
- How can communication around missed collections be improved?

The following responses were received:

- Performance had been affected by sickness absence, waste transfer station repair work and operational pressures.
- Collection services had improved and had largely returned to schedule. Every day the Team must reprioritise what can be delivered based on available staff and vehicles, which sometimes meant that green waste collections have to be delayed to enable missed food waste to be collected. The increased volume of cardboard was also having an impact as it was filling up the lorries quickly requiring them to be emptied more regularly.
- A more visible online dashboard was being developed to improve public information. The Council was required by the Department for Transport to publish an annual Local Highways Maintenance Transparency report, with the latest report showing the Council rated green – see [Local Highways Maintenance Transparency Report 2025/2026 - Torbay Council](#).
- When new Traffic Regulation Orders were implemented parking restrictions were put in place restricting access to the roads, where vehicles cause obstructions, the Team will go back as soon as possible to complete the work.
- SWISCo continue to recruit directly with vacancies being advertised on both the SWISCo and Council websites, supplemented by agency staff where necessary. As an employer of choice there were informal arrangements in

place to help employees get to work early, where public transport was not available.

- Weed treatment and highway repairs were progressing through planned and reactive programmes.
- Missed collection information was published online and residents were encouraged to report issues through established channels, if their bins had not been collected within 48 hours of their normal collection day (with bins expected to be left out for this period – see [My bin hasn't been collected - Torbay Council](#)).

Members requested future reports to include greater analysis of recycling figures, including separate reporting of green waste.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board express their thanks and gratitude to the SWISCo staff for all their hard work and note the content of the SWISCo Annual Report 2025/2026 demonstrating SWISCo's continued role as a key delivery partner for place-based services across Torbay; and
2. that Cabinet be recommended to request SWISCo to implement a public dashboard similar to that published for the SWISCo Shareholder Panel, with an ambition to look forward as well as looking back, and for reporting feedback to acknowledge submission and provide feedback that the work has been completed.

12. Costs & efficiencies arising from the closure of Torbay Economic Development Company

The Board considered the submitted report on the costs and efficiencies arising from the closure of the Torbay Economic Development Company. The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chris Lewis placed on record his thanks to the staff for all the work that they had done to ensure a successful transition from Torbay Economic Development Company (known as TDA) to Torbay Council. He highlighted the improved approach to working together across departments on the biggest regeneration programme in the history of Torbay.

Members acknowledged the integration of services and recognised the positive collaborative working now taking place across the Council.

Members asked questions in relation to the following:

- When will the ongoing revenue pressure reduce?
- What are the financial implications of the different accounting approaches previously used?
- How do transition costs compare with longer-term efficiency savings?

The following responses were provided:

- Most ongoing costs related to IT and operational support functions transferred into the Council.
- Further work was required to confirm the overall long-term net financial impact. (A written response be provided on the saving from the fee, income from assets and what the difference is between these and the impact on the revenue budget going forward.)
- Additional efficiencies were expected to emerge through service reviews up to 2027.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board note the financial position including £590,032 transition costs and £227,711 ongoing impact;
2. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board note progress on efficiencies and integration; and
3. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board recognise further efficiencies will be realised through service reviews up to 2027.

13. Local Government Reorganisation Update

The Board considered and noted the submitted report which provided an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was anticipated that the outcome of LGR would be announced on 14 or 15 July before the Government goes on Summer break.

Members received an update on the work undertaken to prepare for the next stage of the reorganisation process. The Director of Corporate Services, Matthew Fairclough-Kay advised that significant progress had been made across key workstreams and that support arrangements were in place to assist with the development of proposals across Devon.

Discussion focused on organisational preparedness and lessons emerging from the work completed to date. It was noted that most workstreams were progressing well, with lower completion rates primarily relating to areas that would not be required immediately at implementation stage. KPMG had been appointed as a strategic partner to assist with the development of future proposals. They have experience of LGR and had worked with the Districts in Devon to develop their proposal so had good knowledge about the area. Ongoing work would focus on prioritisation of resources and management of future budget pressures.