

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

9 September 2026

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

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

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye, David Thomas, Jacqueline Thomas and Tranter)

20. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group and Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Twelves and Fox in place of Councillors Bryant and Johns respectively for this meeting only.

21. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 12 August 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

23. Urgent Items

The Board considered the item in Minute 27, and not included on the agenda, the Chair being of the opinion that it was urgent by reason of special circumstances i.e. the matter having arisen since the agenda was prepared and it was unreasonable to delay a decision until the next meeting.

24. Safer Communities Torbay Annual Review

The Board considered the annual review of Safer Communities Torbay, which outlined partnership activity across community safety, antisocial behaviour, serious violence, domestic abuse, Prevent and safeguarding activities. It was noted that the Police and Probation were unable to attend the meeting and written responses would be sought where appropriate.

Members heard that the review was informed by the strategic assessment of crime and disorder across Torbay and highlighted activity undertaken to address areas of greatest risk and harm. It was noted that antisocial behaviour data was currently affected by data capture issues within Police recording systems and should be treated with caution until corrected.

The Board was advised of ongoing work relating to the Prevent duty, particularly in response to learning emerging from the Southport Inquiry, including work around the identification and management of individuals fixated on violence, community engagement and communication regarding hate crime.

Members were informed of work undertaken through the antisocial behaviour night-time economy group, youth antisocial behaviour initiatives, the Serious Violence Duty, and awareness raising around domestic abuse and community safety.

Members asked questions in respect of the following:

- What types of weapons were being carried and what action was being taken to address weapon possession?
- What impact had Prevent-related communication and engagement activities had on community safety outcomes?
- What support exists for people aged over 25 in relation to serious violence interventions?
- What conclusions could be drawn from antisocial behaviour data where recording methods may distort trends?
- What is the "Adults Stand Back" initiative?
- How was youth antisocial behaviour being addressed in Paignton?
- What can be learned from longer-term crime trends rather than single-year comparisons?
- How were changes in antisocial behaviour recording impacting other data sets such as harassment statistics?
- How was the partnership monitoring the growing impact of cyber crime?
- How much of recorded harassment may relate to online activity?
- Who receives Active Bystander training and could it be made available to schools?
- How do banks share intelligence relating to cyber crime and how was that information used?
- Were individuals fixated on violence becoming more prevalent, and how were they identified and supported?
- Could the "Adults Stand Back" initiative be expanded across Torbay?
- Was activity delivered through Operation Town Centre reflected within the report?

The following responses were received:

- Current weapon possession activity includes targeted operations addressing knife carrying in clubs and other locations. A written breakdown of weapon types and action being taken would be provided by the Police.

- Prevent activity focuses on identifying individuals at risk, supporting reporting routes, strengthening workforce awareness and building community relationships. Local referral numbers remain relatively low.
- Serious Violence Duty funding was primarily directed towards those aged 25 and under. Other services, including domestic abuse work, support adults affected by violence.
- Antisocial behaviour statistics were currently affected by recording issues and further clarification from Police was required before firm conclusions could be drawn.
- “Adults Stand Back” was an emerging initiative that will give young people opportunities to lead discussions and events on antisocial behaviour and related issues, with adults supporting rather than directing the process.
- Multi-agency work involving Police, Youth Justice and other partners was targeting persistent antisocial behaviour in Paignton, including issues within the town centre, Parkfield and beach hut areas etc.
- It was agreed that crime data should be viewed over multiple years rather than relying solely on year-to-year comparisons and this was done by the partnership.
- Further clarity was required from the Police regarding the harassment figures, specifically what this data includes and whether it relates to ASB. This may help explain the decrease in ASB and the corresponding increase in harassment figures.
- Cyber crime was recognised as an emerging challenge and forms part of broader partnership discussions around technological change and risk.
- Online activity may contribute to harassment figures, although data would require further analysis to verify this.
- Active Bystander training was being offered to SWAN (Safety of Women at Night Charter) signatories, Council staff and Councillors, and there was potential to extend delivery to schools through a train-the-trainer approach as it was being delivered in-house.
- Additional information on the sharing and use of cyber crime intelligence from banks will be provided in writing from the Police.
- Concerns regarding individuals fixated on violence have increased alongside technological change and online influences. Partners were reviewing thresholds and approaches to ensure risks were appropriately managed.
- The “Adults Stand Back” initiative will initially be piloted through a single event before wider roll out was considered.
- Activity delivered through Operation Town Centre contributes to antisocial behaviour and community safety work already being reported.

Resolved (unanimously):

That future Safer Communities Torbay annual reports include a detailed breakdown of crime and community safety trends covering the previous three years to provide greater context and support trend analysis.

25. English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark - Terra Firma

The Board considered an update on the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark - Terra Firma project and proposals to strengthen the future sustainability and governance arrangements for the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark.

Members were advised that work had continued on proposals to establish a Community Interest Company (CIC) and secure funding through the Torbay Heritage Programme to provide additional strategic capacity, develop funding bids, generate new income streams and formalise governance arrangements.

Members asked the following questions:

- Could Local Government Reorganisation affect Geopark boundaries?
- How extensive was current engagement with schools?
- How were links being developed with universities and colleges?
- What were the anticipated costs of future place-making, interpretation and signage improvements?
- When will the new Geopark website be available?
- How will governance operate under a Community Interest Company model?
- How will the Council influence and oversee the CIC?
- What size would the CIC Board be?
- How will stakeholders and partner organisations continue to influence decision-making?

The following responses were received:

- Maintaining the existing Geopark boundaries would be preferable as changes could require a new designation process with no guarantee of retaining UNESCO status.
- Engagement with schools was currently limited by capacity and resources, with the proposed CIC intended to strengthen educational outreach.
- Universities and colleges were represented within discussions around future development opportunities, educational programmes and interpretation.
- Future ambitions include enhanced signage, wayfinding and place-making, largely funded through external sources, with only limited Council match funding potentially required.
- The new website was expected to be available within six to eight weeks.
- The proposed governance model centres on a Community Interest Company supported by a strategic lead officer and annual reporting arrangements.
- Council influence was expected to be exercised through representation on the CIC Board, likely through an Officer appointment.
- The proposed CIC Board would comprise approximately four to six members.
- Stakeholder engagement arrangements will form part of the future governance and operating model and will be developed further by the strategic lead.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board supports the creation of a Community Interest Company (CIC) for English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark - Terra Firma and request that they report annually with details of their Business Plan and finances; and
2. that the Director of Pride in Place be requested to give consideration as to how the Strategic Lead will involve and engage with businesses linked to Geopark for example the previous associate members in the new CIC.

26. Interim update on Torquay and Paignton Place Leadership Boards

The Board considered the annual review of the Torbay, Torquay and Paignton Place Leadership Boards.

Members were advised that the Torbay Place Leadership Board continued to provide strategic leadership, whilst the Torquay and Paignton Boards were responsible for overseeing Pride in Place funding and local delivery priorities. The Council continued to act as the accountable body for the various funding streams.

Members raised the following questions:

- What progress has been made by the various Place Leadership Boards?
- Which projects have received funding so far?
- What were the advantages of the Community Interest Company model being pursued by Paignton?
- How flexible was Government guidance regarding investment outside designated boundaries?
- Could investment opportunities be developed to generate future income streams beyond Government funding?
- How will transparency and accessibility of Board information be improved?
- How could community projects access future funding opportunities?

The following responses were received:

- Torbay Place Leadership Board provides strategic oversight, Torquay was progressing funded delivery projects and Paignton was in its early phase and currently focused on engagement and development of its ten-year plan. A copy of the Torquay ten-year plan would be circulated to all Members after the meeting.
- Torquay approved several capital and revenue projects, although funding limitations required prioritisation. The papers can be found at [Browse meetings - Torbay Place Leadership Board](#), [Browse meetings - Torquay Place Leadership Board](#) and [Torbay Story - Paignton Pride in Place](#).
- The Community Interest Company model offers greater operational independence but also introduces new governance and accountability considerations.
- Government guidance permits some investment outside designated areas where clear benefits can be demonstrated for the target community.

- Other areas nationally have explored investment opportunities capable of generating income beyond the life of Government funding programmes.
- Efforts were underway to improve websites, digital engagement and public accessibility of information and minutes.
- Community groups will be able to apply through funding processes established by the respective Boards.

Members requested future update reports provide tables for the Torquay and Paignton Boards showing the funding approved for projects and any relevant updates to the implementation of those projects.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the progress made by the Torbay Place Leadership Board, Torquay Place Leadership Board and Paignton Place Leadership Board, including the steps taken to strengthen governance, transparency and delivery assurance; the emerging role of the Torbay Board in considering the implications of local government reorganisation; and Paignton's proposed phased move towards greater operational independence, subject to legal, financial and governance assurance;
2. that given the independence of the Boards and Torbay Council's important, and sometimes statutory, role in supporting them, the Overview and Scrutiny Board requests an interim update if there are material changes to Government guidance, the funding profile or Board arrangements. Otherwise, the next annual review will be presented in line with the established annual reporting cycle; and
3. to include copies of the Torquay and Paignton ten-year plans as part of Annual Review.

27. Update on Local Government Reorganisation

The Director of Corporate Services, Matthew Fairclough-Kay provided a verbal update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Members were advised that the Government had requested that implementation work on the proposed four-unitary model across Devon cease while a review was undertaken by the Government. Discussions continued between Councils and Government, although no clear indication had been provided regarding future arrangements or timescales. In the meantime, the Council was reprioritising its resources to focus on key priorities of the Council.

The Board noted that funding commitments for local government reorganisation work remained in place, but further clarification from Government was awaited. Members also heard that the Government's focus had shifted towards devolution work while awaiting further direction.

Members asked the following questions:

- What preparatory work has been taking place despite the current pause?

- How quickly could work recommence if Government decided to proceed?
- Will Councils seek reimbursement or access to available Government funding?
- How have staff responded to the latest developments?

The following responses were received:

- Government has paused implementation activity while wider options are considered. No firm timetable has been provided, but any future proposals would require further Government and Parliamentary approval.
- Existing Government funding commitments remain available, although further clarification was awaited.
- Staff responses have been mixed, with further feedback expected through ongoing engagement with senior management and staff groups.

The Board requested that Local Government Reorganisation remain a standing item on future agendas until greater certainty was available.

Chair