



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Tuesday, 9 August 2011

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Baldrey, Barnby, Bent, Butt, Kingscote, Parrott, Pentney and Pountney

(Also in attendance: Councillors Davies, Ellery, Excell, Faulkner (A), James, Lewis, Morey, Richards, Stockman and Thomas (D),
plus Mayor Gordon Oliver)

203 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Penny Burnside and Councillor Cowell.

In accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended for this meeting by including Councillor Baldry instead of Councillor Darling.

204 Call-in – Options for Future Delivery of Tourism, Marketing and Events Support

The Board considered a report relating to the options for the future delivery of tourism, marketing, and events support within the Bay. The report detailed the reasons for a call-in by ten Members of the Council of the decision by the Mayor on 13 July 2011 to instruct Torbay Development Agency to identify the strategic delivery options for the future delivery of tourism, marketing, and events support (assuming the retention of the Riviera International Conference Centre) and report back to full Council within four months.

The Call-in Promoter (Councillor Parrott) set out the reasons for calling in the decision and four of the Call-in Supporters present also addressed the Board about their concerns regarding the decision. The Board was advised of the concerns of another Call-in Supporter who was unable to be present at the meeting. The Board heard that the call-in was due to concerns including a lack of consultation or involvement of the tourism industry in the Mayor's decision, the change of tourism strategy so shortly after the establishment of the English Riviera Tourism Company Ltd (ERTC), the cost of an options review, the value in a review of the Riviera International Conference Centre (RICC), the high risks of undertaking such a review identified in the report to Council on 13 July, and a lack of evidence to support the Mayor's decision.

The Board heard representations from and questioned invited witnesses. The witnesses appearing before the Board were the Chief Executive Officer, ERTC, the Managing Director, RICC, the Executive Lead Member for Tourism and

Environment (and a Council-appointed ERTC Board member) and the Executive Lead Member for Safer Communities and Transport (and the Council-appointed RICC Board member).

The Board was advised by the Chief Executive Officer, ERTC, that the public sector strategic options review proposed would harm the local tourism industry and lead to a loss of private sector participation and financial support for the new tourism strategy. The Board was advised by the Managing Director, RICC, that the proposal to explore options was unsettling, backward-looking, and that company structural changes were not required to achieve closer working. The Managing Director, RICC, informed the Board that there would not be financial benefit in merging the ERTC and the RICC and the options review was not required and potentially costly.

The Board was informed by the Executive Lead Member for Tourism and Environment that the Mayor's decision would produce closer working relationships between the ERTC and the RICC and was not intended to break up the ERTC. She advised the meeting that the options review would examine all options.

The Board was informed by the Executive Lead Member for Safer Communities and Transport that the purpose of the options review was to examine how closer working between the ERTC and the RICC could be achieved.

In response to questions, the Board was advised by the Chief Executive Officer, ERTC, that greater efficiency and co-ordination between organisations did not require a four-month review and the other two high-level options identified in the proposal were either not viable or against national policy.

In reply to questions, the Board was informed that members of the RICC Board were consulted about the proposed options and the ERTC Board was not.

The Board heard representations from members of the public, including ERTC Board members and a representative of the National Trust, who were opposed to the decision of the Mayor.

The Mayor responded to the points raised in the call-in notice and during the meeting. He indicated that his decision had been debated and voted on at Council on 13 July and that the tourism strategy and the options report proposed were intended to be evolutionary. The Mayor advised the meeting of his commitment to the RICC and of the valuable community resource it provided. The Mayor indicated that sport tourism, the cruise ship initiative, and closer links with the Town Centres Company and the Geo-Park were areas that the ERTC had neglected or overlooked.

Board members questioned the Mayor including whether he had anticipated such a negative response to his proposals, why Council had not been advised that consultation over the proposals had not taken place with the ERTC, and whether he might reconsider his decision and allow the private sector and the ERTC to come forward with proposals to promote greater efficiency and co-ordination rather than proceed with the options review. In response, the Board was advised by the Mayor

that he had anticipated such a negative response, that the Chief Executive Officer of Torbay Development Agency had spoken to both the Chief Executive Officer and the Chairman of the ERTC, and that the strategic overview for the tourism industry was the responsibility of the Council. The Mayor indicated that Council had approved the proposed options review and he wanted to see the results of the democratic process.

The Board considered the concerns raised against the Mayor's decision: including the offer from the ERTC Board Chairman to develop plans to achieve closer working with the RICC and improved communication between marketing and events organisations, the development of a Destination Forum, the resources of the local authority likely to be expended on the options review, the commercial risks of the options review, the successes of the ERTC, the viability of combining the ERTC and the RICC, the public costs of establishing the ERTC, the public criticism of the options review, the possible value in a confidential assessment of the RICC, and the loss of industry confidence and support likely from the proposed options review.

The Monitoring Officer provided the Board with advice on the definition of exceptional circumstances as outlined in the Constitution.

Resolved: That the issue be referred to the Council for consideration for the following reasons:

In addition to the reasons within the call-in notice, it is the view of the Overview and Scrutiny Board that Council was not made aware of both the opposition of the tourism industry to the options review and the lack of consultation with the English Riviera Tourism Company Ltd.