

## **Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board**

**9 July 2025**

**-: Present :-**

Councillor Long (Chairman)

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

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

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### **6. Apologies**

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor Twelves in place of Councillor Fellows.

### **7. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 4 June 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. One item requiring clarification due to its absence will be reported to the Board week commencing 14 July 2025.

### **8. SWISCo Annual Report and Business Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking, Councillor Billings and the Managing Director of SWISCo, Matt Reeks provided an overview of the submitted report on the SWISCo Annual Report and Business Plan which presented an annual review of the operation and performance of the Council's wholly owned and controlled company, SWISCo.

The Board asked a number of questions in relation to the following:

- could Park Management Plans be developed to help to inform residents of various information relevant to their areas;
- was there a rolling programme for cleaning of drains and gullies in Torbay;
- was there an in-house facility for recycling of the seaweed that was collected from the beaches within Torbay;
- where could the public submit a request for pink bags for collection of batteries;
- what arrangements are in place to collect waste and recycling collections from roads where the crews are unable to gain access due to parking issues on collection days;

- why did the SWISCo Highways fleet continue to use vehicles with Tor2 branding;
- what work was being completed by SWISCo to encourage more recycling and food waste collections from residents to increase Torbay's recycling collection rate;
- did the overall waste collection figure stated within the annual report include recycling collections and what did the recyclable waste figure equate to;
- do SWISCo receive a high number of requests for replacement blue bags for the recycling of paper due to the bags being lost during the collection process;
- why was SWISCo continuing to use agency staff and
- residents reported several vehicles regularly park in Shedden Hill Car Park for long periods of time, what was SWISCo Management doing to resolve the issue.

The following responses to Members questions were provided:

- Park Management Plans could be developed as in previous years, however additional resource for the completion of this work would be required;
- the gully cleaning crew work on a 5-day week completing a schedule of cyclical emptying of drains and gullies where all areas have one emptying and cleaning annually;
- the seaweed that is collected from the beaches within Torbay was taken to a recycling plant in Marldon, Paignton for processing which is the most economical for SWISCo;
- SWISCo have distributed 15,000 pink bags to residents within Torbay for the collection of household batteries. Residents could request a pink bag through Torbay Council website or by stopping recycling crews who have bags on the truck that could be issued;
- all waste and recycling crews were aware of ongoing problematic areas in regard to blocked access. The crews amend schedules were necessary to alleviate any issues of missed collections by visiting the concerned areas either earlier or later in the day. Should the crews continue to be unable to gain access to the road, then collections would be prioritised for collection the next working day. SWISCo own four narrow access waste collection vehicles and crews do actively when issues occur, either leave a printed notice on the parked cars causing the access issues or post the notices through letterboxes of properties;
- SWISCo have prioritised certain types of vehicles to be replaced through the fleet replacement scheme to ensure that specialist vehicles continue to be operational for service delivery. All vehicles that display Tor2 branding, continue to be in a functional state and will be replaced at appropriate times;
- SWISCo had completed a project to encourage recycling and food waste collection in blocks of flats and houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) where historically they did not receive any food waste or recycling collections. Additionally at the Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC), crews continue to separate the waste collected from general waste collections to check for recyclable items. This process had uncovered that up to 90% of the items within the general waste collections, could be recycled;
- the blue bags for paper collection were introduced as part of the Right Item, Right Box campaign to help the crews during the collection process. Residents

can request replacement or additional blue bags through Torbay Council's website. Alternatively, residents can leave paper for recycling collection in a plastic bag;

- SWISCo have reduced the reliance on agency workers however agency staff continue to be required for waste and recycling collection rounds due to annual leave and unanticipated absences to ensure that all collection rounds have full crew members. SWISCo continue to operate a rigorous procedure for temporary staff to be employed as permanent staff after a 12-week period. Agency staff are also required for seasonal roles as it is more efficient process for SWISCo for roles to be employed via agency staff; and
- the Managing Director explained that he could not provide a definitive answer as to why the number of vehicles are parked for long periods within Shedden Hill Car Park but would endeavour to investigate. However, some crews do not return to the depot during the day for break times and do choose to take their breaks within the vehicles.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the submitted Annual Report and Business Plan and the achievements of SWISCo over the last 12 months;
2. that the Cabinet be recommended to discuss in detail and identify the necessary resources to support the activity of developing the Play Park Strategy and Open spaces strategy through identifying a fixed term contract to be funded through the underspend; and
3. that SWISCo develop draft Park Management Plans for all parks located within Torbay as public documents to be shared with the community.

## **9. Torbay Housing Delivery Plan Annual Review**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance, Councillor Tyerman outlined the submitted report that set out the annual review of the Torbay Housing Delivery Plan which had been amended with additional commentary since the first version that was published in 2024 and responded to questions together with the Head of Strategic Housing and Delivery, Sam Irving.

Members asked questions in relation to what action could be taken against owners of stalled sites to ensure developments progressed; was the Hollicombe site ready for development and if there were any factors stopping the building work to commence; how many people were waiting to be allocated a property in an extra care housing scheme and how many residents were currently living in an extra care housing scheme; what the age range was for allocation of an extra care housing property; what conversations were being held with NHS colleagues in regard to the development of Victoria Square, Paignton; what work was being completed in regard to smaller sites for housing including areas which currently have unoccupied/derelict garages; and what was the current situation at the land for development on Preston Down Road.

In response to questions regarding stalled sites, Members were advised that conversations were held as regularly as possible with owners and developers of

stalled sites to discuss progression of the development of the sites. However, due to increased costs and viability of the various sites, intervention from Homes England would be required to provide funding for developers to continue to redevelop.

Members noted that in relation to the Hollicombe site, that the site had planning permission granted but would require a vast amount of infrastructure and decontamination works to be completed on the land prior to any building work commencing.

The Board noted that a report had commenced to review the extra care housing requirements for both Adult and Children and Young People social care. Once completed, the report would be shared with Members. It was also noted that the extra care housing sector did not have an age expectation and dependent on the care needs of the individual.

Members were advised that Torbay Council's aspiration for the redevelopment of Victoria Square was for a multi-use development and conversations were being held with NHS colleagues regarding occupation of new buildings once built.

Members noted that conversations were ongoing with Registered Providers (RPs) regarding vacant garages located on housing estates and the option of releasing the sites back to Torbay Council to redevelop.

The Board were advised that Torbay Council were waiting for the latest update on the Preston Down Road site from the developers as to progress on the redevelopment of the site.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the submitted Torbay Housing Delivery Plan Annual Review.

## **10. Torre Abbey New Beginnings Chapter One**

The Cabinet Member for Tourism & Culture and Corporate Services, Councillor Jackie Thomas, Torre Abbey Manager, Lucinda Heron and the Service Manager for Culture and Events, Phil Black, presented the submitted report on the Torre Abbey New Beginnings Chapter One project and responded to questions.

Members were advised that this project would be the first stage in a two-part project and that chapter two would follow in succession. The project was the start of the journey to ensure Torre Abbey remained financially stable for the future.

Members asked questions in relation whether any studies had been carried out to identify the biodiversity of the lower meadow; would historical themed events be held on site in the future; would a timetable be provided to Members which included more detail and costs involved in the project; where will the proposed new visitor centre be located and what will the building be used for; how did Management foresee income being generated on site; what plans had been

developed for Community engagement throughout the project; and how would the aspiration of the site becoming 75% carbon neutral by 2030 be achieved.

Members were advised that through the development phase for the site, archaeological advice would be considered. The team currently did not have any data as to the biodiversity of the lower meadow but have been pleased by how the area has rewilded.

The Board were advised that The New Beginnings Project would help to unlock the ability for various events including historical events to be held onsite at Torre Abbey, within the grounds and in the redeveloped Spanish Barn. Conversations were taking place for the Torre Abbey team to visit Glastonbury Abbey to review and learn from the operation of the scheduled monument.

In response to the question regarding a timetable for more detailed information and costs, the Board were advised that the project is currently in the early stages and had recently appointed the new staff roles for the project which included an Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Project Manager and Project Team made up of a Client and Revenue Liaison Manager, Fundraiser and a Stakeholder Engagement and Activity Plan Co-ordinator. A year of surveys would be required to be completed for the site. However, at a future Board meeting, more detailed information could be provided.

Members noted that the proposed new visitor centre would be located outside of the current pay barrier and would include retail space. The introduction of the visitor centre would help to drive footfall of visitors into Torre Abbey.

Members were advised that throughout the two stages of the project, Torre Abbey would remain open for visitors as the regeneration project would have less impact on the Mansion. With the redevelopment and building works to be completed on the Spanish Barn, the Barn would become an all-year-round useable facility with a new ancillary support building built which would include toilet facilities to enable the Spanish Barn to be used for Event Hire.

The Board were advised that a team member had been appointed as a Stakeholder Engagement and Activity Plan Co-ordinator, from within the current team and they would bring their knowledge and existing relationships within Torbay to the role.

Members noted that the main Mansion would never be able to be converted to become carbon neutral due to the complexity and history of the building. However, through the previous redevelopment works to the Abbey, small changes had been implemented to help with energy efficiencies within the Mansion. Through the New Beginnings Scheme, any new buildings would be purpose built and built to be carbon neutral. Within the redevelopment works of the Spanish Barn, a new infrared heating system would be implemented that would heat the people within the building and not just the building itself. The team were also investigating creative methods to insulate the Barn.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the submitted report on the Torre Abbey New Beginnings Chapter One project;
2. that for the lower meadow at Torre Abbey, that environmental aspects are considered as well as archaeological aspects for the meadow; and
3. to bring back to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, an update on the Spanish Barn redevelopment and the results of the various surveys once completed.

#### **11. Local Government Reorganisation in Devon**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor David Thomas and the Chief Executive, Anne-Marie Bond presented the submitted report on Local Government Reorganisation in Devon.

Members were advised that the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Board were sought on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each of the four options. The feedback collated from the Board would be evaluated along with the feedback received through the Public Consultation to submit Torbay Council's final proposal to the Government in November 2025.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the report and supports Torbay Council remaining as it is; and
2. that a Task and Finish Group be created to consider the options and provide a report with feedback on the Council's interim plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Devon as part of the ongoing engagement ahead of developing a final proposal.

Chairman

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