

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

4 December 2025

-: Present :-

Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillors Cowell, George Darling, Fellows, Foster, Johns, Law, Spacagna (Vice-Chair), Stevens and Tolchard

(Also in attendance: Councillors Billings, Barbara Lewis (virtually), Chris Lewis, David Thomas and Jacqueline Thomas (virtually))

38. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities, Councillor Tranter, who was represented by the Leader of the Council, Councillor David Thomas.

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillor George Darling in place of Councillor Douglas-Dunbar.

39. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Board held on 29 October and 5 November 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

40. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

41. Brixham Town Centre Place Vision and Torbay Vision

The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth – Councillor Chris Lewis outlined the submitted Brixham Town Centre Place Vision and overarching Torbay Vision and responded to questions together with the Director of Regeneration and Place Delivery – David Carter. The purpose of the documents was to attract external investment in Brixham and Torbay.

Beth Huntley, member of the public made oral representations in respect of sustainable cycling provision within the Torbay Vision document.

The Mayor of Brixham Town Council, Councillor Nicholls made oral representations in respect of the Brixham Town Centre Place Vision and questioned if the Brixham document should clarify that it seeks external investment rather than Council delivery.

Members raised the following questions:

- What was the purpose of the Vision documents?
- Why does the Brixham Vision include completed projects like South Quay?
- How will language be adapted to reflect Brixham's identity?
- How will the document capture diversity across Torbay?

The following responses were received:

- The purpose of the documents was a regeneration vision to attract external investment, rather than being a delivery plan.
- The Brixham Vision document was a living tool for events such as UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREIIF) and investor engagement which promotes Brixham and identifies potential investment options.
- Feedback had been received from Brixham Town Council which would be incorporated into the final version presented to Cabinet in respect of local identity.
- Focus remains on regeneration of three town centres; community diversity was noted for consideration for future updates.
- The documents will clearly state their purpose as an investment vision.

Resolved (unanimously):

That Overview and Scrutiny Board recommend to Cabinet:

1. that, subject to the inclusion of the comments made by Brixham Town Council and it being made clearer that the intention of the document is a regeneration vision document to encourage external investment in Brixham rather than what the Council will deliver, and inclusion of reference to the ferry and park and ride, the Cabinet approve the use of the Brixham Vision document to steer both the delivery of current regeneration sites and the development of future proposals for the sites and areas of public realm identified by the vision as suggested priorities;
2. that subject to it being made clearer that the intention of the document is a regeneration vision document to encourage external investment in Torbay rather than what the Council will deliver and the document reviewed to ensure that suitable provision for cycling is included, the Cabinet approve the use of the Torbay Vision document to provide an overarching strategic place vision that works with the three Town Centre Visions and influences the delivery of current regeneration sites and the development of future proposals for the sites and areas of public realm identified by the vision as suggested priorities; and
3. that the documents are updated as and when is necessary by presenting the revised document and evidence base to Cabinet.

42. Update on capital investment to implement the Play Park Improvement Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking – Councillor Billings and the Managing Director of SWISCo – Matt Reeks presented the submitted report which provided an update on the Play Park Improvement Strategy and responded to questions. The report set out the progress made to date including the consultation and engagement. The report proposed a focus on capital investment using the £500k for essential safety works whilst developing Masterplans for each park, with prioritisation given to destination play parks.

Margaret Forbes Hamilton, Tormohun Community Partnership and Chair of Torbay Greenspace Forum made oral representations in respect of the engagement carried out to date and the importance of some of the smaller play parks to the local community.

Members raised the following questions:

- What was the timeframe for developing the Masterplans?
- How and who will conduct the consultation and engagement?
- How do we prioritise sites for early consultation?
- How were destination play parks decided?
- Was the small consultation sample representative of Torbay's children across all areas?
- Which voluntary groups were engaged?
- How would different funding streams (Ward funds, donations, Community Infrastructure (CIL)) be tied together?
- How will local schools be involved in consultation?
- Why was engagement limited in deprived wards like Tormohun?
- Why were some parks being decommissioned without replacements?
- What was a cableway?
- Could funding be used for bins and benches in parks?
- When will the Council hear about the Lottery Funding?
- Will skateparks be included in later phases?
- What was being done to access £18m government funding?

The following responses were received:

- There was an aim to complete the Masterplans by Easter for high-priority sites.
- SWISCo staff would lead the work on the Masterplans, working with Play Torbay, schools, and community associations etc.
- Destination parks were based on Member visits and feedback from Play Week; larger parks offer more opportunities to more people.
- It was acknowledged that the sample size was small; future engagement would broaden the reach.
- SWISCo would look to combine Ward funds, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), donations and other funding opportunities during the Master Planning.
- Schools will be involved in site-specific consultations.

- Deprived areas had been considered, there was a commitment from the Managing Director of SWISCo and the Cabinet Member to visit Tormohun parks before Christmas; Barton Downs and Watcombe had been prioritised in the proposals.
- A cableway is a zipline, often decommissioned due to safety concerns.
- Benches and bins could be explored but had not been included in initial funding tranche.
- The previous bid for Lottery Funding was unsuccessful; feedback had been received and further bids and match funding opportunities were being explored.
- Skateparks were included in Phase 3 of the proposals.
- The Government's £18m investment in play parks requires groundwork and Master Planning; no immediate start date had been provided by the Government.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. to provide written clarity on the proposed engagement process, to include in consultation with key community groups such as Torbay Communities, Torbay Greenspace Forum etc.;
2. to ensure that young people are engaged with in a meaningful way in respect of all play parks;
3. that the first tranche of funding should be focussed on repairs and not landscaping and that landscaping should be picked up as part of the later tranche;
4. that the Board note the emerging Play Park Improvement work and acknowledged that this is work on play improvement which will be further developed into a Strategy and used to inform Masterplans; and
5. to provide a written list of which groups have been engaged to date.

43. Operation Brighter Bay and Town Centres

The Leader of the Council – Councillor David Thomas, the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking – Councillor Billings, the Managing Director of SWISCo – Matt Reeks and the Strategic Lead for Community Protection – David Parsons, presented the submitted annual report which provided an update on Operation Town Centres and Operation Brighter Bay and responded to questions. It was agreed that a video on Operation Town Centres would be circulated to Councillors following the meeting.

Margaret Forbes Hamilton, Tormohun Community Partnership and Chair of Torbay Greenspace Forum made oral representations in respect of the weed spraying, recycling rates and the moving to standard timing all year round for gardening from longer hours in the summer and reduced hours in the winter.

Members raised the following questions:

- Why were residential areas neglected for weed spraying with focus being put on tourist and larger footfall areas?
- How would leaf clearance prevent flooding?
- What was being done about faded double-yellow lines?
- Could Members have a schedule for line painting?
- When would the fleet replacement schedule be shared?
- What support was given to people whose tents were removed?
- What support was given to veterans living who were rough sleeping?
- Has crime and antisocial behaviour increased in other areas since PSPOs?
- Do we have full Town Centre Officer coverage?
- Could the Council clean rubbish from Brixham Harbour at low tide?

The following responses were received:

- SWISCo would address weed spraying in residential areas progressively; new equipment was in place and scheduling was planned for next year.
- Two gully tanking crews were working with the sweepers to clear leaves from gullies to prevent flooding.
- 37km of line painting has been covered; it was agreed that a quarterly schedule would be shared with Ward Councillors.
- The fleet replacement schedule would be shared with Members; the Council had approved capital investment recently for replacements.
- The process for tent removal includes outreach, welfare checks, storage of belongings, and signposting to relevant support services, including support for veterans.
- It was noted that shoplifting had increased slightly; PSPOs focus on alcohol and antisocial behaviour, shoplifting was monitored with the Police. Members were advised of UK Partners Against Crime System (UKPAC) which provided a mechanism to report crime and incidences which were then collated and used by the Police – more information can be found at uk-pac.com.
- All Town Centre Officers were in place and provided full coverage including key dates such as New Year's Eve.
- A second patrol vessel had been deployed by the Harbour Authority to help clean the Brixham Inner Harbour area; belly bins were also helping to reduce street litter entering harbour from the streets.
- Information on weed spraying would be provided to Members; prioritisation was based on high footfall areas.
- Recycling rates were based on residential waste only; staffing changes had not reduced capacity.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Director of Pride in Place be requested:

- 1 that Ward Councillors be provided with details of the quarterly schedule for line painting in their Wards, and those that have been completed;

2. that all Members receive a copy of the fleet replacement schedule, including the SWISCo capital programme;
3. that future reports include what weed work had been done as a comparison over the last five years; and
4. to provide all Members with a dashboard of residential delivery for grass cutting and weed spraying;

That the Director of Adult and Community Services be requested:

5. to provide details of those people who have had tents removed and moved into accommodation; and
6. to provide a written response on the number of veterans sleeping rough who have been supported and where they have been signposted to.

Chair