

Meeting of the Council, Thursday, 11 September 2025

Members' Questions Under Standing Order A12

A member may only submit three questions for consideration at each Council Meeting. Each member will present their first question in turn, when all the first questions have been dealt with the second and third questions may be asked in turn. The time for member's questions will be limited to a total of 30 minutes.

First Round

Question 1

Councillor Carter to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Can the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking advise how the local authority (both members and officers) have been supporting the Torbay Rail Line Users Group in the last 2 years?

Answer to Question 1 provided by Councillor Billings

The Council is in contact with the Torbay Rail Line Users Group and attends meetings when invited and allowing for other commitments. Where appropriate there has been a collaborative approach for instance lobbying on specific points.

Question 2

Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Residents have been advising that some drivers are ignoring the new 20mph speed limits in the new 20mph zones. How have the Council been working with the Police to ensure that there is enforcement for the new 20mph zones?

Answer to Question 2 provided by Councillor Billings

Highways officers regularly liaise with the Police Speed Enforcement Team through the Vision Zero South West partnership. From this we are aware that enforcement action has already been undertaken in at least one of the new 20mph locations. We also understand that the Police will be looking to extend these actions to other 20 mph locations over the coming months.

Question 3

Councillor Pentney to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

The paper recycling bank has been removed from Brunswick Square car park in Torquay. Residents have contacted me enquiring when it will be returned. Can the Cabinet member advise when it will return?

Answer to Question 3 provided by Councillor Billings

The paper bank was removed for emptying and due to difficulties accessing the site when attempting to return it has not yet been replaced. SWISCo will continue to try and return the paper bank as soon as possible.

Second Round

Question 4

Councillor Carter to the Leader of the Council (Councillor David Thomas)

Can the council please confirm which elected member is appointed to support the Torbay Rail Line Users Group?

Answer to Question 4 provided by Councillor David Thomas

There isn't an elected Member appointed to the Torbay Rail Line Users Group, as the group is not a Council appointed Outside Body.

Councillor Fellows has attended previously, but has not received an invite post the general election.

Question 5

Councillor Pentney to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

We have been through an entire summer season where Fleet Walk remains hampered by broken lifts and escalators that have been out of action for months. With no repairs in sight, local shoppers, residents and businesses are being let down. Why has the administration failed to act, and what is being done to urgently address this?

Answer to Question 5 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

We are aware lifts and escalators are currently not operational at Fleet Walk, Shopping Centre. As stated previously this equipment is now over 30 years old, and the Council has spent a considerable sum of money over the last few years repairing and replacing failing parts. This situation has become worse in recent months whereby we have spent significant sums of money only to find a few weeks later that further faults arise or parts need replacing. Given the age of the plant, our contractors in many cases are now having to seek the bespoke manufacture of specific parts as they are no longer available. This has resulted in the repeated

closure of the escalators and lengthy delays whilst we await parts. Clearly this situation is not sustainable, spending money on plant which is beyond its economic life.

To this end we have commissioned a review of the operation of the lifts and escalators to not only ensure statutory and insurance compliance, but also future proof Fleet Walk from continued costly reactive maintenance. We expect the recommendations will come forward during September with a range of options and costs for consideration. Work is presently on-going with the passenger lifts, albeit we are awaiting the delivery of some parts. A further temporary repair will also be undertaken shortly on the escalator adjacent to Sports Direct. It is anticipated these should be operational soon.

Question 6

Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Across Torbay residents have been advising for months about weeds and overgrown bushes. Areas include (but are not limited to) Audley Park (Tormohun) Barton Road (Tormohun) Barton Hill Way (Barton with Watcombe), Brownsbridge Road (Barton with Watcombe) Fore Street (Barton with Watcombe), Southern Close (Barton with Watcombe), Shorton Valley Road (Preston), Portland Road (Babbacombe in St Marychurch) the list could go on and on. When will the Council be in a position to deal with the weeds and overgrown bushes epidemic?

Answer to Question 6 provided by Councillor Billings

SWISCo currently deploy two weed control teams with the aim of treating every road a minimum of twice per year. Each team uses a petrol quad bike to apply long lasting residual weed treatment which aims to prevent the growth of weeds. The teams are backed up by a specialist weed ripper that removes the weed via a mechanical brush in order to give the weed treatment the best possible chance of working effectively and also to remove unsightly growth.

Due to the size and resilience of the seed bank in the road and kerb edges, as a result of many years of little or no weed control, there is still substantial weed growth in some areas throughout the spring and summer.

Through the additional funds that were made available through the budget underspend, SWISCo have placed an order for a second weed ripping machine to speed up the clearance process and next spring will be using a contact weed treatment deployed by an enlarged team of operatives to limit the in season growth.

In order to offer some confidence in this approach could I draw Members' attention to the increase in quality and performance of the highway Grass Cutting service. In 2023, three to four cuts were achieved at best throughout the growing season with no additional attention given to premier routes. In 2024, with a combination of system

management and efficiency savings six to seven cuts were delivered as well as a fortnightly service for the premier routes into and around the Bay and with additional investment through the Brighter Bay initiative. In 2025, we are on course to achieve eight cuts as well as an expansion of the premier route service. As the service has improved there have been a dramatic decrease in the number of complaints.

Third Round

Question 7

Councillor Carter to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

I understand Groundwork South were successfully awarded £250,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund to help deliver a three-year project for local families to engage with Westerland Valley country park in educational and cultural and environmental activities and biodiversity improvement. I understand this was awarded in August 2023. However, after significant delay from the local authority who chose not to engage with this opportunity, the £250,000 heritage lottery fund had to be returned. Can the local authority explain why this money was not put to good use to support our communities in Paignton?

Answer to Question 7 provided by Councillor Billings

Thank you for the opportunity to update members on the success of the Clennon Catchment Blue Resilience project, which indeed has been so successful there is a case study about the scheme on the National Lottery Heritage Fund's website.

To remind members, this was a multi-agency nature restoration project operating within green spaces and natural assets across the Clennon catchment area in Torbay. Torbay Council were awarded Green Recovery Challenge Funding (GRCF) from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver job creation and community engagement programmes alongside a capital works scheme which has delivered three attenuation lakes located near Great Parks Community Centre.

By the project's end, all KPIs as stated in the original GRCF application were either met or exceeded. Its primary successes included its implementation of a natural flood management scheme to build climate resilience within the local ecosystem, in addition to a range of infrastructure improvements within the Westerland Valley. Representatives from partner organisations including SWISCo and Groundworks also reported that the project has been successful in achieving its aims regarding physical restoration in Westerland Valley, engagement with the local community and creating jobs within the sector.

As the project was successfully delivered, and funding spent on its intended purpose, no funds were returned to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

As per my earlier email Councillor Carter, sent prior to providing this answer, if there is any other funding that I have not referred to where it would be similarly helpful for me to provide an update to Member's I would be very pleased to do so.

Urgent Question Accepted by The Worshipful Mayor of Torbay in accordance with Council Standing Order A13.2(ii)

Question 8

Councillor George Darling to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

Could the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth advise as to why the Retail Unit Improvement Grant aspect of the Enterprise Fund is limited to only the town centres. Many retailers in our village-highstreets could benefit from this grant, would the cabinet member consider extending the scheme to allow these retailers to apply?

Answer to Urgent Question 8 provided by Councillor Chris Lewis

We did consider the inclusion of other district centres across the Bay, but it was agreed to focus on the town centres from the desire to make a difference by clustering the investment as much as possible. The more areas included the more diluted the outcomes would likely to be.