

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2024

Present:

Councillors Bullivant, D Cox, Hayes, James, C Parker, Nuttall, Radford, Rollason, Ryan, Sanders (Chair), Steemson and Thorne

Members in attendance:

Councillors Buscombe, Hook, Morgan, Nutley and Palethorpe

Apologies:

Councillors Atkins, Dawson, Foden, Hall, Major, Parrot and Rogers

Officers in Attendance:

Matthew Billings, Team Leader NDR Sundry Debt, Revenue and Benefits

Neil Blaney, Head of Place & Commercial Services

Trish Corns, Democratic Services Officer

Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer & Head of Corporate Services

Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

39. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

40. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

41. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

42. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

None.

43. EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Executive forward plan showing issues to be considered over the next few months was noted.

44. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN

The Committee's forward plan showing issues to be considered was noted.

45. SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

Members noted the Minutes of the Executive held on 10 September 2024, and decisions to approve the revised Air Quality Action Plan (2024-29), and the recommendation to Council regarding approval of the 2023/24 draft final accounts and treasury management, the 2024/25 budget monitoring – revenue & capital, and the treasury management lending list.

There were no subsequent questions or comment.

46. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION UPDATES FROM THE COUNCIL'S APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVES

Cllr Buscombe, the Council's appointed representative, reported on the Stover Canal Trust, which included the canal's history, how volunteers were continuously excavating the canal and improving signage. The Trust was also now able to apply for grant funding following the Council's extension of the lease of the land to the Trust, providing evidence of control over the land.

The Trust and volunteers were thanked for their time and effort in bringing a heritage asset to the community to enjoy.

It was noted that as a charity the Trust could apply for funding through the Councillors community fund.

47. STRATA UPDATE AND DELIVERING THE COUNCIL'S DIGITAL OBJECTIVES AS PER THE STRATA BUSINESS PLAN

The Strata Director of IT and Digital Transformation advised how Strata had responded to the Council's aspirations set out in the Digital Strategy, and progress on the delivery of digital objectives in accordance with the Strata Business Plan, through organisational, operational, and transformational enablers. The delivery of the objectives demonstrated improved staff productivity and efficiency, and improved customer experience and quality of council services.

In response to questions from Committee Members the Strata Director referred to the modern 25 improvements being driven forward, the challenges with third party owned software, migration to new systems and training, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) which would open a new level of efficiency. An AI chat box on the Council's website was being piloted which was running at over 80% accuracy and which was dependent of service areas keeping the information up to date.

The full presentation can be seen at the link below.

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 16th September, 2024, 10.00 am - Teignbridge District Council](#)

48. EXECUTIVE MEMBER BIENNIAL UPDATES

Climate change, trees, coast, and flood risk management

The Executive Member for climate change, trees, coast, and flood risk management presented a biennial update to the Committee on services within their portfolio. Staff were thanked for their time in assisting with the update.

The Portfolio Holder particularly referred to the following and showed a YouTube video of the Newton Abbot and Kingsteignton garden communities flood risk and resilience study:

- The climate hub on the council's website which assisted the public in decreasing their carbon footprint.
- Green business grants available from the Council to assist local businesses reduce their carbon footprint.
- The Council's electric vehicle fleet was expected for later this year.
- Broadmeadow sports centre would be undergoing decarb efficiency works soon.
- The River Lemon and Teign Estuary were tidal. The Council was working with national networks to reduce and tackle flood risk to the area.
- Additional national funding for coastal protection looking at The Point breakwater, and the ongoing issue of cliff fall at Dawlish where the cliff face would be stabilised over the next few weeks.

Responses to questions that could not be answered would be made available in the Members Newsletter as follows:

- Where was the data sourced for the Newton Abbot flood scheme?
 - How much has been spent on green infrastructure initiatives over past years?
 - How many additional electric vehicle charging points would be required in the District if we all moved over to EVs, and would the national grid be up to this?
- The Executive Member advised that this information was provided in the draft EV Strategy being worked on by officers and which would be provided to Cllrs when available.

The full presentation can be seen at the link below:

[Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 16th September, 2024, 10.00 am - Teignbridge District Council](#)

Estates, assets, and parking

The Executive Member for estates, assets and parking presented a biennial update to the Committee on services within their portfolio. Staff were thanked for their time in assisting with the update.

The Portfolio Holder particularly referred to:

- Green business grants of £750k available from the Council to assist local businesses reduce their carbon footprint.
- The Strategic Asset Policy was being implemented. Every asset was being assessed for its future use. Town and Parish Council's can apply for asset to be transferred to them.

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- The FHSF- future high street fund - was being implemented in Newton Abbot with the progression of projects. Major works would be completed for Christmas. The Bradley Lane project was being implemented.
- Funding has been made available for local cliff stabilisation at Dawlish.
- The possibility of a purpose-built GP surgery on council land in Teignmouth town centre area was being investigated.
- All involved in the opening of the Meadow Community Centre in Kingsway, Teignmouth were thanked.
- Buckland Community Centre, Newton Abbot had signed a new 5-year lease.

Responses to questions that could not be answered would be made available in the Members Newsletter as follows:

- Would Queen Street be accessible for the town council's 11 November Remembrance Day annual procession through the town centre?
- Was there plans to increase car parking in Teignmouth?

The full presentation can be seen at the link below:

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49. COUNCIL STRATEGY Q1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Consideration was given to the agenda report.

Issues of concern at agenda page 19 related to matters around national targets and the provision of housing which the Council was largely dependent on third parties to provide.

Additional information as to why these targets were continuously underperforming was requested and would be reported to Councillors.

It was proposed by Councillor Steemson, seconded by Councillor Parker and

RESOLVED

The report and actions being taken to rectify any performance issues detailed in the appendix be noted.

50. FEEDBACK ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The Chair of the medium-term financial plan task and finish group presented the agenda report.

It was proposed by Councillor Thorne, seconded by Councillor Radford and

RECOMMENDED to Executive that:

1. The Council Tax Policy is amended to remove the 100% Council Tax exemption (1 month period) for empty, unfurnished properties. This revokes a

decision made by Full Council on 15 January 2013 and concerns only the Class C discount.

2. The Discretionary Non-Domestic (Business) Rate Relief Policy is amended to reflect the following changes:
 - a. £1,500 Cap (no step or phasing) to be introduced across all discretionary relief regardless of organisation type
 - b. 50% maximum award for 'Not for Profit' Organisations (£1,500 Cap would also still apply).
 - c. Maximum two years awards at any one time. After that organisations must re-apply and then depending on circumstances relief can be re-awarded on a one or two year basis if eligible.
 - d. The policy will be strengthened to make it clear that Teignbridge District Council view Discretionary Rate Relief as a short-term assistance to allow the organisation to establish itself and achieve financial stability and are not minded to use discretionary rate relief as a financial top-up for organisations that are not otherwise financially viable.
3. Councillors Community Fund to continue at £1,000 per annum per member with a minimum grant level of £150 to improve the benefits received by the applicant and to ensure that Council resources are used more efficiently.
4. All Service managers to present options for Fees and charges for their area of control to generate an additional 10% income (5% over the assumed MTFP level) from 1 April 2025 together with the implications. In addition, the following charges will be implemented in all Teignbridge Council Car-Parks where the fees currently apply:
 - i. Coach parking to be increased to a flat rate of £10 from £4 (Up to 4 hours) /£6 (All day transferable). All tickets will be transferable between Teignbridge Car-Parks that have Coach Parking spaces
 - ii. Sunday Parking to be increased to £2 from £1.20 (+67%) in all Car-Parks where that rate applies. In the resorts, this is only during the low season of 1 November – 31 March as at other times of the year, charges apply Monday to Sunday.
5. Approval of Council tax increases at the maximum allowed, currently £5.70 (2.99%) in 2024/25.

51. PROPOSED NEW WORKING PRACTICE FOR SCRUTINY DELIVERY

Consideration was given to a new working practice for scrutiny delivery following discussions during recent all Councillor training and briefing sessions with the Director of Practice, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

It was considered that the new practice would provide more efficient scrutiny.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED

- a) The number of formal meetings of the Committee be reduced to 6 and be scheduled alternate months.
- b) Informal pre-scrutiny meetings be held alternate months and include briefings and updates from the Executive and Senior Leadership Team.
- c) Dates for the remainder of the Municipal Year to be as follows:
 - 15 October 2024 - informal pre-scrutiny meeting
 - 12 November - Committee meeting
 - 10 December - informal pre-scrutiny meeting
 - 7 January 2025 - Committee meeting (Budget)
 - 4 February - Committee meeting (Budget)
 - 11 March - informal pre-scrutiny meeting
 - 15 April - Committee meeting

CLLR S SANDERS
Chair