

## Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025 – 26



### Chair's introduction

*“As the following report demonstrates, the past year has been productive in supporting the council in decision making and providing the opportunity for councillors to ask questions of Executive members.*

*The committee has been able to increase focus on key issues and become increasingly forensic in establishing key information leading to enhanced support for decision making.*

*A key wish of the committee is to engage more with residents, a step towards this was achieved by taking a meeting to Teignmouth to hear the call-in decision relating to the plans for the Teignmouth Lido. This was meeting was a great success as local voices and opinions were heard and informed the basis of the recommendations to the Executive.*

*We are in a dynamic environment and will continue to develop the operations and working of the committee as we move forward but it is important that as the committee size was reduced at the last annual full council that all committee members attend both informal and formal meetings.*

*The support of our Democratic Services team has been invaluable, and I would like to extend my personal thanks for their tireless and expert advice”.*

**Councillor Phil Bullivant,  
Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2025- 26**

### 1. The Operation of the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S)

The Council has one Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discharge the duties laid out in the Local Government Act 2000. The Committee comprises of 13 Members and is subject to political proportionality and balance. The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee include: Councillors Phil Bullivant (Chair), Bill Thorne (Vice Chair), David Cox, Robert Hayes, Andrew MacGregor, Jack Major, Colin Parker, Dave Rollason, Mike Ryan, Robert Steemson, Andrew Swain and Jane Taylor. Councillor Mike James was a member until his passing on 1 April 2026.

Highlights of the year include:

- 8 formal Committee meetings, open and webcast to the Public.
- 4 questions were submitted by Members of the Public at Committee meetings.
- 142 responses were received by Members of the Public to the Work Programme issue prioritisation survey.
- 4 informal pre scrutiny meetings.

Specific topics that were considered during the year included:

- Review of the Equality & Diversity Policy in response the Supreme Court decision.
- Police and Crime Commissioner – Police Update
- Annual Community Safety Partnership Review
- Voluntary Sector Annual Report
- Procurement Strategy
- The Modern 25 Programme
- Financial Plan 2026/27 (initial proposals and final)
- Unauthorised encampments
- Revision of the recycling collection service – simpler recycling reforms
- Carbon Action Plans
- NHS Health & Dentistry

It should be noted that the part-time Scrutiny Officer position in the Democratic Services Team was permanently added to the structure from April 2025 demonstrating the council's support for the scrutiny function.

Quarterly meetings have been held with the chairs of Overview & Scrutiny and Audit Committee and their deputies which are now scheduled to take place in March, June, September and December on a rolling basis. This has ensured that there is greater clarity on the roles of each committee, removed the risk of duplication and increased the understanding of each Chair.

Pre-meetings have been introduced one hour in advance of the scheduled meeting times for both the formal and informal meetings to enable the whole committee to discuss the agenda items/reports, to consider areas for questioning and to make the most effective use of the meeting time.

As a trial, a Councillors Work Document was developed to help members of the O&S Committee document their thoughts at the pre-meeting in a structured way for each Agenda item.

The structure of the Work Document includes the following areas:

- Notes in relation to the agenda item
- Relevant Questions to ask/comments to make
- Suggestions of actions, follow up or proposed recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny or Executive

Although some members had developed their own way of working, others appreciated the structure offered by this document so this would continue and be reviewed in February 2027.

Following the meeting held on 13 May 2025, those who attended were invited to provide feedback on the following areas:

- What went well?
- What could be improved?
- What impact did O&S make:
  - you as a Committee Member personally?
  - The Committee as a whole?

One example of change implemented as a result of the feedback is that the layout of the room has been changed for the formal meetings into a wide 'U' shape (including the Chair, Vice-Chair and officers at the front). This ensures that it is clear who the members of the Committee are at each meeting. The most recent Informal pre-scrutiny meeting was set out in a rectangle which worked well, encouraged open dialogue and physically signified the informal nature of the meeting.

## **2. Regular Agenda items at each formal Committee meeting**

### **i) Quarterly Council Strategy Performance Reports**

The Committee is keen to make timely informed recommendations on actions that could be taken to make improvements where the data evidences areas that are underperforming. The nature of the reports means that inevitably the information is retrospective which limits the influence that O&S can have. In 2025- 26 the reports were based on the 'Teignbridge 10' indicators, but the reporting is being developed in Spring 2026 for Quarter 3 in line with the new One Teignbridge Strategy.

The regular performance reporting of the Council Strategy allows Members to track and monitor the delivery of the strategy, examine in detail those areas which are not on track and learn from those which are on track.

### **ii) Biannual reports from Executive members**

Members of the Executive report to the formal O&S Committee bi-annually on the Portfolio that they are responsible for on a rolling programme. To ensure that these reports are focussed on impact and to allow time for members of the O&S Committee to ask questions a template was produced and reports are now completed in advance and circulated with the agenda where possible, avoiding lengthy presentations.

The structure of the report includes the following areas:

- Services and legal responsibilities covered by Executive Member remit
- Strategic Plan objectives
- Service Delivery updates (inc. budget monitoring, performance information, risks, customer feedback)
- Upcoming decisions, how Overview and Scrutiny can support the delivery of the strategic plan or any other information relevant for the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Plan

All of the Executive Members attended over the year to present their reports and allow Members of the Committee to questions them and hold them to account in their Executive roles.

### **iii) Feedback from representatives on Outside Bodies**

The Council appoints representatives to sit on Outside Bodies. Feedback from the representative(s) is scheduled across a full year cycle once per annum for most organisations and twice where meetings are more frequent (greater than 5).

The Council's representative(s) is invited to report on any meetings of the appointed outside organisation, the role the organisation(s) they represent plays in promoting and aligning with

the Council's priorities, policies and strategies, their impact and results, and advising on partnership discussions which are open and in the public domain.

To allow time for members of the O&S Committee to ask questions a template was produced and reports are now completed in advance and circulated with the agenda where possible.

The structure of the template includes the following areas:

- The purpose of the Organisation
- Attendance requirements/ meetings attended by the Member(s)
- Feedback on the Organisation
- An opportunity for the Member to exemplify how the organisation aligns to the Council's priorities and strategy.
- Additional information relevant for Overview & Scrutiny including the value that TDC brings to this organisation and/or why this organisation needs TDC:
- If the Council incurs an annual fee to enable the Council to have a representative on this organisation.
- How much is the fee (if any) and if it represents value for money for the Council.

#### **iv) Forward Plans**

The meeting agenda includes links to the Executive Forward Plan and the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Plan for Members to regularly review both plans. The Overview and Scrutiny Plan has been expanded to include a Work Programme which covers items scheduled for both the formal and Informal (Pre-Scrutiny) meetings to allow members and the public to see the full range of Scrutiny activity.

The Committee held a Work Planning Session in July 2025 to plan their work for the year and raise the key issues for the Committee. This session included reviewing the principles and purposes of work programme, reviewing Council Performance, the Risk Register and Customer Feedback data followed by specific issues raised by Executive Members, the Senior Leadership Team and Committee Members themselves.

Following the Work Planning session, an Issue Prioritisation Survey was designed and carried out in August 2025 to ask members of the public to indicate the potential areas of review suggested by Members that were most important to them. 142 responses were received. The results were presented as a report to the formal Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on 16 September 2025 and included on the Work Programme following discussion at the Informal Work Planning session held on 14 October 2025.

The exercise meant that the agreed Work Programme would continue to be focused on key issues affecting the Council and the people of Teignbridge, plus the areas where the Committee had the most impact.

### **3. Pre-Scrutiny Meetings (informal)**

There were 4 informal pre-scrutiny meetings held between May 2025 and March 2026. These provide informal spaces for Members to discuss topics where recommendations are not required to provide assurance and information to Members and to discuss topics candidly and not in the public domain.

Topics covered during this year included:

- Teignbridge Housing Strategy at various stages as the strategy was being developed so that observations and comments could be incorporated in the next stage
- The importance of the role of Scrutiny in Local Government Reorganisation had to be balanced with a recognition that it was changing at a very fast pace as the options were being developed.
- A representative of the National Grid responded to the challenge of how prepared they are to deal with the current and potential demand for supply in Teignbridge with a presentation and opportunity to answer questions
- A mid-year 2025/26 Budget monitoring report was received for the first time.
- Work Planning is likely to be an annual topic to prioritise and schedule existing and new areas of work
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 were presented to the Committee
- Introduction to the need for a review of the Future High Street Fund as a 'lessons learnt' for a future Executive report and will be added to the Work Plan.
- Planning: Performance and Delivery were considered and the Committee were satisfied with the improvement in performance evidenced by the data provided.

To ensure that there is a transparent record of activities of the Committee there is now a specific item on the agenda of each formal O&S meeting to receive feedback from any informal pre-scrutiny meetings held.

#### **4. Overview & Scrutiny Training**

It is now mandatory to attend training sessions that were previously optional to remain a member of this Committee.

Formal Training was delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny as follows:

- Scrutiny Essentials                      4 June 2025
- Scrutiny Questioning Skills        10 June 2025
- Budget Monitoring                      17 November 2025

Attendance and feedback on the sessions were reported to the Governance Committee's regular update on Member Training. In all sessions, Members rated their knowledge and confidence in the content at the start and the end of sessions, all 3 sessions led to improved knowledge and confidence as well as a better understanding of the role of scrutiny, the powers of scrutiny and how to plan questions.

This will be repeated on an annual basis to ensure that Members are able to contribute to the work of the Committee with maximum effectiveness.

The Chair attended a national CfGS (Centre for Governance and Scrutiny) workshop of Scrutiny Chairs in London in November 2025.

#### **5. Task & Finish Groups**

The Medium Term Financial Plan Review Group have continued to influence budget decisions made by the Executive and Council. The group met on 7 occasions between July 2025 and October 2025 and considered issues in a wide range of service areas including Waste and Recycling. Housing and Leisure.

The recommendations included in the report to O&S on 11 November 2025 that were subsequently included in the 2026/27 budget include:

- Approval of Council tax increases at the maximum allowed (2.99%)
- Removal of the 50% Council Tax for empty uninhabitable properties
- Support and request the acceleration of 'Invest to save' schemes for Housing to reduce the cost of providing temporary accommodation
- Support 'Invest to save' schemes in Leisure e.g. Dawlish Leisure Centre to invest to generate additional income or the alternative would be to close
- Increase discretionary fees & charges to maximise income

## **6. Post Decision Scrutiny and Call-ins**

At a meeting of the Executive held on 10 February 2026, a decision was taken to close the Lido in Teignmouth to achieve revenue savings of £74,000 p.a.

This decision to 'not open the Lido in the Summer 2026' was called in by O&S and an additional meeting of the Committee was held on 3 March 2026. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the venue of the meeting was changed at short notice and was held in Teignmouth. This made it more convenient for some members of the public to attend which was received very positively (photograph below). Over 30 members of the public attended the meeting. The meeting followed normal procedural rules with the exception that the Committee agreed to suspend standing orders after Members of the Committee, other TDC Councillors and Members of the Executive had spoken to enable those Members of the Public present the ability to speak. 12 Members of the Public were able to speak at the meeting this was completed within the allotted time of 30 minutes. The opportunity to contribute was appreciated by all present and the meeting was praised for its openness, tone and seriousness in which the issue was discussed.

As a result of the points raised and the subsequent debate, the Chair summarised the feedback into 7 main points which were then crafted into a formal recommendation.

*The Committee recommends to the Executive that:*

- 1. The Executive decision to not open the Teignmouth Lido site in 2026 is reconsidered and reversed.*
- 2. The Executive works together with the local community and willing community groups to explore other solutions for how the Lido site can be operated in 2026, and details for any proposals to be submitted is given by the Executive in due course. In coming to a final decision, the Executive should consider an Equality Impact Assessment and assessment of the economic and health impact of their decision*

As a result of the call-in, Executive considered the Lido at their meeting held on 10 March 2026 and resolved amongst other recommendations to:

1. Notes the recommendation of Overview & Scrutiny to reconsider the decision not to open Teignmouth Lido in 2026.
2. Agrees to the ambition of opening Teignmouth Lido in the 2026 season, subject to any necessary maintenance and repair works to the site and the recruitment of staff.



## **7. Scrutiny of Partners/other organisations and holding them to account**

Where relevant, contact has been made with external organisations and there has been communication in a variety of ways: by letter, in person at informal meetings or by invitation to Scrutiny meetings. These include the following organisations: Police, UKBD Rural broadband, National Grid, NHS and Education.

## **8. Impact**

The work of the Medium-Term Financial Plan Review Group has been widely praised and recognised from across the Council. The Group represents best practice for budget scrutiny, providing a positive contribution to budget setting, extra layers of assurance for Scrutiny members and reporting its findings and recommendations in public to the Executive.

The Group's recommendations were positively received by the Executive and a number of them were built into the 2026/27 Budget. On 26<sup>th</sup> February 2026, Full Council agreed to the removal of the 50% Council Tax discount for uninhabitable properties, suggested by the Group, and a decision that would not have come to fruition without the Group's recommendations.

The Committee successfully recommended to Full Council that the revision of the Council's kerbside recycling collection service to meet the simpler recycling reforms be adopted from April 2027.

The Call-in meeting held in Teignmouth regarding Teignmouth Lido ultimately showcased the public opinion against the Executive's decision and persuaded the Executive to decide not to close the Lido for the 2026 Season.

## **9. Looking ahead**

- The MTFP Review Group are reconvening in April 2026 to identify further savings for the next financial year.
- The June Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting has been designated the Crime and Disorder Committee which is an annual requirement.
- The Forward Plan and Work Plan are regularly reviewed to identify areas where Scrutiny can consider, preferably in advance, relevant policies or decisions. The Committee will again hold a specific session to reset the work programme and ensure that the Public are able to contribute to this.
- The Committee will continue to work proactively to improve service delivery and hold the Executive to account, notwithstanding the future challenges that Local Government Reorganisation present to the Council and other public services.