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Dear Member

PRIORITIES AND RESOURCES REVIEW PANEL 2022/23 - THURSDAY, 20 JANUARY 2022

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Thursday, 20 January 2022 meeting of the Priorities and Resources Review Panel 2022/23, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item	Page
3.	Thriving Economy/Tackling Climate Change Responses to key lines of enquiry.	(Pages 41 - 47)

Yours sincerely

Clerk

Priorities and Resources Review – Key Lines of Enquiry – 20 January 2022 Meeting

Key Lines of Enquiry	Response
Thriving Economy	
<p>Premier Resort Funding – What sort of events are proposed within this? Is £500,000 sufficient to achieve this, learning from the costs of previous high-profile events? As this is one off funding how does the Cabinet envisage continuing to promote Torbay as a premier resort from 2023/24 onwards and how does it propose to invest in more permanent solutions to promote Torbay? (Kevin Mowat/Alan Denby/Councillor Long)</p>	<p>This budget is able to provide additional support to further the commitment to the visitor economy. We know from the evidence that is being collected by TDA for a new Destination Management Plan (DMP) that the sector wants to see investment which will help attract new visitors particularly visitors with an interest in cultural activities, we also know that other themes which are likely to be important include food and drink, watersports and the Geopark designation.</p> <p>This investment is informed by the DMP but also by the Events Strategy which sets out that we want to achieve :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A year-round, area-wide events offer • Support recovery from Covid-19 pandemic and sets direction for events in the Bay • Use events to meet the vision of premier resort • Meet social, cultural, economic, skills and sustainability needs of the local area <p>And;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Enhance the national and international profile and reputation of the area (including profile of UNESCO Global Geopark designation) o Deliver high quality events o Attract visitors to the area year-round and align with the Destination Management Plan o Deliver measurable benefits for local businesses o Encourage civic pride and community cohesion <p>We also know that the visitor economy sector and our visitors want to be able to see improvements in other areas of the Bay to help encourage visits and while the proposed investment is likely</p>

to support events and the objectives referenced above we will explore how the funding might support improvements in infrastructure that supports the visitor economy and potentially investment which can help improve the wider economy as a successful economy will help to provide revenues which support these activities in the future.

In addition to this funding the Council has previously allocated a further £750k of one-off funding towards Events, Culture & Heritage initiatives, which will be spread over a number of years. In the case of Events funding the money will be matched in some areas by the English Riviera BID Company, again over several years, to ensure that we continue to promote Torbay as a premier resort. Other previously allocated one-off funding includes £100k towards illuminations around Torquay Harbour, £150k towards beach/sea-front improvements and significant investment in the renewal of festoon illuminations in Torquay and Paignton.

Tackling Climate Change

Tackling climate change is one of the Council's key priorities what sort of activity will the additional £100,000 for climate change subsidy achieve. What overall impact will this have on our ambition to become carbon neutral and is this sufficient to meet our targets? What would be the cost to accelerate this work and what sort of activity could be undertaken to achieve this? **(Kevin Mowat/David Edmondson/Councillor Morey)**

We have commissioned the estate investment grade decarbonisation audits of a number of our buildings and the Green Fleet Review. From this we will have a pipeline of projects that the £100k can fund, but this will not go far. The 6 audits for schools are likely to suggest maybe a £1m pot would be needed to fully decarbonise. Information is being gathered from comparable Authorities as to what a reasonable figure would be required for the projects proposed, to allow us to meet our Carbon reduction targets.

The Council's bold ambition to become carbon neutral needs to be matched by bold action, which should include timely and supportive decision making. In general terms the impact of this funding on the Council's response to tackling climate change will be modest but it will certainly help identify what actions are required and the likely investment that will be necessary.

Reduction in cost for disposal of residual waste of £120,000 – how realistic is this target given the impact that COVID has had on our waste collection rates, with many residents not receiving regular collections due to staff shortages? What other options have been considered to help increase recycling rates and reduce the amount of residual waste collected? **(Kevin Mowat/Councillor Morey)**

Through the interventions of our Recycling Support Co-ordinators (RSCs), at a household level (monitoring activity, leaflets, bin stickers and door knocking), we are seeing increases in both yield and participation levels e.g. food waste collected has risen from 42.8 kg/household in 2019/20 to 48.62 kg/household in 2020/21. However, the pandemic increased both recycling and residual waste (residual more than recycling) and the arisings have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. We do not yet know if they ever will, as so many people might work from home on a permanent basis.

We are hoping that the RSCs will be able to attend community events this year, to further encourage participation in recycling. However, through engagement and communication alone, without any bold service changes, which could also free up the resource to establish a garden waste collection, the impact of the RSCs will be modest and incremental (estimated at circa 2% increase each

year). We also need to recognise that many of our planned campaigns for recycling have been postponed during the last year due to collection delays.

Delays in waste collections may also have a longer-term impact on people's recycling behaviour as they lose faith in the recycling process. The loss of faith in materials actually being recycled is identified nationally as a barrier to recycling by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).

The corporate plans to increase recycling and to reduce residual waste have been laid out in the Council's Resource and Waste Management Strategy and its associated Action Plan. In addition, we are focussing on identifying households with additional residual waste bins and asking them to re-apply for the additional bin, alongside support to recycle more.

A 1% improvement in the recycling rate saves about 500 tonnes of residual waste and this delivers a £50k saving in the waste disposal budget. Therefore, a 2.4% annual improvement delivers £120k, which would cover the cost of the work delivered by the four RSCs and a 4.8% annual improvement would also deliver a £120k base reduction but the new and improved recycling rate would need to be sustained.

In addition to the kerbside collected residual waste, this particular budget line also covers the Recycling Centre residual waste costs, as well as the street cleansing waste and some of these areas are beyond the influence of the Recycling Support Co-ordinators. In summary this target is indeed a challenge and many variables exist which limit our ability to deliver this saving.

Thriving People – SWISCo/Groundwork South

The Council has been unable to allocate and spend Section 106 monies collected in the past due to constraints within the agreements restricting what and where they monies can be spent. What assurance can the Cabinet Member provide that sufficient Section 106 monies are available to fund the proposed post and ensure that this is sustainable in the future? Has consideration been given to making greater use of volunteers to assist with this role and reduce costs? **(Kevin Mowat/David Edmondson/Councillor Morey)**

Green Space Section 106 monies have historically proved a challenge to allocate in accordance with the legal deed due to officer capacity and the lack of 'Friends of Groups' or such groups not necessarily being pro-active enough. With the support of SWISCo's Communities Team and the specific funding for this post, future and wider support of community volunteering and 'Friends of Groups' within green spaces, more Section 106 allocations will be achieved.

Community engagement and volunteering requires management and guidance to complete risk assessments, method statements and compliance with insurances that require officer input. The Green Spaces Engagement Officer role is to support such groups for example the Tree Warden Scheme and provide professional support and guidance.

Funding for the Green Spaces Engagement Officer within SWISCo will take a percentage top slice of the Section 106 legal deeds. This is currently a 2-year fixed role. There is a budget of £1.1m and these costs will be included.

This budget proposal relates to the commissioning of Groundwork from the Community Engagement budget but the risks around allocating Section 106 money still applies, although it is still achievable.

Council fit for the future – SWISCo

The proposals include an investment of £1.5 million in SWISCo after years of underfunding by Tor2. In addition, a further £0.4m is proposed to be set aside for new IT systems for the company. The Council has already invested additional money in SWISCo in 2021/2022 and they were reporting a significant overspend at the last quarter, what assurance can the Cabinet Member provide that the overspend will not increase further in year, resulting in more funding than the proposed £1.5m being required for SWISCo for 2022/2023?

(Kevin Mowat/Councillor Morey)

Since the end of the Tor2 contract and the start of SWISCo (1st July 2019) the Council has been working with the SWISCo Board to establish the correct level of annual funding to allow the company to deliver the core services to our communities, within a sustainable financial envelope. A new Managing Director for SWISCo will commence work at the end of January and the £400k investment in IT will improve the efficiency of the company. As the shareholder the Council has placed the Finance Director/Section 151 Officer on the SWISCo Board and the Council's Deputy Head of Finance also attends the SWISCo Senior Management Team. The financial position of SWISCo is being heavily scrutinised to ensure that the right level of funding is made available to the company. We do not expect to apply for further revenue funding, but this cannot be ruled out, especially as the HGV driver shortage has not been fully resolved. A request for further capital funding for SWISCo can certainly be expected in future years as investment in vehicles and plant will be required.

Council fit for the future - Planning

Investment in Planning Services of £200,000 one off funding - There are no specific proposals for additional investment in housing. The Torbay's Housing Crisis Review has made the following initial recommendation, please can you advise how this will be addressed through the 2022/2023 budget to ensure that the Council is increasing the availability of housing, especially affordable housing in Torbay:

“that a dedicated resource should be appointed to carry out appropriate enforcement on poor standards of accommodation and to bring empty properties back into use and an additional resource should be appointed to chase developers to progress sites which are not coming forward but have received planning permission; this is all linked to the establishment of the enabling role in house.”

This resource was intended to be a permanent resource, however, the funding above is one off.

(Kevin Mowat/David Edmondson/Councillor Morey)

50% of the proposed one-off funding will be used to provide additional Development Management support and assist in clearing the backlog of older cases and reduce Officer Workloads and create a more sustainable workload per officer. In addition, we aim to provide a temporary resource to help progression with the stalled sites and untidy sites list. This will be through the use of agency staff, for a limited period. The other 50% of the funding will be used to address some of the digitisation of elements of the planning Service, in order for the more efficient operation of the service.