

## **Minutes of the Audit Committee**

**6 February 2023**

**-: Present :-**

Councillor Loxton (Chairman)

Councillors Brooks, Douglas-Dunbar, Johns, Kennedy (Vice-Chair) and O'Dwyer

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### **35. Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hill.

### **36. Quarter 3 Performance Report**

Prior to Members considering the submitted Quarter 3 Performance and Risk Reports, a statement was read out which was agreed unanimously, as set out in the recommendation below.

Members were advised that the Quarter 3 Performance Report contained the summaries of progress, updates on projects and performance of key indicators used to deliver and track the priorities within the Community and Corporate Plan.

At the meeting Members were joined by the Divisional Director of Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency and Director of Strategic Projects and held a debate which focused on the indicators within their service areas.

Members raised questions in relation to:

- Perceived slow progress and little improvement of the Development Management Services, concerns over large backlogs and slow decision making, despite the additional resources that had been deployed as part of the PID. Members asked when would Development Management be fixed and the performance in line with other Council's;
- When would a replacement for the Head of Development Control be sought and the reason for the delay in recruiting to the post;
- The lack of detail in the narrative regarding 'Working with Registered providers on Social and Affordable homes';
- Stalled sites and the reasons for sites not being developed. The Divisional Director of Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency agreed to write to the developers of the stalled sites seeking the reason for not developing the sites;
- The 'Tackling Climate Change' risk score which had been identified as significant risk but there still appearing to be a lack of progress towards the climate change targets;

- The lack of implementation and improvement in cycling and walking routes and slow installation of Electric Vehicle Charging points;
- The timescales for the implementation of the Preston and Paignton Community Sea Defences;
- The risk of having a lack of regeneration and development as a whole and what mitigations were in place to avoid further delays to the major capital projects we are already committed to..

Resolved:

That the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive provide a formal response, for consideration by the Audit Committee on 22 March 2023, to the following statement:

‘This Committee has been very ably challenging officers time and again on weaknesses within their areas. Those challenges have apparently fallen on deaf ears as the same issues keep coming up in reports despite a number of assurances and action plans.

As a Committee we need to understand, and have evidence of, how our Chief Executive and Leader of the Council are holding our officers and portfolio holders to account for failing processes. As elected Members accountable to our taxpayers we seek to understand and have evidence of how our Leadership Group is tackling the current culture of weakness when it comes to driving improvements across the Council.’

### **37. Quarter 3 Risk Report**

This item was considered alongside the Quarter 3 Performance Report, see the minute above.

### **38. Risk Management Policy**

The Audit Committee considered the submitted report on Torbay Council’s Risk Management Policy. The Senior Performance and Risk Officer informed Members that the policy had been developed in conjunction with the Devon Audit Partnership Manager and sets out the Council’s commitment and how it intends to manage risk around it’s business activities. The policy includes the legislative requirements, priorities for the council, an explanation of the Council’s registers, how the Council scores its risks, the Council’s current tolerance thresholds and details on officers’ roles and responsibilities.

Resolved:

That Audit Committee recommends to Cabinet:

the immediate adoption and implementation of the Council’s new Risk Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

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Chairman/woman