

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

4 September 2024

-: Present :-

Councillor Spacagna (Chairman)

Councillors Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Fox, Barbara Lewis, Long and Tolchard
(Vice-Chair)

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye, George Darling, Chris Lewis and Virdee (virtual))

16. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cowell and Law. It was also reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Liberal Democrat Group and Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Fox and Barbara Lewis in place of Councillors Johns and Hutchings respectively.

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 7 August 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. A Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan Update

The Board considered the submitted report on the Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan which had been developed by the Torbay Climate Partnership with support from Torbay Council and set out the long term actions the Partnership intended to take to tackle climate change locally. Two consultations had been carried out with nearly 2,000 people being engaged overall in the process.

The Board also had regard to a representation from 7 Concerned Citizens which set out their view and suggestions in respect of this issue. It was noted that this representation had been included as part of the consultation responses to the Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan together with over 600 consultation responses but anonymised (as was the normal practice for consultation responses), which were summarised with a summary response provided in the submitted papers. Further details would be published on the website at [Greener Way for Our Bay - Torbay Council](#) prior to the Place Leadership Board on 27 September 2024. A written response to the points raised by the 7 Concerned Citizens was circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and published as a supplement to the documents on 5 September 2024.

The Board asked a number of questions in relation to how the Partnership could encourage the large organisations in Torbay to do more to tackle climate change as well as encouraging residents to be more active; one initiative had been around planting more trees, how many trees have been planted over the last five years (a written response would be provided to this question); were all the allotments currently being utilised (a written response would be provided to this question); how was the Council going to enforce protecting seagrass in Tor Bay; what reassurance could be given that the proposals affecting transport and planning do not conflict with the Torbay Local Plan; were the plans ambitious enough shown in the immediate plans table e.g. it was proposed for Exeter Community Energy to reach 250 households but with winter fuel pressures should we not be reaching out to more residents, proposals for more cycling routes but this not being achieved in the new Strand redevelopment and concerns that the proposed new Bus Partnership Ticket would not reach all the communities that need it due to removal of some bus routes; there was an article about electric cars and busses being heavier due to batteries and the impact on the roads and multistorey car parks, had this been considered; who was proposed to operate the repair cafes; was there anyway to speed up the installation of electric charging points in our car parks; were the proposals ambitious enough.

In response to questions Members were informed that Torbay Hospital and South Devon College had been involved with the work of the Partnership and were committed to making a difference. The main changes would come through influencing and changing behaviours and having this Framework and Action Plan would help to achieve this. The previous Chair of the Torbay Climate Partnership had a clear vision and plan which was shared and endorsed by partners. He had stood down with the Divisional Director for Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency taking the Chair in the interim with a view to appointing a new community Chair as it was important that the Partnership was led by the community and not Torbay Council.

The Board was advised that there was no legal power to stop people disturbing seagrass, however, advisory markers were placed in the sea to deter people from using those areas. It was proposed to increase the amount of buoys around the area with anchored chains to enable people to anchor to the buoys rather than the seabed. Additional funding had been received to create more seagrass beds in Tor Bay.

Members were advised that use of allotments was just one element of encouraging people to grow their own food and make less food waste, there were a lot of other initiatives that linked to this action including Torbay becoming a Sustainable Food Place.

In response to questions around cycle and bus routes and Exeter Community Energy, Members were advised that this document was the Partnership's plan and a Torbay New Greener Way for the Council Action Plan was being developed and would be presented to the Board later in the year, where these issues could be considered.

Following questions around impact on highways, car parks and planning, it was noted that the Council's Parking Team were looking at the conditions of the Council's car parks and were rolling out more charging points. The roll out had been slower than anticipated as we were part of a Devon procurement and options were being explored

to enter into our own procurement process to speed this up. It was noted that one of the community workshops involved planning and transport and they were working with the Council's Planning Policy Team to ensure that the proposals were inline with the Local Plan.

Members were informed that Torbay Climate Action were looking at options around repair cafes but they had just ceased operating as a group. There were a number of community groups that offered such services e.g. share sheds where people can go to get things repaired. There were also private organisations trying to be established to help people repair items.

The Board welcomed the wide approach to communication and engagement by the Torbay Climate Partnership in developing the Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan and noted that this would be signed off by the Torbay Place Leadership Board as this was a Partnership document.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the results of the Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan public consultation, the asks specifically of the Council to deliver certain priority actions identified within the submitted report and offers the following comments that can be passed to the Place Leadership Board prior to their endorsement (subject to a positive review) of this work:
 - a. the Place Leadership Board be requested to look at 'the immediate plans table on page 7 and consider how some of the proposals could be bolder;
 - b. that Members support the wide consultation and engagement carried out and encourage this to continue in further greener policies and actions; and
 - c. that the Overview and Scrutiny Board receives an annual review of progress against the delivery of the Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan.

19. Plymouth and South Devon Freeport Status - Impact on Torbay

The Board considered and noted the submitted report which provided an update on the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport status and how it impacted on Torbay's economy.

The Board asked a number of questions in relation to potential risks to businesses considering relocating to Plymouth and people leaving Torbay to work elsewhere; and what opportunities there were for Brixham.

In response to questions Members were advised that there was minimal risk of people wanting to go to Plymouth and that Freeport status would not provide a huge economical benefit to Torbay, as it mainly affected start up businesses and associated

tax relief. It was noted that there could be changes arising from the Government but that they were unknown at this time and the British Ports Association and Harbour Authorities would be monitoring this closely. There would be benefits to exploring options for home grown businesses such as shellfish hatcheries which could bring in new investment to the Brixham area. There was potential to explore infrastructure changes and new processing facilities to reduce pressure on transporting fish by road.

Members noted that the Harbour Master and Divisional Director of Maritime and Coastal Services was leaving the Council and thanked him for all his hard work and support and wished him well in his new role.

Chairman