



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

30 April 2013

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Addis, Bent, Darling (Vice-Chair), Davies, Hill, Kingscote,
Pentney and Stockman

(Also in attendance: The Mayor and Councillors Cowell, Excell and Parrott)

49. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively, the membership of the Board had been amended to include Councillors Addis and Davies in place of Councillors Barnby and Pountney.

50. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 March 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. Urgent Items

The Board considered the item in Minute 52 and not included on the agenda, the Chairman being of the opinion that it was urgent by reason of special circumstances i.e. the matter having arisen since the agenda was prepared and it was unreasonable to delay a decision until the next meeting.

52. Arrangements for Assessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Claims

The Board heard a representation from a member of the public on the costs and impacts of re-assessing claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit following periods of short-term employment (in particular in relation to claimants who took repeated temporary contracts). It was requested that the Board consider reviewing this issue as it was felt that it was particularly pertinent given the nature of the current employment market in Torbay.

Resolved: that the request be considered as part of the development of the Board's Work Programme for 2013/2014.

53. Torbay Economic Strategy

Tim Jones, the Chairman of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), attended the meeting and briefed the Board on the operation of the LEP, its relationship with Torbay and how it would be measuring its success.

Mr Jones gave details of the funding that was being made available to the LEP through the Single Local Growth Fund, the combination of EU structural funds into a single pot and the allocation of Devon as having "transition" status and the Plymouth City Deal.

As had previously been noted by the Board at earlier meetings, funds would be allocated to the LEP through a competitive bidding process. The Partnership would need to demonstrate the resilience of its plans and how it was collaborating with the local authorities, chambers of trade and other business bodies within its area. There was also a need to ensure that economic priorities across the area aligned coherently with the spatial plans.

Whilst the LEP would be seeking to raise the Gross Domestic Product of the whole of its area, it was acknowledged that EU Transition Funding would be directed to areas of "market failure". However, how match funding for projects could be identified was an issue which different authorities were addressing in different ways.

The Mayor and the Chairman, Chief Executive and Director of Economic Strategy of Torbay Development Agency also attended the meeting to present the draft Economic Strategy for Torbay. The Strategy aimed to put in place the right landscape to grow businesses within Torbay which would drive productivity and increase skills. This, in turn, would help address issues around child poverty and deprivation; with those living in deprived areas having access to work (although not necessarily within Torbay).

Resolved: that, taking account of the findings of the Board at its meetings in September 2012 and March 2013, the views of the Board on the draft Economic Strategy are:

- (i) There is a continued need to move away from a low-wage economy within Torbay to a mid- to high-wage economy.
- (ii) There should be recognition that the South Devon Link Road will provide an opportunity for inward and outward migration and that everything possible should be done to ensure that skills can be maintained and enhanced within Torbay.
- (iii) The Strategy should include targets and milestones against which success can be measured.
- (iv) The Strategy needs clear prioritisation in order to show a clear focus on what the Council (through Torbay Development Agency) can achieve. This is especially important which the increased competition for funds.

- (v) The need that has previously been highlighted by the Overview and Scrutiny Board to develop and work with the voluntary and community sectors should be highlighted within the Strategy. The current work on this issue should have a clear linkage with the Economic Strategy. In particular, work to encourage social enterprise should be mainstreamed.
- (vi) The Council should work, through the Local Government Association, with similar coastal resort authorities to gain maximum advantage from capital funding to address broad structural issues.

54. Livermead Sea Wall

The Board considered a briefing note on the recent breach to the sea wall at Livermead. The note answered five specific questions which had been raised by the Vice-chairman of the Board and also set out a summary of the response to the incident.

In considering the report, the Board congratulated and thanked the team of officers who had dealt the collapse.

Resolved: that the Board carry out a review into the circumstances surrounding the collapse and the subsequent response as part of its Work Programme for 2013/2014 and that members of the Board identify the specific areas of questioning that they would wish to pursue.

55. Fixed Odds Betting Terminals

Councillor Parrott attended the meeting to raise a Councillor Call for Action on the proliferation of Fixed Odds Betting Machines in Torbay.

Resolved: that a briefing note be prepared to enable the Board to consider whether to carry out a review as part of its Work Programme for 2013/2014.

56. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13

Resolved: that, subject to the inclusion of an Introduction from the Chairman of the Board, the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report be published and forwarded to the Council.

Chairman
