



Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

10 July 2013

-: Present :-

Councillor Thomas (J) (Chairman)

Councillors Barnby, Bent, Darling, Davies, Kingscote, Pentney and Stockman

(Also in attendance: Councillors Cowell, Excell, Lewis, Pritchard and Pountney)

14. Apologies

It was reported that, in accordance with the wishes of the Conservative Group, the membership of the Board had been amended for this meeting by including Councillor Barnby in place of Councillor Hytche.

15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 19 June 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16. Urgent Items

The Board considered the item in Minute 73 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.

17. Torre Valley North Playing Field

Councillor Pountney attended the meeting to raise a Councillor Call for Action in relation to the transfer of part of Torre Valley North Playing Field to a local primary school.

Resolved: that further information be provided to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board about the issue.

(Note: Prior to consideration of the item in Minute 73, Councillor Pountney declared a non-pecuniary interest in the matter as the brother-in-law of Mark Faulkner, director of Community Investment Company.)

18. Home to School Transport Policy

The Board considered a report on proposals to phase out concessionary home to school/college transport assistance over a three year period. The Board recalled that it had first considered the issue in January 2013 when it was proposed to remove all discretionary assistance from September 2013.

A public consultation on the proposal had been undertaken for a period of four weeks in April and May 2013. The consultation had been available on the Council's website and all schools and academies had been contacted, together with South Devon College, and asked to alert parents, pupils and governors to the consultation. The Dioceses of Plymouth and Exeter had also been consulted.

The Board questioned the likely impact on South Devon College as a result of the change in policy. However, the Board were informed that there was now a greater choice in sixth form provision across Torbay than there had been in the past.

Resolved: that the Director of Children's Services investigate how the Council can monitor the impact on South Devon College of the changes in the discretionary home of school/college transport policy and the changes in the market provision for further education.

19. Community Safety Service Plan (Commercial Team)

The Board considered a report which set out the Commercial Team Service Plan which included the Food Safety Service Plan and the Policy on the Protection of Children in relation to Tobacco Sales and Other Age Related Goods. The Service Plan included the current work plan for the Commercial Team which comprises the functions of Food Safety, Trading Standards, Licensing, Health and Safety and Emergency Planning within the Community Safety Business Unit.

The Board noted that the Business Unit now prioritises its workload based on risk and will always target first those businesses, activities, emergencies and disease outbreaks considered to be of the highest risk. Its resilience to continue to deliver its full range of statutory duties and meet customer expectations, within the resources allocated, is now under significant strain.

Resolved: that the following views and recommendations be forwarded to the Council:

The Commercial Team within the Community Safety Business Unit has the full confidence of the Overview and Scrutiny Board which believes it is doing a good job in difficult circumstances.

However, the Board has grave concerns especially as it heard phrases such as the service being "close to falling over" and "not fulfilling its statutory duties" during the course of its debate. The Board also heard how the Team is not able to fully implement the recovery plan agreed with the Food Standards Agency following its inspection in November 2011.

Whilst there is a risk to the reputation of Torbay and the Council, the risk to the public is even greater.

The Board request that the Mayor and Executive Lead review how the actions in recovery plan can be achieved in the short to medium term.

20. Meadfoot Beach Chalets Development

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

21. Acquisition of Torbay and Southern Devon Health and Care NHS Trust

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

22. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Board considered the draft Work Programme for the Board which had been prepared following discussions with members of the Board.

Resolved: (i) that the Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Health Scrutiny Board (as circulated at the meeting) be agreed as a framework for the coming year;

(ii) that the principle of undertaking overview and scrutiny reviews in different formats and in different venues in order to best engage with the community be agreed;

(iii) that the Priorities and Resources Review Panel be appointed (comprising the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board) and meet throughout the year to (a) review and monitor the revenue and capital budgets for the current year; and (b) to review and challenge the emerging proposals for delivering the Council's priorities for the 2013/2014 financial year; and

(iv) that, taking account of the areas of activity and spend identified within the Service Reviews for the Council, the Mayor be requested to identify approximately ten areas which the Overview and Scrutiny Board could usefully review in order to prepare "packages of evidence" which he could use to inform the budget setting process.

Chairman
