

PRESENT:

North Ward:

Councillor P S Christie
Councillor D Bushby
Councillor K Bines
Councillor K Hind
Councillor D McGeough

South Ward:

Councillor S Inch
Councillor P Lawrence

West Ward:

Councillor T Inch

East Ward

Councillor J Craigie
Councillor Mrs J Gubb
Councillor J Hellyer
Councillor Mrs L Hellyer
Councillor J A McKenzie (Town Mayor)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr P Swan (Town Clerk)
Mr R Coombes (Deputy Town Clerk)
Councillor J Wilton-Love (Devon County Council)
Mr T Steer (Vice Chair Tarka Rail Association)

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Ms R Clarke (South Ward – personal and M Taylor (West Ward – Rotary Meeting).

(Apologies were not received from Council Hawkins (West Ward).)

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ANY REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Councillor P Christie declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 17 (Trustee, Bridge Trust).

Councillor T Inch declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 14 (Member, Landdivisiau Twinning Association).

62. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION OF 15 MINUTES DURATION

N/A.

63. MINUTES

Councillor Mrs Hellyer indicated that Councillor Taylor had been referred to by his Christian name at minute number 45. The Clerk will correct the Minutes to read Councillor Taylor.

Councillor Bines stated that his name was incorrectly spelt at minute number 57. and it was wrongly recorded that he had “felt that COVID-19 impacted upon the Community engagement.”.

He stated that his statement was fact, not a feeling, the minute should be corrected, “Councillor Bines stated that the COVID-19 lockdown had resulted in the cancellation of the first round of community engagement planned by the Steering Group.”

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 September 2023 were approved as a correct record.

(Vote – For: 9, Against: 1, Abstention: 3)

64. ACCOUNTS

It was proposed by Councillor T Inch, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the List of Payments be approved.

65. DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL (COUNCILLOR) REPORT

- a. The Mayor welcomed Councillor Wilton–Love to the Meeting who provided Members with an update.
- b. The Mayor thanked Councillor Wilton–Love for his report and contribution.

66. COMMUNICATION BROUGHT FORWARD ON THE DIRECTION OF THE MAYOR / TOWN CLERK

- a. The Chairman invited Councillor T Inch to address the Chamber.

Councillor T Inch stated that the Boots Chemist would be closing on 27 January 2024. While alluding to the probable futility of the act, he felt that a letter should be sent, from the Council, requesting the Company to at least revisit their decision.

Discussion followed where members considered the impact on the Town / Community including support for a letter to be sent but to the local MP and the North Devon Healthcare Trust.

Members agreed that Councillor T Inch would draft a letter to be sent to the local MP and the North Devon Healthcare Trust.

- b. The Chairman expressed concern over the perceived cooling of TDC towards support for the reinstatement of the Barnstaple to Bideford railway line. He invited Mr Tim Steer (Vice Chair Tarka Rail Association) to address the Members.

Mr Steer thanked the Mayor for the opportunity to address the Council with a request for them to impress upon the District Council the necessity of incorporating a commitment to support the development of the strategic, economic and environmental case for Bideford to be reconnected by rail to Barnstaple and beyond in its work over the next few years within the draft Strategic Plan for 2023–28.

Detail of his address and supporting correspondence is attached and forms part of these Minutes.

- c. Members addressed points and questions that included:

- Consultation mechanism providing for Town and Parish Council engagement.
- Distinction between the Strategic Plan and Local Plan (the latter experiencing apparent differences in approach / understanding between the North Devon and Torridge District partners).
- o The Strategic Plan for Public Consultation closes 14 November 2023.
- o Item to be considered at the Planning Committee Meeting scheduled to be held on Wednesday, 8 November 2023, to provide a Town Council response.
- TDC will, amongst other items, give a presentation on the Strategic Plan at the Torrington Area Advisory Meeting on 6 November 2023 at 6.00 pm in the Town Hall.
- There will be hurdles for the strategic planners (of the rail link) to address hence the need for pre-emptive studies.
- Members expressed continued broad support for the project, which can only improve opportunities for the local economy / community and giving notice to TDC, as such.

67. MARKET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Councillor Mrs Hellyer noted that although Councillor Hind had presented his Notice of Motion, his attendance had not been recorded. The Clerk will correct the omission.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2023 were approved and adopted.

(Vote – For: 10, Against: 0, Abstention: 3)

68. STAFFING, FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES (SF&GP) COMMITTEE MEETING

Councillor S I Inch noted that date of the Meeting on the Minutes was incorrect. The Clerk will address.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 October 2023 were approved and adopted.

(Vote – For: 11, Against: 0, Abstention: 2)

69. TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 October 2023 were approved and adopted.

(Vote – For: 11, Against: 0, Abstention: 2)

70. PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

- a. The Minutes of the Meetings held on 27 September and 18 October 2023 were approved and adopted.

(Vote – For: 12, Against: 0, Abstention: 1)

71. ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Councillor Lawrence reiterated his concerns regarding the disparity in rent received by the Council from the Associations and the amount paid by the Council to the landlords for the respective site rents.

Discussion followed on the benefits of independence for the Associations and their communal works in relation to the Council's administration of the Pollyfield and Tricks Allotment Sites.

Councillor Lawrence stated that when their respective Tenancies are to be renewed "reasonable amounts," should be considered when setting the rent levels.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2023 were approved and adopted.

(Vote – For: 7, Against: 1, Abstention: 5)

72. TIDY TOWN WORKING GROUP

Minute Number 15. Councillor Bushby indicated that he had been in discussion with the Development Manager, TDC. The Council would not formally adopt the area opposite the entrance to Devonshire Park (Ford Rock) but would use Council resources to clear, tidy and maintain the area. This agreement was welcomed by TDC.

Members noted the Minutes of the Working Group Meeting held on 27 September 2023.

73. LANDIVISIAU TWINNING RECEPTION – 18 MAY 2024

Councillor T Inch, for the benefit of the more recent and junior French members of the Association, indicated that it would be a good opportunity to host the Reception in the Town Hall, as had previously been the case. Visitors would be able to view the attractive Hall in the same reciprocal manner accorded when the Reception is held in Landivisiau.

He also suggested that the actual reception offer is scaled back as the itinerary, after the Reception, would lead to a full lunch, there was no need to provide a full menu; finger food and a glass of wine would be sufficient.

It was proposed by Councillor T Inch, seconded by Councillor Bushby and

RESOLVED: That the Council Host the Landivisiau Twinning Association Reception on the morning of Saturday, 18 May 2024 within the Town Hall.

(Vote – For:13, Against: 0)

74. NEIGHBOURHOOD STEERING GROUP

It was proposed by Councillor McKenzie, seconded and

RESOLVED: That Councillors Bines, Craigie, Hind and McKenzie represent the Council element of the Neighbourhood Steering Group.

(Vote – For: 13, Against: 0)

75. TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL – UPDATE

Councillor Bushby advised that:

- Victoria Park equipment (provision) will go through the tender process in the New Year.
- TDC are the lead in the Levelling up process, not the Town and Parish Councils although there will be communication with them.
- Sully House, with provision for six families, is available from this week. In addition, the three Pods (for individuals), also three further Pods to be installed.
- Operational Services Centre is simply a vehicle repair / storage facility.
- Jubilee Square Unit, formerly let by the Council, has seen positive correspondence for a Police occupation.
- The first stage of the Brunswick Wharf Development has been completed.
- The Rugby Club is in discussion with TDC with view to Community Asset Transfer of the Cattle Market Site.

Councillor Christie advised:

- Although there had been a shortfall in funding the improved Victoria Park facilities, it should open in Easter.
- There will be provision of a drinking fountain facility to support the refilling of water bottles.

Discussion followed on Travellers' facilities in the North Devon / Torridge axis.

76. BRIDGE TRUST

Councillor Christie gave detail on income, Estate expenditure, Grants: individual, student and group.

Councillor Christie intimated that a letter should be sent thanking the Bridge Trust for the continued financial support to the local people of Bideford.

The business of the meeting having been completed, the Mayor thanked the members for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8.13 pm.

BIDEFORD TOWN COUNCIL - Accounts for approval at the Town Council Meeting - 26 October 2023

NO			VAT	NET	TOTAL	
1	2410	Nick Sampson, Mec. Eng Servs Ltd	Removal of Photos - Bideford Quay	90.00	450.00	540.00
2	2410	EDF	Decorative Lighting Bideford Quay	68.55	342.78	411.33
3	3110	Tucker Environmental	Maintenance Items	27.30	136.50	163.80
4	3110	RGB	Maintenance Items	3.64	18.21	21.85
5	3110	Blights	Fuel	65.12	325.59	390.71
6	3110	Tanner Trading	Maintenance Items	40.72	208.58	249.30
7	3110	Acorn	Seasonal Worker (w/c 22 Oct)	64.98	324.90	389.88
8	CC24	Microsoft	License	24.72	123.60	148.32
9	CC25	BF's Value House	Maintenance Items	1.21	6.03	7.24
10	CC26	BF's Value House	Maintenance Items	0.92	4.58	5.50
11	CC27	Mow B	Maintenance Items	6.46	32.29	38.75
12	CC28	Mole Valley Farmers	Maintenance Items	12.49	62.47	74.96
13	CC29	BF's Value House	Maintenance Items	7.66	38.30	45.96
14	CC30	Mow B	Maintenance Items	10.49	52.45	62.94
			424.26	2,126.28	2,550.54	
		Bank Balances at 25 Oct 23		16,120.42		
		Bank Balances at 24 Oct 23		677,271.28		
		- Current Account				
		- Deposit Account				

Minute Number 66. ACE Rail, Bideford to Barnstaple Link Briefing.

Bideford Town Council from Tim Steer (ACE Rail campaign lead)

Mr Mayor, Councillors, ladies and gentlemen. I most recently had the pleasure of addressing you on the subject of restoring rail connectivity for Bideford and Torrridge on Thursday 3rd August, in the presence of Sir Geoffrey Cox KC MP, following my original presentation to you on Thursday 20th January last year.

I stand before you this evening with one straightforward request, in support of our shared endeavour to see mainline passenger train services in Bideford once again.

As I'm sure many here are aware, Torrridge District Council has a current public consultation on its draft Strategic Plan for 2023–28. As the local authority's corporate plan, its work programme for the coming few years, it is structured under four Themes – Local Economy; Communities, Health and Housing; Our Environment Our Future; and Our Council. Each Strategic Theme has a number of Priorities, and 'Actions by us and in partnership.'

The Tarka Rail Association views this consultation as a golden opportunity for the Town Council, as well as other organisations and individuals, to impress upon the District Council the necessity of incorporating a commitment to support the development of the strategic, economic and environmental case for Bideford to be reconnected by rail to Barnstaple and beyond in its work over the next few years.

There will be some here this evening who will recall the Motion agreed by the Full District Council at its meeting on 13th June 2022 [see Minute 12 (a):] *"That Torrridge District Council, following on from the presentation made at the last Full council meeting, do support the extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford and that this aspiration is embedded in the new Joint Local Plan."* It was seconded with a suggested amendment that the extension of the railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford also be embedded in the Economic Development Business Plan, which was agreed by the proposer and the amended Motion was then carried by an overwhelming majority.

In order now to reflect that commitment in the District Council's new Strategic Plan for 2023–28, *recognising the socio-economic benefits that rail already brings to the wider area, and that those benefits could be further embedded by restoring a direct link to Bideford*, the Tarka Rail Association is advocating inclusion of the following additional Priority and Actions within the 'Local Economy' theme of the final Strategic Plan:

Priority – *Develop opportunities to enhance community prosperity through improved public transport connectivity.*

Actions by us and in partnership – *Support further work on developing the business case for restoring a Bideford–Barnstaple rail link, to allow the strategic, economic and environmental case and the implications of reopening to be more fully evaluated.*

It will be seen that this also supports the Priority *"Develop Torrridge to be a great place to work and build a career"* within the 'Our Council' theme.

The Tarka Rail Association believes that these amendments will strengthen the District Council's new Strategic Plan and demonstrate the local authority's appetite to play an active role over the coming years in a wider partnership exploring and evaluating the case for a restored rail link.

The Tarka Rail Association will therefore be grateful if Bideford Town Council would consider making a submission to the District Council's consultation in light of the Association's proposition as I have set out above.

Tim Steer

26th October 2023

