

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held jointly with Torridge District Council's External Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Riverbank House, Bideford on Wednesday 1st October 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Members representing North Devon Council:

Councillor Biederman (Chairman)

Councillors Chesters, Haywood, Luggar, Moores and White.

Officers:

Head of Legal Services (KM), Regulatory Services Manager (AM), Regulatory Services Officer (DD), Community Development Officer (HH) and Democratic Services Officer (JG).

Councillor Spear attended the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 9 (3).

Also present:

Mr. Grosvenor and Ms. Squires	Environment Agency
Mr. Bell	UNESCO Biosphere Reserve
Mr. Rosser and Mr. Thomas	South West Water
Ms. Hayes	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
Mr. Pratt	Taw and Torridge Estuary Forum
Councillor Green	Vice-Chair Instow Parish Council
Councillor Blackmore	Braunton Parish Council
Ms. Weaver	Clerk to Braunton Parish Council

34 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brown, Clark, Gurney and Lane.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest announced.

36 WATER QUALITY IN THE TAW AND TORRIDGE ESTUARY AND POTENTIAL FLOODING ISSUES IN THE TAW AND TORRIDGE

Mr. Grosvenor, Catchment Co-ordinator for the Environment Agency gave a presentation updating the joint Committee on water quality issues, the current flooding situation and the ongoing role of the Environment Agency.

Mr. Rosser and Mr. Thomas from the South West Water Authority also addressed the Committee outlining the role of the authority with particular reference to raw sewerage discharge and modern sewerage treatment/engineering projects.

The Committee discussed the following: -

- pressures on the catchment in terms of water quality, water resources and flood risk
- the number of different types of protected areas in the North Devon catchment, and whether they were complying with the standards set out for their protection. It was noted that the Taw estuary had never passed the guideline flesh standard for Shellfish Waters and the Torridge estuary and Taw-Torridge estuary mouth passed the G standard only about 1 year in 10
- pressures on shellfish industry due to poor water quality affected by location/agriculture/land management/point source/waste water treatment/metals
- non compliance of bathing water at Instow owing to the function of the catchment and land use within in it (discharge from sewerage plant)
- weather trends and tidal ranges particularly in the South West
- concerns regarding raw sewerage from outlets in Appledore discharging into the river Torridge and cascading across to Instow
- impact of vessels left to rust
- impact of dog fouling and subsequent results of water quality testing
- sustainable land management and soil health
- changes to farming practices
- local planning authority approval of planning applications against advice of the Environment Agency
- ability to develop on land previously classified as 'not for development' owing to flood risks through well designed flood alleviation schemes

- infrastructure required to keep towns protected from flood risk
- improvements to our relationship with public health in terms of communication
- capacity issues of pumping stations at Landkey and Bishops Tawton
- partnership working to prioritise resources in critical drainage areas together with a monitoring programme

Councillor Chesters declared a personal interest as a Member of the Braunton Marsh Drainage Board.

Following a question and answer session, Mr Grosvenor advised that discharge from the Ashford Sewerage plant was in his opinion, not as significant to the water quality as that of land management.

Ms. Hayes representing the AONB addressed the Committee and advised that if the estuary was to become a valuable fishery going forward, authorities needed to work together to ensure that schemes moved ahead and ask South West Water authority what plans it had in place to improve performance.

The Chairman thanked all attendees for their input.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that a joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task Team be established comprising 4 Members from each Authority with the primary purpose of providing a response to the consultation document entitled Update To The Draft River Basin Management Plan out for consultation on 10 October 2014 and also to investigate potential flooding and water quality issues in the Taw and Torridge areas;
- (b) that Councillors Biederman, Chesters, Luggar and Moores be appointed to the joint Task Team from North Devon Council; and
- (c) that the scope for the Task Team be developed.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 12.40 p.m.

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.