

Community Planning Overview in Torrige

Report of the Community and Strategy Officer

Please note this recommendation is subject to consideration and determination by the Torrige County-Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: That the Committee notes the position regarding Devon County Council involvement in Community planning and Development work in Torrige.

1. Context

The County Council is involved in a wide range of multi-agency and partnership working in Torrige. This report provides an overview of the County Council's formal involvement in the work of the North Devon and Torrige Local Strategic Partnership and related community planning activity, and in the context of the work of the Devon Strategic Partnership and Devonwide Local area Agreement.

2. Devon Strategic Partnership/Local Area Agreement

The Devon Strategic Partnership (DSP) comprises public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations, all working together to improve the quality of life for those who live, work in and visit Devon. Its focus is on delivering real improvements to the issues that matter most to the people of Devon; working towards a joint vision to be ***“England's greenest county with strong local communities that are prosperous and welcoming with an excellent quality of life and a sustainable future”***.

Many of the most challenging issues which we face are complex and cannot be tackled by one agency or group and require new approaches. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) sit at the heart of improving services and the quality of people's lives. The DSP, working with the district level LSPs takes a strategic view across the county. When developing the Sustainable Community Strategy for Devon (www.devonsp.org.uk/), the priorities of each of the district Local Strategic Partnerships were carefully considered.

Local Strategic Partnerships were introduced by Government in 2000 as a non statutory way of working on partnership. Since then their role has been strengthened, and whilst they are still technically non statutory, it is mandatory to develop and deliver a Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement in partnership and nominated partners have a “Duty to Cooperate” in this process. The County Council is the Accountable Body for the Local Area Agreement, but it cannot deliver it other than in partnership. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and its accompanying statutory guidance spelt out the role of the LSP more clearly than ever before.

Each of the districts in Devon also has a LSP that tackles issues facing their area. In North Devon and Torrige this is managed through a joint LSP. Working in partnership and improving quality of life can be done at many levels – parishes can best address some problems, others need partnership working at the district level, still other issues can only be effectively tackled at a county wide level. In this way the District LSPs and the Devon Strategic Partnership can complement each other in the work they do. Further work to better align the work of the DSP and District Local Strategic Partnerships is planned for the next year. Crucially, the Local Area Agreement, needs to be better articulated at a local level.

3. North Devon and Torridge Local Strategic Partnership

The Local Strategic Partnership for North Devon and Torridge meets quarterly and is responsible for overseeing the development and delivery of its new Sustainable Community Strategy which can be found at www.torridge.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2860&p=0. The strategy has adopted the same thematic headings as the DSP to ensure maximum alignment.

The Vision for the area is described as ***“An economically vibrant place which, combined with an exceptional and diverse environment, offers an excellent quality of life for all its people and communities in a safe, healthy and sustainable manner”***.

Currently, the LSP is chaired by Cllr. Des Brailey of North Devon Council but the role of chair rotates between the two District Councils and the County Council on an annual basis. An Officer Support Group, led by Maria Bailey of Torridge District Council, supports the work of the LSP.

Councillors Parsons and Yabsley are appointed as the DCC representatives to sit on the LSP, one from each of the County Committees.

At its last meeting the LSP focused on issues relating to the local economy. It received an economic profile prepared by Devon County Council as background to a discussion that agreed to pursue a number of actions (see Appendix 1 for actions already under way):

- To examine further ways of supporting small business locally through Employment, Advice and Training Events offered by Job Centre Plus and short courses offered by Adult and Community Learning
- Considering ways in which public sector employment can encourage applications from people who might traditionally be hesitant to apply (building on a successful scheme introduced by DCC)
- Improving take-up of advice to small businesses and their employees facing financial difficulties
- Working more effectively with third sector organisations dealing with debt, personal insolvencies, home repossessions etc
- Developing the ICT infrastructure for northern Devon
- Using business networks to pick up risks of minor redundancies from SME's and micro-businesses.
- Developing solutions proposed through the Joint Delivery Team

The agenda also included discussion of Employee Volunteer Release Schemes where public bodies and businesses encourage members of staff to act as volunteers in local third sector organisations or to support community action. Devon County Council already offers such a scheme to its employees and partners agreed to review our experience and consider its place in their organisations.

Finally, the agenda reviewed the “Single Conversation” process initiated by the Homes and Communities Agency to think through its investment priorities in the coming years. This is to be discussed at the Devon Strategic Partnership later in September and the LSP agreed to develop its contribution to those discussions collectively.

4. Local and Parish Community Planning

Within the district area, other community planning activity takes place on a more local basis, for example through parish plans and also action plans developed through the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTi) Tracking progress in the development and production of all these local plans has been made easier by the creation of a database – Communities in Action - that all local plan groups can use to upload their plans and potential project ideas for wider circulation. As parishes upload their plans onto the database it becomes a powerful source of information accessible to Members and agencies to help inform them about emerging community priorities from the local level.

Members may find it a useful source of information about what local community planning activity has taken place. The database is hosted at: - <http://syd.paribus.co.uk/cia/index.do>

Some localities, such as Barnstaple, were too large to be included in the MCTi programme and have developed their own approach. In Barnstaple, an innovative approach has been pursued for some years through the Barnstaple Our Town programme which published a ten year action plan in 2006 and publishes an annual report each autumn. This programme is led by the Barnstaple Alliance in which Devon County Council takes a leading role.

5. Devon Town Profiles

As part of the work undertaken to better understand community needs and aspirations, profiles have been developed for 28 local areas, recognising the physical make up of the county and the important role many market towns play as the hub for the small and scattered communities in their respective hinterland.

The footprint for each area has been shaped through taking account of local travel plans, shopping catchment areas, the extent of the local learning community and the areas designated for regeneration support through the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative. Whilst for analytical purposes each area has a firm boundary, it is readily accepted that local people may not agree with the specific boundaries in all cases. Having said that, these profiles do provide a starting point for a local discussion about the needs and priorities of these local areas. Since the production of the initial profiles, population projections to 2021 have been produced as well as a mosaic lifestyle analysis for each area.

Profiles can be accessed on the web at:-

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/neighbourhoods-villages/devontownprofiles.htm>

Electoral Divisions: All in Torridge

Local Government Act 1972

List of Background Papers

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Appendix 1

Recent action on the economy in Northern Devon

- **Feasibility study** underway for a combined community and sports facility at Yeo Valley in Barnstaple (contact: Keith Brown)
- **Feasibility study** underway for potential Agri Business centre in Holsworthy which links with potential relocation of the Livestock market (contact: Tom Dixon)
- **Renewable Energy 4 Devon**: significant number of projects across Northern Devon (contact: Mel Sealey)
- **SW European Competitiveness funding programme**: DCC successfully lobbied for an additional weighting of funding for the Western peninsula, which includes Northern Devon. (contact: Jamie Evans)
- **Skills & Training**: Devon Renewable Energy Skills & Training report compiled July 2008 and work ongoing to implement recommendations including more subsidised training in RE4D.
- **Ward Forestry**: project in development, looking to work with small private woodland owners to coordinate management and improve wood-fuel supply chain (contact: Heather Hillman)
- **Marine/Renewable Networking**: work is underway to bring the marine engineering and renewable energy sector together, 85 participants attended the first successful event on 5th May 2009. Across Devon but a significant contingent from Northern Devon (contact: John Baker)
- **DCC Projects**: work underway supporting other departments/directorates to develop DCC renewable energy infrastructure on our own estate - includes Northern Devon (contact: Mel Sealey).
- **Leaderflush Shapland**: DCC, along with JC+, SWRDA, North Devon Council intervened to provide advice and guidance to employees over job losses (134 redundancies). DCC also in continuing talks over improving employment site suitability in Barnstaple for the company. (contact: Jamie Evans)
- **Sea Change bids**: DCC assisted North Devon and Torridge Councils in their successful bids for CABE Sea Change funding for Ilfracombe and Westward Ho! sea fronts. A second bid was submitted recently for Ilfracombe, for which we are awaiting a decision (contact: Jamie Evans)
- **Bideford College** – Building Schools for the future project underway, which includes a state of the art biomass boiler (contact: Beth Gritten)
- **Tarka Line** – improved train links between Barnstaple and Exeter (DCC intervention) to increase frequency to almost hourly in the main part of the day (contact: Ian Harrison)

Future activity?

- **Atlantic Array**: research and liaison with Developers, SWRDA, North Devon and Torridge Councils to bring construction, maintenance and servicing facility for offshore energy project to the North Devon coast (contact: Jamie Evans/John Baker)
- **Devon Employment Space Strategy**: Potential sites for interventions to improve availability of suitable employment space being looked at across the county, including several sites in Northern Devon.
- **Knapp Farm – Torridge**: discussions underway about potential marina village, including 70-bedroom hotel, marina and 500 new homes
- **Ilfracombe to Swansea ferry link** – still on track for 2010
- **A Joint Delivery Team** has been formed between DCC, North Devon Council, Torridge District Council and the South West for the Northern Devon area. Bideford, Ilfracombe and Holsworthy are their key priorities