

**Minutes
Northern Devon Futures
Thursday 06 March
9.30-12.00
In Person Meeting at Caddsdawn Business Park, Bideford**

Attendees

Alan Dykes - TDK Lambda
Councillor Ken James – Leader, Torridge District Council
Kurt Hintz – Petroc
Steve Hearse – Chief Executive Torridge District Council (Chair for this meeting)
Councillor Peter Leaver – Deputy Leader, North Devon Council (virtual)
Councillor Clayton – Leader, North Devon District Council (virtual)
Tim Jones - South West Business Council and North Devon Plus (virtual)
Stuart Elmore - Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce (virtual)
Natalie Haines – Homes England (virtual)
Ann Barriball – MP Office, Torridge & Tavistock
Martin Slocombe – 361 Energy
Tony George – Department for Work & Pensions
Mike Matthews - Lineal
Marie Gould – NDVS and Chair of Place and Community NDF Action Group
Mark Burnett – Seiche Group and North Devon & Torridge Maritime Network
Ken Miles – Chief Executive, North Devon District Council
Sarah Jane Mackenzie-Shapland - North Devon Council
Mark Rostock - North Devon Homes Ltd
Richard Light – Tarka Learning Partnership
Andrea Beecham - One Northern Devon and Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (virtual)
Toby Davies - Superintendent Devon and Cornwall Police (virtual)
Keri Denton – Director of Performance & Partnerships, Devon County Council

In attendance

Karen Hewlett - Torridge District Council
Jon Walter -Torridge District Council
Kirsty Brown - Torridge District Council
Alex Farmery - Petroc
Donna Sibley – North Devon District Council and Torridge District Council
Bill Blythe - Petroc (virtual)
Chris Fuller - Torridge District Council
Dominie Dubrook - North Devon Council
Paige McNamee - Bideford College (work experience with TDC)
Bailey Curtis - Bideford College (work experience with TDC)

Meeting started 9.33

Steve Hearse, Chief Executive Torridge District Council, opened the meeting and introduced 2 students from Bideford College, who were attending the meeting as part of a work experience week with Torridge District Council.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

Peter Morrish (Chair), Steve Hearse took the Chair on his behalf.
Andy Bell, North Devon Biosphere
Donna Manson, Devon County Council
Councillor Rufus Gilbert
Geoffrey Cox MP

Stuart Brocklehurst
 Kay Brennan
 Councillor David Wordon
 Philip Butterworth
 Helen Bone
 Katherine Allen

2. Declaration of Interests

Members were reminded to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests related to agenda items as they were discussed.

3. Minutes and Actions

The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2024 and Chair reviewed the action list. It was confirmed the action relating to the Community and Place Action Group was on the agenda and therefore complete.

No.	Action	Owner	Due Date	Status/update
1.	List of Priority Actions for Community & Place Action Group NEW ACTION - MG to suggest definition of the group's remit, after which the Board can identify any gaps.	Board members	22 February 2024	DONE
2.	Set up of the Housing and Infrastructure Action Group	Secretariat		
3.	Action Group Chair's Away Day to review KPIs and cross over of work streams.	Secretariat		
4.	OND Health & Wellbeing work planned with junior schools on mental health provision to be progressed in conjunction with the Children & Young People's Action Group of NDF.	Action Group Chairs		
5.	Closing the Gap on Inequality. Agenda item for a future meeting	AB / Chair		
6.	Connect to Work and Get Britain Working Initiatives - it was agreed that KD would look to arrange for someone to attend and speak at OND meeting.	KD		
7.	Local Plan to become a regular item on the agenda of the Board	Secretariat		

4. Update from each Action Group and OND

Chair advised that papers were circulated in advance of the meeting and handed over to the representatives for each group to summarise.

Economy, Innovation and Skills Action Group

CF noted the report shared with the Board in advance of the meeting and went on to highlight a workshop delivered last quarter to create an action plan for the Economic Strategy.

Following a query about the Chair vacancy, CF confirmed there was a meeting later today and there were a couple of people who were being considered. The challenges of recruitment to the role and the type of skills required were also noted in terms of this search.

Climate Action Group

A short report had been circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting. DS explained that the group was currently on hold due to time constraints, and there was a need for more clarity on the future direction of the group.

CYP Group

KH advised on the success of the programme to recruit 100 apprentices in 100 days, which had already exceeded the target. Work taking place to promote work experience for young people, as well as work to engage with teaching staff and businesses was summarised.

A detailed discussion took place and the following was noted:

- KH advised there were 35 different employers, a small number of which had not taken on an apprentice before.
- MB noted the funding from Maritime UK South West to support the development of new maritime skills course and provided some context in terms of the types and numbers of skilled jobs required for Celtic Sea.
- KH advised of work taking place to engage with young people not in education and employment. The H2O project was noted and explained, and the impact of home education was also noted.
- KH advised retention rates for apprenticeships are around 60%, around 5% higher than the national average. In terms of the age range, it was confirmed this was a general age of 16-18, and the reasons for this were explained in terms of the aims of this apprenticeship model.
- In relation to travel and transport, KH stated this was not as big an issue for apprenticeship rates, with attendance rates at 90%. It was explained that blended learning / online learning may be the reason for this.
- The low response rates for employer surveys was recognised, and KH advised of the work Petroc do in terms of engaging employers on apprenticeships.

Chair noted the positive update and outcomes from the group.

Andrea – Health & Wellbeing OND

AB noted the draft programme for next year, which had been circulated to the Board before the meeting. Some of the key areas of work were summarised as below.

One Ilfracombe now has a taskforce and is looking to identify 5 key areas of work to reduce inequalities in the local area. AB noted the Poverty Truth Commission work in relation to this, which will also be considering themes for the year.

AB highlighted planned work with the local junior school on mental health provision. It was agreed that this work could be progressed in conjunction with the Children & Young People's Action Group of NDF.

AB went on to highlight the planned work Closing the Gap on Inequality. AB explained there was a hope this would be a joint piece of work between One Northern Devon (OND) and NDF. The focus of this piece of work and the overall aim was summarised for the Board, and AB suggested that further detail could be provided at a future meeting.

5. Overview of plan to Refresh Strategy, Objectives and Priorities and KPI's.

Communities Action Group

MG advised of the proposal to align OND Community Development Steering Group and the NDF Communities Action Group, to avoid duplication and streamline efforts. MG would be the link between the 2 Boards given her role on both OND and NDF. There was a request for a secretariat to support.

MR reflected on work that had taken place already and felt that the proposal was worthy of consideration and SH advised of an update from Peter Morrish (Chair) on the work that had taken place with Katherine Allen (OND Chair) on this transition of this group.

Housing & Infrastructure Action Group

MG and MR introduced the item and summarised the detail of the Housing Report attached with the agenda - noting the work so far, the current political landscape, some of the issues and lived experiences locally and the progress made since the writing of the report. It was felt that Housing and Infrastructure required its own space and the recommendations at the end of the report were the foundation blocks going forward.

There followed a detailed discussion on the issues for the local area in terms of housing need and infrastructure. It was felt there is an over provision of homes high in price and this wasn't meeting the local need for affordable housing.

- KM advised that issues around housing supply, transport and infrastructure were covered within the Local Plan, and the NDF role in terms of the Local Plan. SH noted the Terms of Reference would be well placed to reflect this.
- SJMS advised that the Thematic Groups of Local Plan reflect the NDF Board action groups, and changes should be reflected in Local Plan. The importance of establishing direct links between the groups was explained along with some of the key areas of crossover.
- There was discussion regarding the balancing of what is required nationally in terms of NPPF and what the needs are for the local community, what the northern Devon region needs and what the people in the area expect.
- The issue of capacity, in terms of skill and supply, and the capability to deliver on the set targets regarding housing was raised, along with the need to consider employment land.

Next Steps

The Board agreed to set up the Housing and Infrastructure Action Group. It was arranged for the Secretariat to take this forward using the paper that was presented to Board as a starting point.

BB advised that the Chair of NDF has asked for an away day for working group Chairs and the Secretariat. It was explained this would be to agree KPIs and objectives for each working group to populate the action plan, as well as a session to pick up any cross over objectives and to set up mechanism for discussing work across the groups. The Board were in agreement.

6. Local Government Re-organisation

KM provided members with a summary of the Government plans for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. The Government proposals and timescales were explained, along with the outcome for Devon, which is no longer part of the priority programme. It was explained that discussions on the proposals for Devon were ongoing and the deadline was 21 March. KM advised of the District Leaders press release, which suggested the 1-4-5 model for Devon.

The population targets for any proposed Unitary were noted and explained in terms of the model that has been put forward by Districts. The Board were advised that on the 21 March there were expected to be a range of options put forward to Government.

The potential implications were explained in terms of the types of service provision that would be taken on as well as the potential costs of delivering these services and managing the debt of other Councils and the transition to Unitary itself.

Both Council Leaders and the Chief Executives reflected on the scale of the change, the timescales and the lack of certainty – it was felt that the work of NDF, as well as the work on the joint Local Plan were all strengths for North Devon in terms of expressing the needs of the Local Area.

There was a detailed discussion on the potential impact of the move to a Unitary model and the Board discussed the following :

- The impact in terms of local employment and commissioning of local services and the supply chains
- Whether a change in Local Government will delivery on the cost savings suggested and what impact this will have for the local electorate.
- The uncertainty of timescales moving forward.
- In terms of business, consider the blocks to economic growth and how these could be solved – the importance of using an evidence base for this work to show preferred options.
- Focus on the governance arrangements, how power will be devolved and ensure the concerns are addressed within the new structure.
- Demonstrate the joined up work already taking place locally and how to use this to inform the process (Community Safety work was noted, Joint Local Plan, NDF partnership).

7. Update from North Devon+

The Board were provided with an update on North Devon Plus – a Business Support Company set up between North Devon District Council and Torridge District Council, which delivers programmes within the local area to support business growth. role as a supplier who understand the local district to Central Government.

AD noted his role on the Business Advisory Group so declared an interest.

AD advised of work taking place to draw in funding around apprenticeships and advised the Main issue going forward would be considering the future shape of the organisation and the potential impact in terms of the change that devolution may bring.

KM advised how North Devon Plus was coming to the end of delivering the programmes they have in place and provided additional detail in terms of how the company plan to adapt and ensure their future to continue to provide support to the industries in the area.

AD shared a presentation with the Board and advised this would be circulated following the meeting.

8. Devolution update – Devon and Torbay

KD joined the meeting at 11:20pm and provided a detailed update on the work taking place to set up the CCA (Combined County Authority), and the inaugural board meeting will be on 9th March. The Board were advised of the work that had taken place so far to set up the CCA, and where the focus was moving forward – it was confirmed that most work would be delivered through Service Level Agreements initially and that DCC had completed work around the Adult Skills Fund and what this meant for adult education.

The Board were advised that:

- Skill Strategy work had been awarded to Exeter University to deliver develop, and this would build on the local skills improvement plan. The role of the advisory groups in terms of the development of this work.
- A Local Growth Plan had also been commissioned and Metro Dynamics would deliver on this. The Business Advisory Group would have oversight on this piece of work and this would be consulted on.
- Connect to Work programme – a joint initiative across the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Health and Social Care. The Board were advised this work would transition from Devon County to the CAA. It was the first time this programme had been devolved to local areas to deliver and is the first part of the Get Britain Working plan.
- The CCA had responsibility to develop a local Get Britain Working plan and the Board were provided with a summary of what this may look like in terms of support, targets and funding involved.
- Capital Programme - it was confirmed this was well underway and end of March was the deadline for spend on 16 projects and how work was progressing – noting the involvement of NDDC and TDC.
- Green Innovation Fund - an update was provided and it was confirmed that CCA could return to Board and provide an update on these schemes.
- The setting up of advisory groups was summarised.

The Board commented on the Connect to Work programme and noted the number of suppliers operating the IPS model within Devon, advising they were keen to reach out and be involved in the project. KD suggested they make contact with details and she advised on the next steps for procurement and delivery.

It was asked what route was being used to engage with Health in terms of the Get Britain Working and Connect to Work initiatives. KD advised it would be the local health and care partnerships and the ICB. The 4 pillars of the Get Britain Working scheme were explained to the Board, along with the planned focus of these pillars and the aims of the work. AB advised that the local care partnerships for North Devon would be OND, and it was agreed that KD would look to arrange for someone to attend and speak at this meeting.

SJMS asked about the Local Growth Plan and the objectives. AD advised that this would focus on local business and business opportunities in the CCA area. With a focus on identifying existing businesses that can grow and where there are natural advantages that can be taken advantage of, hydrogen energy and green economy were noted. An update on the work of Metronomics was provided and it was stated that this work should be complete by end of March.

- Business Advisory Group- Alan Dykes

AD advised that this group had strong ND contingent and the Board were updated on the progress of the first 3 meetings of this group.

- Skills and Employment Advisory Group - Kurt Hintz

KH advised the group had a new Chair, Laurence Frewin, and Vice Chair, Sharron Robbie .

An update on the planned skills strategy was provided, and it was confirmed that Exeter University would be leading this work, which will look to identify the skills requirements are.

KH advised of planned work for Devolved Adult Skills Fund, which was due to be in place for 2026-27 with all the infrastructure in place. The impact in terms of the funding streams open to Adult Skills and the potential opportunities were discussed and KH provided some examples to the Board in terms of the devolution of Adult Skills.

Capital Projects for Combined Authority

North Devon

KM advised funding would be used to support the provision of Social Housing through Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and the Ilfracombe Healthy Homes project – it was confirmed there were offers in on 3 properties at this time.

Torridge

CF advised funding would be used to support the delivery of the slipway at the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovate Centre, which had been outside the scope of the levelling up bid. It was explained this would provide access to the water, which was a key ask from the local businesses involved.

SH extended an invitation to the Chair to meet with the Board and update on the direction of CCA.

9. Update on ND hospital plans - Katherine Allen 10 mins

The item was deferred until the next meeting.

10. Torridge Community Regeneration Partnership (Levelling up) - Steve Hearse 10 mins

SH provided background to the Board on the awarding of this funding, and confirmed that last week a package of projects had been announced with a value just over £20 million.

Further detail was provided in regards the types of projects the Government had allocated the funds to and it was confirmed that there was just over 2 years to deliver on these projects - with 6 of the projects to be led by Torridge District Council and 6 by external partners.

11. Local plan update - Ken Miles 10 mins

SJMS provided the Board with an update on the Local Plan. She advised that a Local Development Scheme would need to be submitted to Government today, setting out the programme in terms of the new Local Plan for northern Devon – this was a requirement for all Councils.

It was confirmed the Joint Planning Policy Committee had met last week and it was agreed the scheme will advise that the new Local Plan work would formally start in October 2025, with an adoption date of July 2028. This was dependent on secondary legislation from Government.

SJMS confirmed that the scheme would also advise of a plan period of a minimum 15 years from adoption, with a vision for an extended period of 20-year period. SJMS went on to explain the work taking place now to gather evidence, and highlighted the importance

of the Board's involvement once the process starts in October. It was suggested this could become a regular item on the agenda of the Board.

Following a question on how to best be involved in the process, SJMS advised the thematic working groups were aligned to the action groups of NDF and feedback from those groups could be come to the Board.

12. AOB

The following issues were raised:

Following a query MB updated the Board regarding the Strategic Defence Review and provided a summary of the possible outcomes. Following a detailed discussion, there was agreement that NDF role held a role in terms of lobbying Government regarding the opportunities within North Devon. Specifically, the local capabilities in the area, and the local skills and suppliers linked to these.

MG asked for the Boards support or advice for Charities who are awaiting annual funding decisions - the possible implications of closure was noted.

Chair summarised the meeting, and the agreed actions. Thanks to all who attended.