

# **MINUTES FOR THE TOWN MATTERS COMMITTEE**

# **MONDAY 28TH MARCH 2022 IN THE GUILDHALL**

Present: Councillors V Trow (Chair), G Allen (joined 18.40), S Collinson (joined 18.40), J Cummings, P Paine (joined 19.00), N Stopp (left 19.20) and L Webberley.

## Apologies: Cllr J Hannam (received during the meeting).

Not Present: Cllrs A Oliver and S Skinner.

## In Attendance: Representative from South Hams Citizens Advice, a member of the public, L Ferrier (Marketing and Communications Manager) and S Halliday (Governance and Projects Manager).

### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

### **To receive apologies and to confirm that any absence has the approval of the Council.**

Cllr Trow read out a statement about how the meeting would be conducted and recorded.

Apologies were received later from Cllr Hannam.

*The Committee will adjourn for the following items:*

### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

A member of the public requested that the planters and granite bollards off Fore and High Street are washed down to freshen them up – they have got grubby over the past six months from passing traffic and dogs. The Committee requests that the Town Maintenance Officer actions this before the Easter visitor season begins.

**2. CITIZENS ADVICE SOUTH HAMS**

**To receive an update on the work of Citizens Advice South Hams from its Chief Executive Officer.**

Apologies were sent by the Chief Executive Officer who was unwell and was represented by a member of the management team who is an energy advisor. Totnes has helped around 500 clients in 2021, roughly a 10 per cent increase on previous years, and one client often brings multiple issues requiring advice. In the current environment those seeking energy help is high, particularly the issues associated with pre-paid meters, and in Totnes there has been an increase in health and community care questions. During the pandemic the method of giving advice has changed – only 5 per cent of advice has been face-to-face, with most consultations conducted by phone, and Citizens Advice are trying an outreach approach via the St John‘s Café, the community hall in Bridgetown and in The Mansion. Citizens Advice are looking at a holistic way of helping people and are also trying to offer help through food banks.

Councillors asked about working with the Totnes Renewable Energy Society, a local event to promote the work of Citizens Advice, rogue landlords, relations with the local MP, and the idea of individuals being able to donate a fuel voucher (as you would donate to a food bank).

*The Committee reconvened.*

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that Town Councillors meet with Citizens Advice and District Councillors to discuss the energy and housing issues faced in the town.

### **3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

### **To approve the minutes of 28th February 2022 and update on any matters arising.**

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of proceedings. Matters arising:

Item 2 – it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to allocate £1400 to the Earthjump project. The Link Orchestra application had been withdrawn.

Item 4 – Community Award Scheme. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that:

a. The following process is adopted for 2022:

• Each Councillor has the opportunity to nominate the name of an individual for the award by 21st March 2022.

• Town Matters Committee 28th March 2022 - consider the nominations in Part 2, confirms if any individual has more than one nomination (i.e. they have been put forward by more than one councillor), and shortlists the nominees to go forward to Full Council.

• Full Council 4th April 2022 – Councillors decide on who should win the award.

• Mayoral Choosing 19th May 2022 – winner presented with the award.

b. The scheme is called the ‘Totnes Community Award’.

c. The award will be in the form of a medal (mould cost approximately £50, each medal approximately £25-50).

d. The Mayoral budget will pay for the cost of the medal each year.

Item 5 – Homelessness Strategy: It was **RESOLVED** to give the Council Matters Committee delegated authority to respond and the Council’s comments have been submitted

Item 6 – Great British Spring Clean. It was **RESOLVED** that in conjunction with Totnes Against Trash that Councillors take part in two litter picks during the Great British Spring Clean (Cllr Trow will organise):

• Saturday 26th March, 10am-12pm in Totnes town.

• Sunday 10th April, 10am-12pm in the recreational areas of Bridgetown.

### **4. PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**

**To consider a request to Government for a proportional representation electoral system to be used in local government elections.**

Cllr Cummings explained the background to the matter which aims to: improve diversity in local government; make votes fairer; and increase the number of people registered to vote.

Cllr Stopp left the meeting at 19.20.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council:

a. to seek the support of neighbouring town councils (Dartmouth, Kingsbridge, Ivybridge, Salcombe) by end of May 2022 to send a joint letter (Cllr Cummings to draft);

b. to write to Her Majesty’s Government to request changes to legislation that would permit local councils in England to take steps to increase their diversity and representativeness by allowing councils to trial a more proportional voting system in County, District and Town Council elections; and also requesting an increase of funds to support greater levels of electoral registration;

c. to inform South Hams District Council and Devon County Council of this decision, and invite them to pass similar resolutions;

d. to ask our MP, Anthony Mangnall, to support such a change in the law; and

c. to issue a press release to the Totnes Times, informing the public of this resolution.

### **5. OPEN SPACES, SPORTS AND RECREATION AND S106 MONIES**

**To review the list of Open Spaces, Sports and Recreation facilities in Totnes and consider how unallocated S106 monies could be used to enhance these areas.**

The Committee discussed the lack of play provision at the Camomile Lawn development (for which money was allocated) and the lack of older children/young teen play facilities in the town. It was **AGREED** that this item would return to the next meeting and that an item with an update on the Skate Park would be included.

### **6. UKRAINE**

**To consider an update on Totnes support initiatives in response to the war in Ukraine.**

Cllr Webberley updated on the work of the local group TSUNAMI – Totnesians Support Ukraine Not Any Military Incursion – who are fundraising through holding a coffee morning on 23rd April in St John’s Church and selling sunflower seedlings in the town. The idea of twinning with a town is still being considered, with the possibility of a town in Poland near the border with Ukraine being a more suitable option at the moment.

### **7. COMMEMORATIVE BENCH**

**To consider the recommendation of the Council Assets and Public Realm Working Group for Totnes Gardens to place a commemorative bench for the Platinum Jubilee on Coronation Road.**

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it agrees to the use of Totnes Town Council land on Coronation Road for Totnes Gardens to install a commemorative bench at their own cost.

### **8. CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP**

**To note the minutes of the Climate Change Working Group on 15th March 2022 (standing item).**

Noted. An additional meeting to discuss the ‘Planning for the Climate Emergency’ consultation will be held on Tuesday 5th April 2022. The officer pointed out that Full Council will also consider the matter on 4th April in order to have an agreed Council view to be able to respond before the deadline.

### **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

### **To note the date of the next meeting of the Town Matters Committee – Monday 30th May 2022 at 6.30pm.**

### Noted.

T*he Committee will be asked to* ***RESOLVE*** *to exclude the press and public “by reason of the confidential nature of the business” to be discussed and in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. (CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council)*

**10. COMMUNITY AWARD SCHEME**

**To consider the nominations for the Community Award scheme (personal information).**

See separate confidential minutes.

Sara Halliday

Governance and Projects Manager