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26 April 2022

**Totnes Town Council makes a £2.5m offer to purchase the lower school site at KEVICCS**

Totnes Town Council’s ambition to purchase the former Lower School site from King Edward VI Community College for community use has taken another step forward. Following a detailed feasibility study at the end of last year, a formal offer to purchase the site was made on 13th April 2022.

The offer of £2.5million for the site, which includes the red-brick Elmhirst Building and playing fields alongside Ashburton Road, could see the area be used as a centre for sports, recreation, the arts, learning, craft, enterprise and renewable energy. The Town Council's plans also include improving pedestrian access to the River Dart for recreational activities, and enhancing connectivity with Totnes Railway Station and the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists. The entire site was listed as an Asset of Community Value by South Hams District Council in November 2021, which reflects its significance to the social life and wellbeing of local people.

***Catherine Marlton, Clerk at Totnes Town Council said:****“Our feasibility work identified that our proposed scheme is viable, giving Councillors the confidence to move ahead. While it’s important to note we’re still at an early stage of negotiation, we’re committed to working closely with the Community College and South Hams District Council to make this project happen for the Totnes community.*

*“The site has huge potential to contribute to the social, environmental, and economic wellbeing of Totnes and to the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of local people, especially young people. At the same time, the Town Council fully acknowledges that the Community College has an urgent need to raise a significant amount of capital. As a result, we’ve proposed a “win-win” solution that will be in the best interest of the college and the town. That means offering to buy the site at a fair value that doesn’t disadvantage the college’s plans. We can afford to do this because we can take advantage of the public sector’s ability to apply for loan funding at favourable rates of interest over 50 years (known as prudential borrowing).”*

The Town Council acknowledges that the Lower School site and the college’s three other development sites are allocated for housing in the latest Joint Local Plan, the planning framework which determines how Totnes will look and feel over the next 20 years. The Town Council is fully supportive of the proposed provision of sustainable new housing and careful improvements to the town. It believes that it is possible to work with the college and South Hams District Council to meet the allocation within the overall area while still protecting and enhancing the Lower School site and Elmhirst Building for the community on a permanent basis.

With the offer now in place, the Town Council hopes to start formal negotiations with the college. If discussions are successful, the next stage will be securing funding and starting a community consultation to enable local people, groups and community partners to help shape the concept and plans for the future of the site.

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**Note to Editors**

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