**Full Council Monday 4th December - Clerks Report**

**General update**

* The lights are up and look amazing! Beyond thrilled and a huge thank you to the whole team, particularly Sara for working tirelessly to get it there. A further report on this and the switch on will be at Council Matters next week.
* Free parking in SHDC Car Parks has been agree as Wednesday 13th December at the request of the Chamber of Commerce.
* Disappointing mistake made in the Totnes Times about comments attributed to a Councillor who was not present at the meeting. A retraction and apology has subsequently been printed.
* Work continues on the Strategic Plan – and the current plan is to continue work in the new year. This will mean setting a budget with a Community Development ‘pot’ and then setting budget commitments against priorities. It means we can set the precept and annual budget for 24 25 overall by the SHDC deadline in January.
* All Councillors are asked to attend the part 1 section of the December Council Matters to discuss a recommendation to Full Council in January about the budget as above.
* The Neighbourhood Plan was adopted! Solid turn out and overwhelming support from those that did vote.
* The OSSR review is ongoing via Town Matters.
* The new IT contract has not been without its issues, but we are at a point where all the emails have transferred to Microsoft outlook. Further phases will be happening in the coming weeks and Councillors will be kept abreast of changes in advance.
* Huge increases in access issues with the Civic Hall should be resolved in January as SHDC are installing a security gate to ensure proper access is maintained.
* As per the confidential extraordinary Full Council meeting we are waiting on further information from DCC regarding Elmhirst.
* I have confessed to an error in diary planning for next year – please see my email about May and June meeting dates.
* Christmas Markets start tomorrow – lots of engagement online and BBC Radio will be interviewing the Mayor. Some damage/theft of infrastructure around signage has been challenging this year which is new.
* Still working on the Eastgate Lease – some delays due to legal checks on specific terms.
* 15Th November - Cllr Peters and I had a meeting with the KIN Network with Inspector Shardlow and I have circulated the points raised and the updates that came out.
* I attended an SLCC briefing on Martyn’s Law. Lots of work coming down the line around venue management but early stages at the moment.
* Cllr Price and I attended a session with DALC where other towns and parishes shared similar frustrations with rising costs and increasing expectations from the electorate given cuts elsewhere. Also a preliminary briefing on the Devon Devo deal – more information to follow but I have circulated the thoughts I expressed in the meeting.
* I circulated the SPARSE Rural parish census information to all Councillors for information.
* The Artisan Markets have grossed £2655 this year for Paige Adams Trust which is great news and a big thank you to Lisa for all her work on those events.
* The office closes for the Christmas break on Wednesday 20th December, returning on 2nd January 2024. A Councillor Social is arranged for 15th December and the staff do is next week. My last day in the office is Thursday 14th December.

**NALC Chief executive's bulletins**

**The King’s Speech 2023**

**On Tuesday 7 November, during the State Opening of Parliament, His Majesty The King opened the 2023/24 Parliamentary session, setting out the Government’s legislative plan ahead of the next general election. The speech covered three key themes of strengthening society, growing the economy and keeping people safe, with 21 separate Bills announced. There are several areas of relevance to local government including proposed legislation on restricting the sale of tobacco and vaping products to young people, creating a legal framework for self-driving vehicles, supporting renters, and digitalising local traffic regulation orders. The legislative programme also includes proposals aimed at protecting public premises from terror attacks through the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also known as Martyn’s Law, which NALC wrote to the prime minister about last week. The government has also announced that ahead of introducing the Bill in Parliament, there will be a further consultation on the Standard Tier to ensure the Bill’s measures strike the right balance between public protection and avoiding undue burdens on smaller premises. This consultation is welcome as NALC’s written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee set out our concerns about the impact of the legislation on our councils. We will of course be responding to the consultation and engaging further with the government and Parliamentarians in both Houses on the Bill and wider legislative programme.**

**NALC briefing on the national salary pay scales**

**We have published a new employment briefing on the national salary pay scales for clerks and other employees who are employed under the terms of the model contract or Green Book terms. The briefing includes updated pay scales in line with the 2004 NALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks national agreement for the sector. These pay rates are applicable from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. You can find the briefing under the Employment section of the Briefing webpage in the member's area. If you have any queries, please contact your local county association.**

**On the blog: The Health Foundation**

**This week’s blog is from the Health Foundation. The blog provides recommendations for what councils can do to tackle food insecurity in their communities. Affording and accessing enough nutritious food to lead a healthy life should be possible for everyone, but this is not currently the case in the UK. Local government has a crucial role in building healthy, thriving communities. The building blocks are interconnected; any missing or weakened threaten the whole structure. Preventing food insecurity is an important cornerstone that will help shore up the health and resilience of everyone in a community. Read the blog to find out more!**

**Local Government Strategy Forum**

**Our senior solicitor and legal manager, Jane Moore, attended the Local Government Strategy Forum in Cheshire between 1 and 3 November 2023. The packed event had a varied programme, including presentations and group sessions looking at improvement and more efficient ways of working across local government, particularly within budgetary constraints. The event also heard positive stories on housing regeneration projects and organisational transformation, including the use of digital technology, with high-level speakers from principal authorities across the country.**

**NALC committee election results**

**The results of our committee elections were unveiled at the National Assembly meeting held at the offices of the Local Government Association before the parliamentary reception on 29 November 2023. Cllr Keith Stevens has been re-elected unopposed as our chair, as has Cllr Peter Davey as our vice-chair (finance), and I am pleased to welcome our new vice-chair (member services), Cllr David Francis. I want to congratulate all candidates elected to governance roles on NALC committees for 2024/25, and I'd like to thank everyone who put themselves forward. You can read the full results on our website. The first meetings of the new committees take place in early December.**

**Autumn Statement**

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt MP, delivered the 2023 Autumn Statement on 22 November 2023. Measures of interest for local government include:**

**• A long-term freeze in capital investment in the public sector with no new funding for adult or children's social care or any general local government funding for 2024/25 beyond what was announced last year.**

**• Council tax referendums were not mentioned. This is expected to be set out in the provisional local government finance settlement (PLGFS) in December.**

**• The main rate of National Insurance was cut from 12% to 10% from 6 January.**

**• National Living Wage will increase from £10.42 to £11.44 an hour from April, with the new rate applied to 21 and 22-year-old workers for the first time rather than just those aged 23 and over.**

**• Independent Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts inflation will fall to 2.8% by the end of 2024 before reaching the Bank of England's 2% target rate in 2025, with living standards expected to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2027/28.**

**• The 75% business rates discount for retail, hospitality and leisure firms in England extended for another year.**

**• Households living close to new pylons and transmission infrastructure to get up to £1,000 a year off energy bills for a decade.**

**• Local planning authorities will receive £32m to tackle planning backlogs and introduce new premium planning services across England, with faster decision dates for major business applications and fee refunds when these are unmet.**

**• Four new devolution deals, including Level 3 mayoral deals with Greater Lincolnshire, Hull and East Yorkshire, Level 2 non-mayoral deals with Lancashire and Cornwall and advanced discussions to agree on a Level 2 non-mayoral deal with Devon and Torbay.**

**NALC event explores how to improve the planning system for local councils**

**Our latest online event took place on 22 November 2023, looking at how to make the planning system work for local councils. The event highlighted how to improve the planning system to meet local councils' needs, the challenges and opportunities they face, different approaches for improving community engagement, promoting sustainable development, and ensuring a fair and transparent planning process. Richard Blyth of the Royal Town Planning Institute spoke about the local council's vital role in planning, stating, "On applications, local councils are obliged to be consulted about all planning in their area". Cllr Sue Camp of Sevenoaks Town Council's Planning Committee spoke about how her council benefitted from the infrastructure to deal with planning, saying, "Sevenoaks Town Council successfully deals with planning applications by holding their Planning Committee every two weeks". Cllr Sanchia Davidson and Cllr Helen Sunday of Wing Parish Council spoke about the neighbourhood plan introduced at the council to help control the future development of the village, commenting, "The team needs to be big enough to represent but small enough to function". You can find out more about NALC online events on our website.**

**Lastly…**

**This month's Rural Insight Forum – which brings together officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) with national organisations with a rural interest – reflected on the recent Cabinet reshuffle with the appointment of Steve Barclay MP as Secretary of State and former Alnwick Town Council councillor, Robbie Moore MP, as Parliamentary Under-Secretary. The forum discussed the Autumn Settlement, noting positive elements for rural areas, including reducing VAT on energy efficiency measures, for example, in village halls, and rate relief on hospitality. Other measures, mainly decreasing financial support for principal councils, would put more pressure on services in rural areas. The forum also heard about progress with implementing the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, which includes a new duty to have regard to rural areas and is the subject of active discussions between ministers and officials in Defra and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It was also noted that the Levelling Up Advisory Panel includes a sub-group to consider the design and delivery of levelling up in rural areas.**

**Visit Totnes**

Firstly really positive feedback on the Christmas Light Switch On and the new lights all over socials. Few examples:

A screenshot of a phone

Description automatically generatedA screenshot of a chat

Description automatically generatedA screenshot of a phone

Description automatically generated

A screenshot of a phone

Description automatically generated

**Visit Totnes social media and website stats for October:**

Website views: 23,000

Reach Facebook: 64,480

Reach Instagram: 10,219

A screenshot of a graph

Description automatically generated

**Tourist Information Centre**

We closed the TIC for the end of the season at the end of the October half-term holidays after answering 268 enquiries during the month (242 in-person).

The total number of enquiries answered by the TIC during the 2023 season was 2,503 (compared to 2,878 in 2022 and 3,344 in pre-pandemic 2018 when the TIC first moved to the Market Square.)

**In the press**

Our Christmas markets have been featuring:

[Festive fairs and Christmas markets 2023 - Devon | Muddy Stilettos](https://devon.muddystilettos.co.uk/things-to-do/whats-on/christmas-markets-devon/?utm_source=Devon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=d07f044be1-MUDDY-MAIL-FRI-3-NOV-2023&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-d07f044be1-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D)

## [Christmas Market & Late Night Shopping](https://visittotnes.co.uk/whats-on/totnes-christmas-markets/), Totnes, Tuesdays 5, 12 and 19 Dec 3-9pm

Credit Visit Totnes

The classic – as you’d expect from Totnes, rammed with 90 indie stalls, great food and oodles of character, late night opening for the stores, plus a festive lantern procession through the town at 4pm on 19 December.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [A christmas tree outside of a building  Description automatically generated](https://devon.muddystilettos.co.uk/things-to-do/whats-on/christmas-markets-devon/?utm_source=Devon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=d07f044be1-MUDDY-MAIL-FRI-3-NOV-2023&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-d07f044be1-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D) | [Festive fairs and Christmas markets 2023 - Devon | Muddy Stilettos](https://devon.muddystilettos.co.uk/things-to-do/whats-on/christmas-markets-devon/?utm_source=Devon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=d07f044be1-MUDDY-MAIL-FRI-3-NOV-2023&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-d07f044be1-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D)  Tick off your Christmas list locally this year with a glass of mulled wine in hand with Muddy’s pick of the festive markets and fairs in Devon.  devon.muddystilettos.co.uk |

The markets have also been featured in the December issue Totnes Directory

A magazine with a picture of people and a christmas tree

Description automatically generatedAn open book with text and images

Description automatically generated

Bradt Guides <https://www.bradtguides.com/> has confirmed they will be using one of our photos credited [www.visittotnes.co.uk](http://www.visittotnes.co.uk) in their planned new guide for South Devon (published spring 24)

**Partnership working**

The Discover Dartmouth and Visit Totnes combined campaign, which focuses on the river (and our easy bus link) should be launching at the end of the year/early 2024.  here's a map that has been produced as part of the campaign.  There has been no cost to Visit Totnes (apart from time):

A map of a city

Description automatically generated

**Governance and Projects Manager**

* 16 Nov – Neighbourhood Plan referendum. Weekly posts on Facebook to publicise the vote and how to register to vote, need for ID etc. Updates on the TTC website A number of people came to the Council Offices to view the plan or take a copy away. A copy of the Plan was also given to the Library for people to view outside of office hours on a Saturday/between 4pm-6pm.
* 28 Nov – Christmas Lights Switch On event
* Drafting of a Council Co-option Policy document to set out a process to be used in future cases of councillor co-option.
* Cemetery – since September: 2 interments (1 full and 1 cremated remains); 4 memorial applications process; 4 deed of grant transfers completed. A number of enquiries for memorial stones on older graves answered/advised on.
* Website – refresh of the Funding Opportunities page to give a drop down on themes for the various grants available which will hopefully be more user friendly.
* Christmas lights
  + Repair of ‘cross-street ‘Welcome to Totnes’ sign by TMO assistant.
  + 13 Nov – Install of power sources on The Plains.
  + 15 Nov – Christmas Tree put up.
  + 15-16 Nov – Installation of lights on Eastgate, ‘Welcome to Totnes’ sign, Civic Square and testing of all lights.
  + 20 Nov onwards – dealing with calls and emails from the public and businesses about the Chamber of Commerce’s cross street festoon lighting.
  + Getting the infrastructure required for the lights, liaising with businesses, snagging and finding work arounds to the various problems has taken a lot of staff time (TMO, TMO Assistant and Governance and Projects Manager).
* **Correspondence**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Name** | **Subject** |
| 27/10/2023 | SHDC Conservation | Consultation on Conservation Area Review |
| 01/11/2023 | SHDC Heritage | Power Riser on Fore Street |
| 02/11/2023 | REDACTED | Wildlife Measures by Council |
| 07/11/2023 | REDACTED | Chamber of Commerce contact |
| 10/11/2023 | SHDC | Response to SHDC PSPO consultation for Dog Control |
| 13/11/2023 | Totnes Pulse | Neighbourhood Plan Referendum Questions |
| 13/11/2023 | REDACTED | Neighbourhood Plan Question - Omission of Longmarsh in green space listing |
| 22/11/2023 | Totnes Rare Breeds | Solar Farm Application - Email to make them aware |
| 22/11/2023 | South Devon Railway | Solar Farm Application - Email to make them aware |
| 22/11/2023 | Historic England | Solar Farm Application - Email to make them aware |
| 22/11/2023 | REDACTED | Full Council and Totnes Times reporting of Shady Garden Use |
| 22/11/2023 | REDACTED | Pedestrianise Castle Street |
| 24/11/2023 | REDACTED | Christmas Lights and Local Business Payment to Chamber of Commerce for Festoon Lighting |
| 27/11/2023 | REDACTED | Follow up on Full Council and Totnes Times reporting of Shady Garden Use |

**Council Assets/Venues**

We made £4760 this year as donations from visitors to the Guildhall compared to £2699 last year. We had budgeted for £3000. So big thank you Becky and the volunteers.

Civic Hall Event Diary below. Two new regular hirers booked in for 2024 – both on Wednesdays which will mean 4 separate bookings on a single day from January!  Becky is also optimistic about a new hirer for Ballroom and Latin Dance events (possibly monthly).

A white sheet of paper with red text

Description automatically generated

The first of two new doors to increase capacity has been installed inside the hall. The ‘making good’ is being undertaken by the maintenance team. The remaining work should be finished in January in time for TAODS.

Lovely feedback from TAODS about the lights the staff put up inside and the new lights in the square:

A collage of people with their arms up

Description automatically generated

Lots of work has been ongoing this year to protect and improve our buildings. Most of this has been managed in house by our Town Maintenance team of two, Tom and Neil. They have gone above and beyond in a variety of ways including wiring protection in the Guildhall, sourcing a new boiler in the Civic, a new changing facility and toilet in the Civic, public realm projects like the Civic Square, endless cleaning of graffiti, CCTV improvements to name a few.

*I want to thank all Councillors and the staff team for their hard work this year. It has been very full on with new Councillors joining and complex projects being thrown into the mix! Here’s hoping to another productive year in 2024!*

Catherine Marlton

Town Clerk

4th December 2023