

**MINUTES FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL**

**MONDAY 16TH DECEMBER 2024 IN THE GUILDHALL**

## Present: Councillors E Price (Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, T Bennett, T Cooper, J Cummings, J Hannam, J Hodgson, D Peters, N Roberts and M Trant.

Apologies: Cllrs Chinnock, Collinson, Presswell, Robshaw and Smallridge.

## In Attendance: C Marlton (Town Clerk).

### **WELCOME TO ALL ATTENDING AND OBSERVING**

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

**To receive apologies and to confirm that any absence has the approval of the Council. The Mayor will request confirmation that all Members have completed or made any necessary amendments to their Declaration of Interests.**

The apologies were received and agreed unanimously. There were no amendments to declarations of interest.

### **3. SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL CAR PARKING CHARGES CONSULTATION**

### **To consider the Council’s response to the South Hams District Council Car Parking Changes Consultation (deadline or responses 5th January 2025).**

Members discussed the proposals outlines in the consultation and raised a number of concerns. It was **RESOLVED** to give the Clerk delegated authority to draft the response to South Hams District Council based on these points, to be circulated by email for agreement prior to submission.

It was **RESOLVED** to give the Mayor and Clerk delegated authority to liaise with any of the other South Hams towns to submit a shared response, in addition to the individual response.

[Post-meeting note: the agreed response is attached.]

The meeting closed at 6.05pm

Cllr Emily Price

Chair

**Second Response to South Hams District Council – Proposed Car Parking Charge Increases**

Dear Andy, Steve, and Julian,

The opportunity to provide further comments regarding the proposed changes to car parking charges and the residents’ parking discount scheme is appreciated. We have held an Extraordinary Full Council meeting and below are additional concerns raised by Totnes Town Council members for your consideration:

**1. Consultation Process**

Members believe that local authorities have a clear duty to ensure consultations are balanced and inclusive, employing both online and offline methods to achieve fair representation and comply with legal and ethical obligations. In this case, the consultation falls short in both process and accessibility. Notably:

* The information provided is not accessible for all stakeholders—for example, there is no "easy read" format to ensure inclusivity for those with learning disabilities or other needs.
* The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is of insufficient quality, failing to adequately evaluate whether the proposals will result in differential impacts on vulnerable groups or individuals with protected characteristics. This raises serious concerns regarding compliance with the Equality Act 2010, as fed back to us by a local group, Inclusive Totnes.
* The timing and duration of the consultation further undermine the potential for genuine engagement, particularly as it overlaps with the busiest time of the year for businesses and residents. This risks alienating stakeholders from the decision-making process.

**2. Transparency and Rationale**

TTC request greater transparency in the financial rationale underpinning the proposed revenue target of circa £419,000. Original statements and conversations with officers suggested this figure was based on a 40% increase to visitor rates, yet the proposed increases significantly exceed this threshold (see Appendix A). This makes it challenging to evaluate the fairness and validity of these measures.

We also request clarity on whether cumulative inflationary costs applied to charges over the past four years have been considered and how these figures align with the proposed changes – by our calculations the figure is lower than 40% even with the catastrophic post Covid year.

**3. Inconsistencies and Fairness**

We note several discrepancies in how the proposals are being applied:

* The Totnes Leisure Centre car park is being treated as a "town centre" car park, despite its primary function serving commuters and leisure users. This contrasts with SHDC's own website, where the Pavilions car park is categorised alongside peripheral car parks such as Longmarsh and Steamer Quay, with lower associated charges.
* Totnes charges appear disproportionately high compared to nearby towns. For example, Kingsbridge's Cattle Market car park has lower charges than Totnes' Leisure Centre car park, which serves a similar purpose.
* Ivybridge and Modbury tariffs remain lower overall, raising questions about equity and consistency across the district.

**3. Scheme Details and Administrative Issues**

Totnes Town Council reiterates its objection to the £5 administrative fee for residents joining the discount scheme, especially in the context of the rising cost of living. Residents should not bear this additional cost when charges are already increasing.

The application process for the scheme must also be easy to navigate and accessible for all, including options to apply by post or in person rather than relying on online-only methods.

Additionally, we request clarification on the following:

* **Eligibility**: Does "signing up" require South Hams electoral registration?

**4. Equality and Economic Impacts**

We urge SHDC to conduct both a thorough Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and a robust Economic Impact Assessment (EIA). These evaluations are crucial to understanding how these proposals may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups and the local economy.

The economic implications for Totnes are particularly concerning, as businesses and residents have expressed strong fears regarding:

* Reduced competitiveness compared to similar towns, which could deter visitors.
* Financial strain on part-time and casual workers commuting into Totnes.
* Potential inconsistencies with other SHDC consultations, particularly the Community Economic Plan (CEP). The CEP consultation with businesses and residents is due to start in March 2025, just as decisions on the proposed charges are set to be taken. Implementing the changes from April 2025 risks undermining the credibility of the CEP process and distorting its outcomes.

We also note concerns regarding the application of the visitor rate. Expanding the geographic area for which the rate applies would ensure that workers commuting from areas such as Plymouth and Torbay are not disproportionately affected, particularly part-time and casual workers who may not qualify for permits that other, full-time workers, would use.

**5. Alternatives to Charge Increases**

We recommend that SHDC conduct a comprehensive options appraisal to explore alternative strategies for addressing revenue shortfalls. For example:

* Implementing a smaller, flat percentage increase across all rates.
* Enhancing public transport and active travel infrastructure to reduce car dependency and parking pressures.
* Seeking efficiencies and savings elsewhere to offset the need for such significant increases.

As a Town Council, we have only partial visibility into SHDC's broader financial situation, which hinders our ability to evaluate the merits of these proposals fully.

**6. Service Cuts and Visitor Experience**

Totnes Town Council remains concerned that service cuts, if required, may unfairly impact Totnes despite the town generating a significant share of the District's revenue. We emphasise that maintaining the town’s attractiveness—through street cleanliness, facilities, and general upkeep—is essential to sustaining visitor footfall. We do our best to promote and support the visitor economy via the ‘Visit Totnes’ work but feel that this aim could be negated by any consideration of reducing non statutory services, such as toilets or adequate maintenance of the town. This would then impact the projected revenue created from this proposal, which assumes significant visitor use.

**7. Business Engagement and Timing**

Members are worried this process may alienate businesses at a critical time. The mixed messaging from SHDC around supporting the economy, but also making substantial increases to charges. undermines trust, particularly as the CEP consultation is due to start in March. This disconnect risks eroding relationships with businesses and undermining engagement.

Additionally, we seek clarification on why Totnes' proposed charges are higher than comparable towns in the region (see Appendix A). Understanding this rationale is essential for justifying the fairness of the proposals.

**8. Car Park categorisation**

We note inconsistencies in the categorisation of the Pavilions car park. SHDC’s own website states that this car park is classified as "peripheral," with associated lower permit charges. We reiterate our request that the large Pavilions car park, Longmarsh and Steamer Quay are retained as lower rate than the town centre car parks.

**Conclusion**

Totnes Town Council remains committed to constructive dialogue with SHDC to ensure that these proposals achieve a balance between fiscal sustainability and the needs of our residents, businesses, and visitors. We strongly urge SHDC to address the concerns raised here and consider alrenative approaches moving forward.

We have already requested a meeting to discuss service delivery in areas such as street cleanliness and options for partnership arrangements. We would like to expand these conversations in 2025 given the announcement on local government reorganisation and the obvious financial challenges all tiers of authority face.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues in greater detail and work collaboratively on solutions.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Marlton
Town Clerk
On behalf of Totnes Town Council

CC: Local District Members, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge, Salcombe, Modbury and Dartmouth Town Clerks, all Town Council members, SHDC Officers

**Attachment**: Appendix A – Benchmarking Data

**Proposals taken from the SHDC Executive Report**

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**SHDC proposals for Totnes and comparisons**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Main tariff** | **Residents Tariff** | **2020 - 2024 average inflation** | **40% standard flat rate** |
| **All Totnes car parks except Longmarsh** | **CURRENT** | **PROPOSED tariff** | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** | **PROPOSED tariff** | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** | **Estimated**  | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** | **Estimated**  | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** |
| 30 min | £0.70 | £1.50 | £0.80 | 114% | £0.90 | £0.20 | 29% | £0.90 | £0.20 | 29% | £0.98 | £0.28 | 40% |
| 1 hour | £1.20 | £2.00 | £0.80 | 67% | £1.50 | £0.30 | 25% | £1.55 | £0.35 | 29% | £1.68 | £0.48 | 40% |
| 2 hours | £2.00 | £3.00 | £1.00 | 50% | £2.50 | £0.50 | 25% | £2.58 | £0.58 | 29% | £2.80 | £0.80 | 40% |
| 3 hours | £2.80 | £4.50 | £1.70 | 61% | £3.50 | £0.70 | 25% | £3.61 | £0.81 | 29% | £3.92 | £1.12 | 40% |
| 4 hours | £3.50 | £6.00 | £2.50 | 71% | £4.50 | £1.00 | 29% | £4.52 | £1.02 | 29% | £4.90 | £1.40 | 40% |
| All day | £6.50 | £10.00 | £3.50 | 54% | £8.00 | £1.50 | 23% | £8.38 | £1.88 | 29% | £9.10 | £2.60 | 40% |
| **Longmarsh** | **CURRENT** | **PROPOSED tariff** | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** | **PROPOSED tariff** | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** | **Estimated**  | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** | **Estimated**  | **Increase** | **Percentage increase** |
| 30 min | £0.30 | £0.50 | £0.20 | 67% | £0.40 | £0.10 | 33% | £0.39 | £0.09 | 30% | £0.42 | £0.12 | 40% |
| 1 hour | £0.60 | £1.00 | £0.40 | 67% | £0.80 | £0.20 | 33% | £0.77 | £0.17 | 28% | £0.84 | £0.24 | 40% |
| 2 hours | £1.20 | £2.00 | £0.80 | 67% | £1.50 | £0.30 | 25% | £1.55 | £0.35 | 29% | £1.68 | £0.48 | 40% |
| 3 hours | £1.60 | £2.50 | £0.90 | 56% | £2.00 | £0.40 | 25% | £2.06 | £0.46 | 29% | £2.24 | £0.64 | 40% |
| 4 hours | £2.00 | £3.50 | £1.50 | 75% | £2.50 | £0.50 | 25% | £2.58 | £0.58 | 29% | £2.80 | £0.80 | 40% |
| All day | £4.00 | £6.00 | £2.00 | 50% | £5.00 | £1.00 | 25% | £5.16 | £1.16 | 29% | £5.60 | £1.60 | 40% |
| Motorhomes | £10.00 | £15.00 | £5.00 | 50% | £15.00 | £5.00 | 50% | £12.90 | £2.90 | 29% | £14.00 | £4.00 | 40% |

**Benchmarking:**

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| **1. Short-Stay Parking (1 Hour)** |
| **Town** | **Standard Tariff** | **Resident Tariff** | **Notes** |
| **Totnes** | £2.00 | £1.50 | Proposed under SHDC scheme for most car parks. |
| **Kingsbridge** | £2.50 | £1.70 | Higher base rate than Totnes but comparable resident discount. |
| **Dartmouth** | £2.50 | £1.90 | Mayor's Avenue (high season) |
| **Salcombe** | £2.50 | £1.70 | Creek Car Park (year-round) |
| **Ivybridge** | £1.50 | £1.00 | Lowest among SHDC towns. |
| **Crediton** | £1.60 | Not specified | Market Street -Mid Devon District Council |
| **Barnstaple** | £1.30 | Not specified | Town centre - North Devon District Council |
| **Ashburton** | £1.40 | Not specified | Teignbridge District Council |
| **Tavistock** | £1.30 | Not specified | Wharf and Brook Street Car Park, - West Devon Borough Council |
| **Newton Abbot**  | £2.40 for up to 2 hours | Not Specified | Venture Court - Teignbridge Council |
| **Dawlish**  | £1.80 | Not Specified  | The Strand - Teignbridge Council |
| **Teignmouth**  | £1.80 | Not Specified | The Point (and most other car parks) -Teignbridge Council. Summer and winter tariff currently showing as the same.  |
| **Bideford**  | £1.50 | Not Specified | All short stay car parks - Torridge District Council  |
| **Okehampton**  | £1.00 | Not Specified | Market Street short stay - West Devon Borough Council  |
| **Exmouth**  | 50p for 30min£1 for 2hrs | Not Specified | Short Stay, Exmouth - East Devon District Council  |
| **Sidmouth**  | £2.00 | Not Specified | Manor Road- East Devon District Council  |
| **Seaton**  | 50p for 30min£1 for 1 hour | Not Specified | Orchard Road - East Devon District Council  |
| **2. Long-Stay Parking (4 Hours)** |
| **Town** | **Standard Tariff** | **Resident Tariff** | **Notes** |
| **Totnes** | £6.00 | £4.50 | Proposed SHDC scheme for long-stay car parks. |
| **Kingsbridge** | £7.00 | £6.00 | Slightly higher than Totnes for both standard and resident tariffs. |
| **Dartmouth** | £8.00 | £7.00 | Mayor's Avenue (high season) |
| **Salcombe** | £7.00 | £5.00 | North Sands (high season) |
| **Ivybridge** | £4.50 | £4.00 | Competitive long-stay rate compared to other SHDC towns. |
| **Crediton** | £3.80 | Not specified | Market Street - Mid Devon District Council |
| **Barnstaple** | £5.20 | Not specified | Town Centre - North Devon District Council |
| **Ashburton** | £3.20 | Not specified | Long-stay tariffs by Teignbridge District Council. |
| **Tavistock** | £3.00 | Not specified | West Devon Borough Council-managed car parks. |
| **Newton Abbot**  | £5.00 | Not Specified |  Cricketfield Car park, Livestock Market - Teignbridge Council  |
| **Dawlish**  | £4.30 | Not Specified | Teignbridge Council - Barton Hill  |
| **Teignmouth**  | £4.20 | Not Specified | Teignbridge Council - The Point (and most other car parks) Summer and winter hours currently showing as the same.  |
| **Bideford**  | £4.00 | Not Specified | Torridge District Council - Riverbank Long stay and all other long stay car parks |
| **Okehampton**  | £2.90 | Not Specified | West Devon Borough Council - Mill Road Car park |
| **Exmouth**  | £3.50(£2 winter) | Not Specified | Queen's Drive Echelon, Exmouth - East Devon District Council  |
| **Sidmouth**  | £8.00 | Not Specified | Manor Road - East Devon District Council £2 per hour until 8 hours is reached then you can stay for 24 hours. |
| **3. All-Day Parking** |
| **Town** | **Standard Tariff** | **Resident Tariff** | **Notes** |
| **Totnes** | £10.00 | £8.00 | Proposed SHDC scheme. |
| **Kingsbridge** | £10.00 | £8.00 | Matches Totnes' proposed rates. |
| **Dartmouth** | £10.00 | £9.50 | Park & Ride standard tariff. |
| **Salcombe** | £10.00 | £8.00 | Creek Car Park (high season). |
| **Ivybridge** | £7.50 | £6.50 | Most affordable among SHDC towns. |
| **Crediton** | £6.40 - £13.00 | Not specified | Market Street -Mid Devon District Council |
| **Barnstaple** | £2.50 - £13.00 | Not specified | Varies by car park - North Devon District Council |
| **Ashburton** | £4.20 | Not specified | Long-stay tariffs managed by Teignbridge District Council. |
| **Tavistock** | £5.00 | Not specified | West Devon Borough Council |
| **Newton Abbot**  | £6.20 | Not Specified | Cricketfield Car park, Livestock Market - Teignbridge Council  |
| **Newton Abbot**  | £4.30 | Not Specified | Multi-Storey (over 4 hours)- Teignbridge Council  |
| **Teignmouth**  | £6.20 | Not Specified | The Point (and most other car parks) - Teignbridge Council  |
| **Dawlish**  | £4.60 | Not Specified | Barton Hill - Teignbridge Council  |
| **Bideford**  | £5.50 | Not Specified | Riverbank Long stay - Torridge District Council  |
| **Exmouth**  | £6.00(£2.50 winter) | Not Specified | Queen's Drive Echelon, Exmouth - East Devon District Council  |
| **Seaton**  | £6 - £10 | Not Specified |  East Devon District Council  |
| **Sidmouth** | £8 | Not Specified | Manor Road, East Devon District Council - The charge goes on at £2 per hour until you have paid £8 and then you can stay for 24 hours. |

**Key Takeaways for Totnes**

1. **SHDC Comparisons:** Totnes’ tariffs are generally aligned with Kingsbridge and Salcombe but less competitive than Ivybridge, especially for all-day and long-stay parking.
2. **Regional Comparisons:** Totnes' proposed rates are significantly higher than similar-sized towns.