

Totnes Town Council – Consultant Brief

Strategic Review of Marketing and Communications, Business Support and Tourism Services

Deadline for tenders: 7th August 2025

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1. Introduction and Background

Totnes Town Council is commissioning a review of its strategic communications, stakeholder engagement, business support, and tourism promotion functions — focusing on how these align with the Council’s wider role in relation to civic leadership, enabling **local democracy**, building **community trust**, and influencing other key stakeholders. This function plays a critical role in maintaining transparency, building trust, supporting local priorities including economic growth, protecting and enhancing reputation and enabling civic participation.

This review comes at a time of organisational reflection and transition, with interim staffing arrangements in place to allow for considered assessment and forward planning.

Currently, the Council employs:

- A **part-time Economic Support Officer** (permanent)
- A **part-time Marketing and Communications Officer** (12-month fixed term, in recruitment)

These roles manage:

- The **Visit Totnes** tourism brand (website, social media, press engagement)
- Local business-facing activities including the **Totnes Guide**
- Broader **Town Council communications**, including website, newsletters, and media relations

The Council is now seeking an **independent, experienced consultant** to evaluate the effectiveness and future potential of these functions.

2. Purpose of the Review

The review aims to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness, reach, and coherence of the Council’s strategic communications, public information, marketing and brand management, media and stakeholder management, crisis communications and public engagement functions including its staffing and delivery approach
- Explore **alternative delivery options**, including retaining, restructuring, or outsourcing the tourism function
- Consider the role of tourism marketing to the local economy within a broader framework of civic engagement, influence, and narrative coherence
- Integrate insights from the **Community Economic Plan** consultation (led by South Hams District Council)

- Provide options for **sustainable delivery models** that align with both councillor priorities and economic needs

3. Key Deliverables

The consultant is expected to deliver:

1. **A Strategic Review Report** including:
 - Audit of current operations, capacity, and function across tourism, business support, public engagement, and strategic communications
 - An assessment of the economic and reputational value added of the Visit Totnes brand and related services (taking into account other tourism related services in Devon; South Hams etc)
 - An assessment of the opportunities to enhance civic engagement and to better align communication outputs to TTC's strategy.
 - An assessment of how effectively the Council tells its story, builds trust, and influences public discourse and key actors
 - Stakeholder analysis (including interviews with councillors, officers, and external business partners)
 - Options appraisal for future service delivery (internal, hybrid, outsourced models) ensuring the optimal balance between civic, economic, and reputational objectives
 - Recommendations grounded in best practice, local need, reputational enhancement, TTC's democratic responsibilities, community engagement and return on investment
2. **Presentation to Full Council** summarising findings and recommended next steps

4. Methodology

It is expected that the consultant will:

- Conduct a **communications audit** using principles from systems theory and excellence in public communication
- Use a combination of **quantitative and qualitative methods**, including:
 - Interviews with **Town Councillors**, the **Town Clerk**, and **officers**
 - Focus groups or surveys with local businesses (particularly those engaged with Visit Totnes)
 - Desk review of existing materials, budgets, media output, civic engagement work, and relevant reports
- Analyse findings through the lens of strategic communication theory, ensuring a robust, evidence-based review

5. Consultant Profile

The successful applicant will likely:

- Be **CIPR-qualified** or equivalent demonstrable experience
- Have **10+ years' senior-level experience** in public sector communications, economic development or tourism
- Demonstrate a solid understanding of **local government**, stakeholder engagement, and destination branding
- Be able to balance **strategic insight** with **operational awareness**

- Be independent, with **no current stake** in Totnes's tourism or Council activities

6. Timescales

Stage	Date
Deadline for submissions	7 th August 2025
Appointment made	Early September 2025
Interviews and desk research	September-October 2025
Draft report	November 2025
Final report and presentation to Council	December 2025

7. Budget

The budget for this review is up to **£10,000** inclusive of VAT and all expenses.

8. Submission Requirements

- A brief proposal (no more than 6 pages) including:
 - Your approach and methodology
 - Timeline and key milestones
 - Relevant experience and case studies
 - Fee structure
- CV(s) of key personnel
- Two references from previous clients

9. Additional Notes

- The consultant should consider and reference the **Community Economic Plan consultation results**, expected by September 2025.
- There are **diverse views** among Council Members on the use of public funding for tourism and destination marketing—recommendations must account for this political context.