



AGENDA FOR THE MEETING OF TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL

MONDAY 5TH JANUARY 2026 IN THE GUILDHALL

Please note that public question time will be held prior to Full Council from 6.30pm.

There are stairs to the Council Chamber but if any member of the public has mobility issues the Council can relocate to the Main Chamber.

You are hereby **SUMMONED** to attend a meeting of the Town Council, on **Monday 5th January 2026 at 7.00pm** for a maximum of 120 minutes the purpose of transacting the following business:

1. WELCOME TO ALL ATTENDING AND OBSERVING

The Chair will read out the following statement:

Welcome to everyone attending and observing the meeting.

A reminder that open proceedings of this meeting will be video recorded. If members of the public make presentations, they will be deemed to have consented to being recorded. By entering the Council Chamber attendees are also consenting to being recorded.

This meeting is limited to 120 minutes and therefore members are asked to raise their points succinctly and not repeat the same view expressed by colleagues if it does not add to the debate.

2. 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 Committee will adjourn for the following items:

Reports from County and District Councillors:

- a. County Cllr Hodgson
- b. District Cllr Allen
- c. District Cllr Birch
- d. District Cllr Presswell

The Council will convene to consider the following items:

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve and sign the minutes of the following meeting:

(Please note confidential minutes can be agreed but any discussion must be held in the Confidential session)

- a. Full Council 1st December 2025 – document attached [page 3].

To note the following minutes:

- b. Council Matters Committee 8th December 2025 – document attached [page 7].
- c. Planning Committee 15th December – document attached [page 9].

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTERS ARISING REQUIRING A DECISION

To consider any matters arising from the Minutes and to approve any recommendations from Committees (document enclosed, page 13):

(Please note confidential minutes can be agreed but any discussion must be held in the Confidential session)

- a. Full Council 1st December 2025.
- b. Council Matters Committee 8th December 2025.
- c. Planning Committee 15th December 2025.

5. STRATEGY DELIVERY WORKING GROUP UPDATES

To receive an update from the Chairs of the Strategy Delivery Working Group Chairs. Verbal update.

6. COMMUNITY AUDIT

To consider a revised cost for the Community Audit exercise. Verbal update.

7. TAX BASE FOR 2026/27

To note the tax base for financial year 2026/27. Document attached [page 14].

8. BUDGET SETTING FOR 2026/27

To consider the Council Matters Committee recommendations for the budget for financial year 2026/27. Document attached [page 14].

9. PRECEPT SETTING

To consider the Council Matters Committee recommendation for the precept for financial year 2026/27. Document attached [page 14].

10. TOTNES LANTERN PARADE – TOWN COUNCIL LANTERN

To consider whether to retire the Town Council’s current lantern, Pegasus, after three years of it featuring in the Lantern Procession in December. Verbal update.

11. LIST OF MEETING DATES, COMMUNICATIONS POINTS AND LINK COUNCILLOR UPDATES

To note a list of upcoming meeting dates, Council communications points and link Councillor/Councillor representatives on outside bodies updates. Document attached [page 18].

12. NEXT MEETING

To note the next meeting date of Monday 2nd February 2026 for Full Council, 6.30pm public session, 7.00pm formal meeting in the Guildhall.

The Council 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.

13. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE (Standing Item)

To consider any recommendations or matters arising that are considered confidential in nature. No document.

14. GUILDHALL COTTAGE SURVEY

To consider a building survey of the Guildhall Cottage (commercial). Document attached.

Agenda produced by:

Catherine Marlton

Town Clerk

18th December 2025

USE OF SOUND RECORDINGS AT COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The open proceedings of this Meeting will be audio and video recorded. If members of the public make a representation, they will be deemed to have consented to being recorded. By entering the Council Chamber or Zoom meeting, attendees are also consenting to being recorded.

Televised, vision and sound recordings or live broadcastings by members of the press or public at Council or Committee debates are permitted and anyone wishing to do so is asked to inform the Chairman of the respective Committee of their intention to record proceedings.



DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL
MONDAY 1ST DECEMBER 2025 IN THE GUILDHALL

Present: Councillors T Bennett (Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, J Chinnock, T Cooper, J Cummings, J Hannam, J Hodgson (from 19.30), D Peters, A Presswell, E Price and M Trant.

Apologies: Cllrs Collinson, Roberts and Robshaw, and District Cllrs Allen and Birch.

Not Present: Cllr Smallridge.

In Attendance: Members of the public, C Marlton (Town Clerk) and P Bethel (Town Sergeant).

1. WELCOME TO ALL ATTENDING AND OBSERVING

2. 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.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the apologies. There were no amendments to Declarations of Interest.

The Committee will adjourn for the following items:

Reports from County and District Councillors.

- e. County Cllr Hodgson**
- f. District Cllr Allen**
- g. District Cllr Birch**
- h. District Cllr Presswell**

It was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders.

- a. County Cllr (C Cllr) Hodgson had not submitted a report and was not present at this point [see below].
- b. District Cllr Allen had not submitted a report and was not present.
- c. District Cllr Birch had submitted a report but was not present.

d. District Cllr Presswell was present and had submitted a report and updated on: quiet fireworks; allotments and composting site; support available for those on low incomes via Citizens Advice and the Food Bank; pursuing repairs to the boardwalk area near the river; and requesting bench placement at Longmarsh (which falls in the Berry Pomeroy Parish).

The Council reconvened.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve and sign the minutes of the following Meeting:

(Please note confidential minutes can be agreed but any discussion must be held in the Confidential session)

a. Full Council 3rd November 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve and sign the minutes.

To note the following minutes:

b. Council Matters Committee 10th November 2025.

Noted.

c. Planning Committee 17th November 2025.

Noted.

d. Town Matters Committee 24th November 2025.

Noted.

4. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTERS ARISING

To consider any matters arising from the Minutes and to approve any recommendations from Committees:

(Please note confidential minutes can be agreed but any discussion must be held in the Confidential session)

a. Full Council 3rd November 2025.

No matters arising.

b. Council Matters Committee 10th November 2025

Item 6. Councillor Co-option Policy. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the revised Councillor Co-option Policy is adopted.

c. Planning Committee 17th November 2025

Item 5. Reform of the Licensing System. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Town Council that it displays details of licensing applications on its notice boards and website to ensure ongoing notification and accessibility for the community.

d. Town Matters Committee 24th November 2025.

Item 3a. Notice Board. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the larger notice board is installed under the Civic Hall on the wall and that the smaller notice board currently on the Civic Hall fire door is relocated to the outer red door to the Council Offices.

Item 3c. Railway Bridge. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that Town Council officer time is allocated to obtain quotes for painting the railway bridge in two colours (framework in one colour, panels another) which will need to include a pavement/footway closure application.

Item 4. William Wills Project. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council:

- Supports the proposed update to the Burke and Wills display space, led by the Heritage Trust;
- Cllr Bennett works closely with the Heritage Trust on how the display will look and its content, updating Council to ensure that it is in keeping with the building; and
- Cllr Bennett works with the Heritage Trust to liaise with the First Nation people in Australia.

Item 5. Vire Committee President. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Mayor becomes the ex officio President of the Vire Twinning Association.

5. STRATEGY DELIVERY WORKING GROUP UPDATES

To receive an update from the Chairs of the Strategy Delivery Working Group Chairs.

Informal updates were given by the Chairs which were noted. In summary:

Community Working Group – Cllr Bennett updated that engagement with community groups and networks is ongoing, and that he will Chair the group until the end of the meeting year [March 2026].

Economy Working Group – Cllr Auletta updated that the Community Economic Plan work continues with projects coming forward that will need to be built into the existing work strands of the Council via the working groups. A business forum is developing as part of this work.

Environment and Public Realm Working Group – Cllr Peters updated on Vire Island, railway bridge, bins and his work with the Canoe Club on obtaining grant funding for repairs to the pontoon.

6. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

To consider giving the Clerk delegated authority to respond to planning applications (informed by Councillor comment) in December/early January should illness affect the Planning Committee in December being quorate or if deadlines for comment fall in early January.

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that delegated authority is given to the Clerk in December/early January to respond to planning applications based on comments from members of the Planning Committee, if required.

Cllr Hodgson arrived at the meeting (19.30hrs) and the Council adjourned for item 2a.

2a. County Councillor Report. CCllr Hodgson updated on local government reform proposals; special educational needs funding; the Littlehempston cycle path; weight restrictions on Blackpost Lane. Cllrs asked about: funding for libraries and the consultation; old bridge feasibility study; pedestrian crossings on Bridgetown Hill, the Lamb and Plymouth Road; and dissatisfaction at the Devon Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Council reconvened to consider the following items:

7. LIST OF MEETING DATES AND COMMUNICATIONS POINTS

To note a list of upcoming meeting dates and annual meetings calendar, Council communications points and link Councillor/ Councillor representatives on outside bodies updates.

Noted.

8. NEXT MEETING

To note the next meeting dates of Monday 5th January 2026 for Full Council, 6.30pm public session,

7.00pm formal meeting in the Guildhall.

Noted.

*The Council **RESOLVED** 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)*

12. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE (Standing Item)

To consider any recommendations or matters arising that are considered confidential in nature.

None.

13. CASTLE MEADOW ACCESS

To note an update on Castle Meadow access (legal).

Noted.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Cllr Tim Bennett

Chair



DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF COUNCIL MATTERS MONDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2025 AT 6.30PM IN THE GUILDHALL

Present: Councillors D Peters (Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, T Bennett, J Hannam, E Price and M Trant.

Apologies: Cllr J Chinnock.

In Attendance: Cllr Hodgson, C Marlton (Town Clerk).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair read a statement about how the meeting would be conducted and recorded. The apologies were accepted.

The Committee adjourned for the following item:

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Cllr Hodgson requested that the Town Council allocates funding for a replacement bollard outside Happy Apple/Fire Fly on the High Street due to parking and obstruction issues - informal support was given for up to £700 funding from the Environment and Public Realm Budget. Cllr Hodgson also raised the matter of £12,000 funding needed for TRAYE (Totnes Rural Area Youth Enterprise) in 2026/27. It was explained to members that £50,000 community grant funding is in the proposed draft budget but that the decision on the allocation of this will be taken after the conclusion of the Community Audit.

The Committee reconvened.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 10th November 2025 and update on any matters arising.

The minutes were **AGREED** unanimously as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. BUDGET MONITOR

To consider the Budget Monitor.

The budget monitor was **AGREED** unanimously.

4. STRATEGY DELIVERY WORKING GROUPS

To consider any budgetary recommendations from:

a. **Economy Working Group, 3rd December 2025.**

No recommendations.

b. Environment and Public Realm Working Group, 19th November 2025.

The Working Group recommendations for the 2026/27 budget allocations and moves of underspend to EMR were unanimously **AGREED** but it was noted that the Committee will consider this further and make a recommendation to Full Council in January 2026.

5. DRAFT BUDGET 2026/27

To consider an initial draft budget for financial year 2026/27.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that:

- The draft 2026/27 budget is adopted (subject to a minor amendment); and
- A precept increase of a minimum of 7.5 percent and maximum of 10 percent is adopted.

6. PAYMENTS TO COUNCILLORS POLICY

To review the Payments to Councillors Policy.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the revised Payments to Councillors Policy is adopted.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Council Matters Committee – Monday 12th January 2026 at 6.30pm in the Guildhall.

Noted.

*The Committee **RESOLVED** 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)*

8. BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS (Standing Item)

To consider the bank statements and reconciliations for November (financial).

These were reviewed and **AGREED** unanimously.

9. STAFFING UPDATE

For any general or urgent updates that required confidential sharing with Councillors (staffing).

Noted.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm

Catherine Marlton
Town Clerk
December 2025



DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

MONDAY 15TH DECEMBER 2025 IN THE GUILDHALL

Present: Councillors L Auletta (Chair), T Bennett, S Collinson, T Cooper, J Cummings (left at 2000hrs), J Hodgson (from 1835hrs) and Trant.

Apologies: None.

Not Present: Cllrs Smallridge.

In Attendance: Members of the public, Cllrs Beavis, Peters and Presswell, 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 Auletta read out a statement about how the meeting would be conducted and recorded.

There were no apologies.

The Committee adjourned for the following item:

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Cllr Beavis commented on the renewed road markings on the roundabout.

2. BOWDEN PILLARS PROJECT

To update on the proposals for the Bowden Pillars Village Project from the applicants Bowden Pillars Future.

Two representatives of the Bowden Pillars Village Project attended to set out the background of the site, and the three elements of the project that focus around multi-purpose and regenerative land use: by Devon Wildlife Trust for tree planting (75 acres); regenerative farming/horticultural businesses (35 acres); and the planned regenerative village community which has been suggested to South Hams District Council in its call for sites for the Local Plan. The proposal is for the 50 dwellings to: have a low carbon footprint; use renewable energy; be super insulated; promote car sharing/pools and EV use; 50 percent affordable housing; no second home/holiday homes; co-housing shared facilities; onsite food hub open to residents and wider community/visitor use; self-contained sewage system. The idea of tiny homes is being explored (25-45sqm) designed for single/smaller household occupancy, with 75sqm 2-bed and 95sqm 3 bed dwellings, with all occupants required to sign up to the principles of the village community. Following on from two public sessions recently held in the town, from the New Year representatives of the project will be in the Climate Hub once a fortnight to engage with the public on the scheme, as Bowden Pillars see the project as an extension to the town and hope that it will appeal to multigenerational living and a more sustainable community. Councillors asked questions on: what percentage of those expressing

an interest in living on the site have a TQ9 postcode; concerns about building on a greenfield site; pressures on local infrastructure (schools, health service); transport – and pedestrian and cyclist safety from the site into the town; disability/accessibility build in the new dwellings; opportunity for young people to learn skills during the build; where they are in the planning process; and what contributions to local infrastructure are planned.

The Chair thanked the representatives for taking the time to engage with the Town Council and it was **AGREED** that they will come back with regular updates to the Committee via the officer.

The Committee reconvened.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it writes to the Devon Wildlife Trust to make them aware of the historic catchment meadow on the Bowden Pillars site.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 17th November 2025 and update on any matters arising.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

To make recommendations on the following planning applications:

4a. 3381/25/FUL and 3382/25/LBC – Listed Building Consent for works associated with Change of use to residential maisonette to above ground floors including demolition of rear dilapidated outbuildings at ground floor & rebuilding of new kitchenette & WC, installation of a first floor balcony and slate-hanging of rear elevation. 1 The Plains, Totnes.

Support, subject to more detailed information about the specification of the slates.

4b. 3178/25/FUL – Installation of a new garden shed, reconfiguration of existing internal layout and replacement/repositioning of some existing windows to align with new internal layout. Quarrenden, Flat 1, Weirfields, Totnes, TQ9 5JS.

Support, subject to retention of the hedge to screen the shed.

4c. 3524/25/HHO – Householder application for single storey extension to side and rear of existing bungalow and associated works. Glenroy, Weirfields, Totnes, TQ9 5JS

Support.

4d. 3450/25/HHO and 3451/25/LBC – Listed Building Consent for Internal alterations, repairs and replacement windows, roof lights and external doors and replacement flat roof finish. 5 Leechwell Lane, Totnes, TQ9 5EA.

Support, but the Committee would encourage the use of breathable materials when decorating an historic building.

4e. 3203/25/FUL – Proposed conversion of flat into 2 x flat dwellings. Brutus Centre, Unit 2-3 Flat 2, Fore Street, Totnes, TQ9 5RW.

Support in principle, but the Committee would encourage the use of acoustic and thermal insulation and renewable energy.

4f. 3546/25/LBC – Replace slate-hanging on south elevation. 51 Fore Street, Totnes, TQ9 5NJ.

Support, subject to the Heritage Officer being content that suitable coloured slate and specification is used.

4g. 2887/25/FUL - Change of use to mixed use & alterations to shopfront to allow access to proposed first floor maisonette, internal refurbishment & rear access stair & garden space. 12 High Street, Totnes, TQ9 5SB.
Support, subject to exterior drawings in application reference 3145/25/LBC being used.

5. TOTNES CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

To consider the South Hams District Council pre-consultation draft Totnes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and make any recommendation to Full Council.

The Committee discussed the pre-consultation draft which is an improvement on the earlier drafts but the Committee felt that some of its earlier comments have not been incorporate. It was **AGREED** that there is information that they would wish to see included and therefore the draft is not yet in a position to take to Full Council. It was **AGREED** that the Officer will circulate the draft comments by email for Committee agreement.

The Committee has the following comments on the draft:

- That more of the historic context detail and images used in the extant Conservation Area Appraisal is incorporated.
- Key views need to include the following: from Totnes Bridge down river; Borough Park in all directions (particularly towards the Castle, and east to the Bourton Valley).
- Limited detail on the three proposed new areas and lack of images to support the recommendations.
- Images - concern about the quality of some of the images (shadowing for example) and sizing; and lack of medieval doorways and buildings.
- P14 – Rotherfold and reference to ‘Little Totnes’ – the sentence is confusing, is it both areas or one?
- What is the consultation process for the proposed extension areas (for example, do the residents get contacted direct)?
- Typos which will be identified and submitted to the officer at South Hams District Council separately.
- It will send the updated OSSRW greenways map to the South Hams District Council officer.
- Wish to see reference to the 2018 South Hams District Council Landscape Character Assessment included in the plan [this is already referenced in the appendix to the plan].

CLlr Cummings left the meeting during this item.

The Committee voted to extend the meeting by 15 minutes at 8.15pm.

6. TORBAY LOCAL PLAN 2025-45 – REGULATION 18 DRAFT PLAN CONSULTATION

To consider the Torbay Local Plan 2025-45 Regulation 18 Draft Plan Consultation and make any recommendation to Full Council [Deadline for comments 26th January 2026].

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it responds to the Torbay Local Plan 2025-45 Regulation 18 Draft Plan Consultation with the following comments:

- Policy TA2. No reference is made about the impact of traffic and congestion caused by vehicles coming out of Torbay through adjoining settlements. Whilst the route northwards towards Newton Abbot and Exeter has had significant investment to improve capacity, this is not the case with the southern route towards Plymouth. The impact on Totnes is already substantial with junctions beyond capacity during rush hours. Altered driver behaviour results in vehicles increasingly taking routes through the town to avoid congestion on the A385.

Investment in this route is required to mitigate these effects and to improve economic outcomes for Torbay.

- Page 173 paragraph 6.7 – there is no mention of improvements beyond the Torbay boundary, but the impact of traffic will extend beyond the bay area.
- Acknowledge that Torbay is an employment hub for the area.
- Torbay has important wildlife corridors that link to the River Dart and Totnes which the plan should be mindful of retaining to best preserve biodiversity in the region.
- Would refer you to the 2018 South Hams District Council Landscape Character Assessment and the importance of green spaces between communities on the outer regions of the bay area.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Planning Committee – Monday 19th January 2026 at 6.30pm in the Guildhall.

Noted.

*The Committee **RESOLVED** 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)*

8. TOTNES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW

To consider the brief and quote for a health check of the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan and make a recommendation to Full Council (commercial).

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that:

- a. The Council proceeds with the commissioning of the health check; and
- b. A named consultant is used (Intelligent Plans and Examinations) rather than going to tender and as such seeks Full Council approval for this appointment as a provider of a specialist service and as an agreed exemption to Financial Regulations.
- c. As well as the health check, advice on these specific questions is included: principle residence policy; licencing of holiday rental properties; feed in of potential site allocations from South Hams District Council Local Plan; and extension of the national landscape area up the River Dart to include Totnes (proposed to Buckfastleigh).
- d. The Landscape Character Assessment and Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan are provided to be viewed alongside the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Sara Halliday
Governance and Projects Manager
December 2025

ITEM 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEE

4a. Full Council 1st December 2025

No recommendations.

4b. Council Matters Committee 8th December 2025

Item 5. Draft 2026/27 Budget. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that:

- The draft 2026/27 budget is adopted (subject to a minor amendment); and
- A precept increase of a minimum of 7.5 percent and maximum of 10 percent is adopted.

Item 6. Payments to Councillors Policy. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the revised Payments to Councillors Policy is adopted.

4c. Planning Committee 15th December 2025

Item 6. Torbay Local Plan 2025-2045 – Regulation 18 Draft Plan Consultation. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it responds to the Torbay Local Plan 2025-45 Regulation 18 Draft Plan Consultation with the following comments:

- Policy TA2. No reference is made about the impact of traffic and congestion caused by vehicles coming out of Torbay through adjoining settlements. Whilst the route northwards towards Newton Abbot and Exeter has had significant investment to improve capacity, this is not the case with the southern route towards Plymouth. The impact on Totnes is already substantial with junctions beyond capacity during rush hours. Altered driver behaviour results in vehicles increasingly taking routes through the town to avoid congestion on the A385. Investment in this route is required to mitigate these effects and to improve economic outcomes for Torbay.
- Page 173 paragraph 6.7 – there is no mention of improvements beyond the Torbay boundary, but the impact of traffic will extend beyond the bay area.
- Acknowledge that Torbay is an employment hub for the area.
- Torbay has important wildlife corridors that link to the River Dart and Totnes which the plan should be mindful of retaining to best preserve biodiversity in the region.
- Would refer you to the 2018 South Hams District Council Landscape Character Assessment and the importance of green spaces between communities on the outer regions of the bay area.

Item 8. Totnes Neighbourhood Plan Review. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that:

- e. The Council proceeds with the commissioning of the health check; and
- f. A named consultant is used (Intelligent Plans and Examinations) rather than going to tender and as such seeks Full Council approval for this appointment as a provider of a specialist service and as an agreed exemption to Financial Regulations.
- g. As well as the health check, advice on these specific questions is included: principle residence policy; licencing of holiday rental properties; feed in of potential site allocations from South Hams District Council Local Plan; and extension of the national landscape area up the River Dart to include Totnes (proposed to Buckfastleigh).
- h. The Landscape Character Assessment and Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan are provided to be viewed alongside the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan.

Budget and Precept setting – 2026/27

Report author: Town Clerk

1. Purpose and Recommendations

This updated report draws together the original briefing provided to Council Matters, along with their recommendations and the most recent financial information, to support Full Council in setting the 2026/27 budget and precept.

Council Matters advised that the following should guide the final decision:

- **Recognition of key assumptions and risks**, including pay award uncertainty, inflation, and increasing liabilities associated with maintaining listed buildings.
- **Continuation of the move toward earmarked reserves**, while maintaining general reserves at a minimum of three to six months of core operating costs.
- **Delegating minor adjustments** to the Clerk and Finance & HR Manager once the 2026/27 tax base is confirmed, with the final Band D figure to be brought back to Full Council before adoption.
- **Recommending an appropriate precept uplift** that responsibly reflects financial pressures and the need to maintain resilience.

This revised report retains all the original notes and detail to ensure members who did not read the earlier version have full context, while adding the further updates required.

2. Executive Summary

The Council is operating in a period of continued cost pressure, with increasing demands across staffing, utilities, maintenance of listed buildings, and strategic service reviews. Updated survey information highlights the scale of property liabilities and reinforces the need for sustainable financial planning.

The key decision for members is the level of precept increase needed to:

- Maintain service delivery
- Manage unavoidable property risks
- Sustain general reserves in line with policy
- Support planned earmarked reserve allocations

Two levels of increase now provide the clearest strategic choice: **7.5%** and **10%**. The updated financial modelling shows that:

- **A 7.5% increase secures the Council's general reserves for 2 years.**
- **A 10% increase secures general reserves for 3 years.**

This is significant considering the Council's substantial property responsibilities, sector-wide cost increases, and the emerging pressures expected ahead of Local Government Reorganisation in 2028.

3. Background and Updated Financial Context

All cost assumptions remain based on the figures previously shared, unless otherwise noted, including the application of up to **5% inflation** where appropriate.

Since the Council Matters meeting, members should note the following additional updates:

- **Community Audit costs:** Proposals will be brought forward to increase the cost to **£6,500**.
- **Guildhall Cottage:** An initial heritage survey costing **£2,250** will take place in the current year.
- **Totnes Museum heritage survey:** Now completed. The estimated **£75,000** for urgent phase-one works in 2026/27 is considered realistic and necessary.

These additions further underline the financial pressures associated with statutory and non-statutory assets, and the need for a prudent reserves strategy.

4. Budget Proposals

Administration

Staff salaries and pensions remain based on current structure. Pay award assumptions remain at **5%**, though unions continue to advocate for **10% or £3,000 per FTE**, presenting a real risk to future budgets.

Civic & Democratic

Councillor allowances continue to be estimated based on the national pay award, payable only to elected members who choose to take them.

Tourism, Communications and Business Engagement

The **£25,000** Visit Totnes budget continues to fund partnerships, marketing, and the Totnes Guide, with **£10,000** income assumed.

The Communications and Marketing Audit may require reconsideration of delivery models.

Guildhall and Offices

Utility estimates are now more stable.

Admissions and weddings income remains cautiously forecast.

Business rates await confirmation from the Valuation Office.

Civic Hall

Paige Adams grant remains indicative pending Trustee decision.

Maintenance call on reserves may increase despite a reduction in the in-year budget.

Property Maintenance (Updated)

Significant increases remain for both the Museum and Guildhall Cottage. With the Museum's heritage survey now completed, the **£75,000** estimate for phase-one urgent works in 2026/27 is validated.

The Guildhall Cottage will shortly incur an initial heritage survey cost of **£2,250** in the current year, and substantial works are expected to follow, with an estimated figure for Phase 1 at **£75,000**.

Cemetery

No significant changes.

Open Spaces

Maintenance of the closed churchyard and walls remains minimal and handled in-house.

Previous attempts to transfer responsibility were not legally possible.

Precept and Income

Investment income forecasts remain conservative.

Community Development

Your original detail remains unchanged; however members should note that the **Community Audit** is now expected to cost **£6,500**, and its outcomes will shape future grant-making. Christmas operations continue to rise with inflation.

5. Reserves and Sustainability

The key issue continues to be the pressure on **general reserves** as earmarked reserves grow. A realistic baseline for core operations remains **£500,000**, requiring at least **£125,000–£250,000** in general reserves under the Council’s policy.

New modelling shows:

- A 7.5% precept increase secures general reserves for 2 years.
- A 10% increase secures general reserves for 3 years and best protects the Council’s risk position.

Given the increasing cost of statutory maintenance, and the developing agenda of Local Government Reorganisation, resilience must remain central to decision-making. As explained to Council Matters attendees, it is possible to reallocate Earmarked Reserves if priorities and projects change in the future.

6. Band D Impact

Based on the SHDC Parish Precept calculator tool:

Year	Tax Base	Precept	Band D	Band D increase % on previous year	Band D £ on previous year	Notes
26 27	3110.61	744541	239.36	6.98%	15.63	10% increase to precept
26 27	3110.61	727619	233.92	4.55%	10.19	7.5% increase to precept
25 26	3078.83	688823	223.73	2.32%	5.08	2nd Homes Premium included
24 25	3000.38	656022	218.65	6.54%	13.42	
23 24	2973.55	610253	205.23			

7. Additional information and Clerk summary

It is worth noting the increases in Devon last year as below.

RANK	Local Authority	Parish Name	Precept 25 26	Tax base 25 26	Band D 25 26	% increase band D from 2024/25 to 2025/26
1	East Devon	Cranbrook	669344	2614.32	256.03	0.00%
2	South Hams	Dartmouth	753203	3163.54	238.09	11.77%
3	North Devon	Barnstaple	1617958	7208.88	224.44	15.70%
4	South Hams	Totnes	688823	3078.83	223.73	2.32%
5	West Devon	Tavistock	1088850	4895.56	222.42	7.33%
6	West Devon	North Tawton	159617	777.6	205.27	1.00%
7	West Devon	Okehampton Town	457313	2277.41	200.8	2.01%

8	Torrige	Holsworthy	212800	1090.64	195.11	14.70%
9	South Hams	Ivybridge	771437	4002.42	192.74	30.62%
10	Teignbridge	Teignmouth	1052997	5514.8	190.94	9.90%
11	Teignbridge	Newton Abbot	1698731	8909.5	190.67	4.83%
12	Mid Devon	Crediton	510750	2794.9	182.74	4.97%
13	East Devon	Axminster	504850	2948.28	171.24	11.14%
14	East Devon	Honiton	667545	4087.27	163.32	9.75%
15	East Devon	Broad Clyst	463946	2936.94	157.97	1.12%
16	East Devon	Clyst Honiton	18000	119.6	150.5	3.98%
17	Teignbridge	Ashburton	224162	1494.7	149.97	48.09%
18	Mid Devon	Cullompton	553617	3730.29	148.41	2.27%
19	Mid Devon	Culmstock	61500	424.65	144.83	26.39%
20	Teignbridge	Buckfastleigh	172250	1201.5	143.36	7.81%

Our precept was a relatively small 2.32% increase to the band D, comparative to others, and while we are still high in the County this is partly because we have a significant proportion of the homes in the Totnes boundary claiming Council Tax benefit and because we lose the precept income from the top half of Bridgetown because of the current parish boundary. We also have limited revenue making assets.

Members need to take the decisions as recommended by Council Matters as outlined below:

1. To **RESOLVE** to agree the draft budget as presented.
2. To note the detail outlined in this report, including the impact on Band D rates.
3. To note that the earmarked reserves figures as presented are estimates – they will be transferred at financial year end based on the underspend from agreed budgets.
4. To **RESOLVE** to increase the precept by either 7.5% or 10% as outlined in the attached papers.

Catherine Marlton, Town Clerk
18th December 2025

ITEM 11 – LIST OF MEETING DATES, COMMUNICATIONS POINTS AND LINK COUNCILLOR UPDATES

Month	Full Council, 7pm	Council Matters Committee, 6.30pm	Planning Committee, 6.30pm	Town Matters Committee, 6.30pm
January 2026	Monday 5 th	Monday 12 th	Monday 19 th	Monday 26 th
February 2026	Monday 2 nd	Monday 9 th	Monday 16 th	None
March 2026	Monday 2 nd	Monday 9 th	Monday 16 th	Monday 23 rd
April 2026	Monday 13 th	Monday 20 th	Monday 27 th	None

January

Full Council – 5th January at 6.30pm
 Council Matters Committee – 12th January at 6.30pm
 Community Working Group – 13th January at 6pm
 Planning Committee – 19th January at 6.30pm
 Environment and Public Realm Working Group – 21st January at 4.30pm
 Town Matters Committee – 26th January at 6.30pm
 Traffic and Transport Forum and AGM – 28th January at 6.30pm

February

Full Council – 2nd February at 6.30pm
 Economy Working Group - 4th February at 6pm
 Council Matters Committee – 9th February at 6.30pm
 Civic Service – Sunday 15th February at 11am (St Mary’s Church)
 Planning Committee – 16th February at 6.30pm

March

Full Council – 2nd March at 6.30pm
 Council Matters Committee – 9th March at 6.30pm
 Planning Committee – 16th March at 6.30pm
 Environment and Public Realm Working Group – 18th March at 4.30pm
 Town Matters Committee – 23rd March at 6.30pm

April

Full Council – 13th April at 6.30pm
 Council Matters Committee – 20th April at 6.30pm
 Planning Committee – 27th April at 6.30pm
 Traffic and Transport Steering Group – 29th April at 6.30pm

May 2026

21st May – Mayor Making (morning)
 28th May - Annual Town Meeting, 6pm in the Civic Hall.

Communications Points – please check the Totnes Town Council ‘News’ page Further verbal updates to be given by the Clerk at the meeting.

Link Councillor/Councillor Representative on Outside Body Updates