



## AGENDA FOR THE TOWN MATTERS COMMITTEE

### MONDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2026 IN THE GUILDHALL

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

You are hereby **SUMMONED** to attend the **Town Matters Committee** on **Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026** at **6.30pm** for a maximum of 90 minutes in the Guildhall for the purpose of transacting the following business:

**Committee Members:** Councillors N Roberts (Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, J Chinnock, S Collinson, J Cummings, D Peters, A Presswell, E Price and T Robshaw.

#### 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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 90 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.

To receive apologies and to confirm that any absence has the approval of the Council.

*The Committee will adjourn for the following items:*

#### PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A period of 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make comment regarding the work of the Committee or other items that affect Totnes.

*The Committee will convene to consider the following items:*

#### 2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and update on any matters arising. Document attached [page 3].

#### 3. STRATEGY DELIVERY WORKING GROUPS

To consider any recommendations and note the minutes from the following:

- a. Economy Working Group, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025 (document attached, page 6).
- b. Environment and Public Realm Working Group, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026 (document to follow).

#### 4. DEVON LIBRARIES CONSULTATION

To consider the Devon County Council consultation on 'Shaping the Future of Devon's Library Service' and make a recommendation to Full Council on signing a joint letter with other towns or

making a separate response (deadlines 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026). Documents attached [page 9] and see [Have Your Say Today - Shaping Devon's Library Service - Commonplace](#).

5. SHDC CLIMATE NATIONAL EMERGENCY BRIEFING MOTION

To consider the South Hams District Council Climate National Emergency Briefing motion and make any recommendation to Full Council. Document attached [page 17].

6. EMERGENCY PLAN UPDATE

To consider an update on the timing for review of the Totnes Emergency Plan. Document attached [page 17].

7. COMMUNITY AWARDS TIMELINE

To note the timeline for the 2025 Community Awards. Document attached [page 18].

8. OPEN SPACES, SPORTS, RECREATION AND WELLBEING PLAN UPDATE

To update on any general matters linked to the Open Spaces, Sport Recreation and Wellbeing Plan including an update on the greenways map (standing item). Document attached [page 19].

9. LINK COUNCILLOR REPORTS

To consider link councillor reports from Committee members. Verbal update.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Town Matters Committee – Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 at 6.30pm.

Sara Halliday  
Governance and Projects Manager  
21<sup>st</sup> January 2026

**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 Councillor 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 TOWN MATTERS COMMITTEE**

### **MONDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2025 IN THE GUILDHALL**

Present: Councillors N Roberts (Chair), L Auletta (from 18.35), C Beavis, J Chinnock, J Cummings, D Peters, A Presswell and E Price.

Apologies: Cllr Collinson.

Not Present: Cllr Robshaw

In Attendance: Members of the public, 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 Roberts read out 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**

Representatives from The Heritage Trust explained the background to the William Wills project, looking to put together a more comprehensive display of information in the area of the current display [outside of the Council Chamber door]. The proposed information will provide a more balanced portrayal of the expedition that reflects the post-colonial environment. The Heritage Trust is also looking to make contact with descendants of the indigenous people in Australia who assisted the expedition and saved one of its members and would like a Cllr to help with this liaison. Cllrs asked: whether the space is sufficient for the proposed new display to cover all the topics that the Trust plans; what would the display look like – it needs to be in keeping with the building; if any other venues for displays had been considered, for example Totnes Museum or the library (which is open all year round).

*The Committee reconvened.*

#### **2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**To approve the minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025 and update on any matters arising.**

The minutes were **AGREED** unanimously as an accurate record of proceedings. Matters arising:

Item 3b Public Realm– Planter Audit. It was **RESOLVED** by Full Council to accept the proposed retentions, removals and actions as listed.

Picnic Benches (PRD2.Q). It was **RESOLVED** by Full Council that the Town Council offers two rectangular picnic tables to South Hams District Council (SHDC) to be installed in the vicinity of the skate park, location to be agreed between the Mayor, Skate Park Community Group and SHDC.

XL Bins (PRD2.F). It was **RESOLVED** by Full Council that the two XL heritage bins are installed outside Firefly/Happy Apple on High Street; and to the rear of the Civic Hall.

Item 6 – Universal Toilets. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council writes to South Hams District Council (SHDC) requesting that it considers extending the provision of RADAR keys to transgender people on request.

Item 4. Community Audit Brief. It was **RESOLVED** that the Council commissions the audit and uses a named consultant.

Item 5. Mobility aid warnings for narrow pavements. It was **RESOLVED** by Full Council to place friendly warnings on the planter and bollards, place information on the Town Council website and make a referral to Devon Highways requesting signage.

It was **AGREED** to bring forward item 4.

#### **4. WILLIAM WILLS PROJECT**

**To consider a proposal from the Totnes Heritage Trust to work with the Town Council on a project on William Wills including: updating the information displays in the Guildhall; and forming links with the First Nation Yandruwandha on their descendant's role in the expedition.**

Cllr Price declared a personal interest. The Committee discussed the information that the Heritage Trust members had presented. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that:

- It supports the proposed update to the Burke and Wills display space, led by the Heritage Trust;
- A nominated Cllr representative 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
- The nominated Cllr works with the Heritage Trust to liaise with the First Nation people in Australia.

#### **3. STRATEGY DELIVERY GROUP AND WORKING GROUP**

**To consider any recommendations and note the minutes from the following (documents attached):**

**a. Community Working Group, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025.**

Noted.

**b. Economy Working Group, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025.**

Noted. Cllr Roberts gave a quick update on the Community Economic Plan work.

**c. Environment and Public Realm Working Group, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025.**

Noted. To make the following recommendations from the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025 meeting:

Item 3a – **Notice Board (PRD2.L)**. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council 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 (PRD2.P)**. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that TTC 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 3d – **XL Bins (PRD2.F)**. It was **AGREED** to forward to District Councillors the latest email requesting permission for the installation of the XL bins and ongoing litter issues outside Happy Apple.

#### **5. VIRE COMMITTEE PRESIDENT**

**To consider a request from the Vire Twinning Association for the Mayor to be the president of the organisation and make a recommendation to Full Council.**

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the Mayor becomes the ex officio President of the Vire Twinning Association.

#### **6. OPEN SPACES, SPORTS, RECREATION AND WELLBEING PLAN UPDATE**

**To update on any general matters linked to the Open Spaces, Sport Recreation and Wellbeing Plan including an update on the open spaces and greenways maps (standing item).**

Cllr Auletta presented the latest greenways map and asked members to pass any additional path information to her for inclusion. There will be a refresh following comments received from Totnes Ramblers. There was also discussion of re-numbering the greenways serials to correspond to the existing footpaths wherever possible to reduce confusion. The final maps will form an appendix to the OSSRW Plan.

Cllr Presswell spoke about the number of benches on Longmarsh which are well used and the potential for a third bench at the end of the pathway. It was **AGREED** that this should be taken to Berry Pomeroy Parish Council for consideration and that any additional bench should be timber to be in keeping with the existing benches.

#### **7. LINK COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

**To consider link councillor reports from Committee members.**

Cllr Presswell updated on a visit to the museum and the condition of the building that is likely to need significant future investment both inside and out.

#### **8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**To note the date of the next meeting of the Town Matters Committee – Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 6.30pm.**

Noted.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Sara Halliday  
Governance and Projects Manager  
November 2025

## ITEM 3 – STRATEGY DELIVERY WORKING GROUPS

### 3a. **Economy Working Group Agenda, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2025**

Working Group: Cllr Roberts (Chair) (Apols), Cllr Auletta, Cllr Beavis, Cllr Chinnock (Apol), Cllr Peters, Cllr Price (Apols)

Officer: Economic Support Officer (KO) and TTC Clerk (CM)

*Cllr Auletta approved as interim chair for today's meeting due to Cllr Roberts sending his apologies.*

1. AP from British Cycling will join us to discuss a proposal regarding a Totnes Cycling Event in July 2027 to coincide with the British Tour de France. **DEFERRED**

2. Notes of the last meeting and matters arising that are not already on the agenda.

APPROVED

*Catherine Marlton, TTC Clerk was in attendance but limited on time so items 9 and 10 were moved forward on the agenda.*

### 3. **SHDC Parking charges** (moved up from item 10)

Members received an update on the SHDC parking permit review from CM and related parking issues.

A monthly payment option will be introduced, and the residents' discounted tariff will be frozen next year while other tariffs rise with inflation. Members noted this may benefit local workers and businesses.

Concerns about parking costs impacting employment, footfall, and access to the town were raised. SHDC noted that the Pavilions car park status will remain unchanged, as the review does not cover individual car park charging categories.

SHDC highlighted there was higher-than-expected revenue from the 2025 tariff changes and Totnes was therefore being prioritised for investment in public toilets, bins and benches.

SHDC officers have agreed to share detailed car park usage data, which will allow assessment of under-used car parks and potential alternative approaches for business staff or community use.

**ACTION** – KO to share car park usage and further information from SHDC at the next EWG meeting.

### 4. **Bridge feasibility update** following DCC meeting – Cllr Auletta (Moved up from item 9)

Cllr was joined by Cllr Hodgson and Graham Bennett at a meeting with DCC officers regarding the Bridge feasibility study. Nothing is moving forward as of yet.

**ACTION** Cllr Hodgson is to find out the process of getting the study done. Cllr Auletta to report back to EWG if any progress is made.

### 5. **Proposal from Fringe regarding request of financial support.**

Members discussed the Fringe and what it brings to the community and economy of Totnes. The Fringe festival reported 2,000 tickets sold for shows in 2025, with many venues selling out, which significantly boosted income during the festival days. The organisers also noted their intention to market the festival more widely next year, which is expected to have a positive economic impact by attracting additional visitors to the town from further afield over the weekend.

Mayor Tim Bennett, the link councillor for the Fringe, was unable to attend the EWG meeting but sent notes to Cllr Auletta regarding the proposal and noting that he felt it was good value for what

they were requesting, in particular, the estimated £1,000 for a website upgrade which was felt would improve the Fringes offering. There was further discussion around their proposal with money requested for a paid facilitator to train volunteers, with some concern expressed that existing volunteers through TalkAction might already be able to take on the role of said community champions.

Members wish to gain a clearer understanding of the Fringe's organisational structure in order to better understand its financial arrangements. If no formal structure exists, members indicated they would prefer to pay facilitators and contractors directly on behalf of the Fringe rather than provide funds to an individual.

Members voted unanimously to **APPROVE** the proposal of £2,000 to the Fringe, on the basis that the expenditure is fully traceable and receipts are provided for the agreed work.

**ACTION:** KO to email Fringe organisers with approval and conditions of the allocation of budget.

6. KO to **update on eat:totnes meeting.** (Data from eat:festivals sent on 26/11/25 )

Members expressed interest in the information provided by eat:festivals and welcomed the festival's focus on supporting local traders within a 30-mile radius.

There was discussion of how TTC supported the festival last year through sponsorship from Visit Totnes. Members noted that, as relatively few shops in Totnes are open on Sundays, the direct economic benefit to local businesses from the event was limited.

The long-term impacts of this and other festivals were considered. Members highlighted that a strong sense of community, supported by a range of vibrant events, encourages people to live and work in Totnes which provides ongoing economic benefits, not limited to the one day of the event.

The location of the festival at Longmarsh was also discussed. Some members felt it was slightly out of the way and suggested it might be better situated in Civic Square, where the current markets are held. KO explained that the location was intentional, as eat:festivals prefer to be by the water to encourage visitors to make a day of the event, picnicking and enjoying the view.

It was noted by members that the timber quay at longmarsh is damaged and this needs to be highlighted to SHDC.

Although no decisions were required regarding sponsorship or budget allocation at this meeting, members agreed that marketing for the event needed improvement next year. It was noted that promotion from both the organisers and Visit Totnes had been limited in 2025, coinciding with TTC's ongoing recruitment of a marketing officer.

**ACTION:** KO to find out what Eat:fetival are requesting and add to the next agenda to discuss.

## 7. CEP update

Topic Task groups for the Community Economic Plan have been discussed with the steering group and projects are being allocated.

Next steps are for the steering group to discuss how to recruit businesses to the groups and to work out if there are already groups targeting the projects that have been identified.

**ACTION:** Add CEP to next agenda for further updates.

8. **Business Forum discussion** (proposed for the 13<sup>th</sup> January at Royal Seven Stars)

DL, owner of Tempt Chocolate, has put himself forward as leading the Business Forum conversation with other businesses, which is a project that has come out of the CEP. KO has also been having conversations with other business owners in Totnes regarding the setting up of a forum.

Members are keen to make clear that the business forum is being supported by the EWG and TTC, but the council are not running or responsible for it. Businesses must be made aware that any forum must have their own committee and structure and that the council are there to support.

**ACTION** – KO to liaise with DL regarding the invites for the business forum.

**ACTION** – KO to book the Seven Stars for the 13<sup>th</sup> January for the Business Forum first meeting. NR to attend and give general overview of the CEP.

#### 9. **The Narrows update**

Bunting has been replaced in the Narrows which businesses in the area have reported being happy about.

The Narrows are holding their own late night shopping event on 29<sup>th</sup> November and 19<sup>th</sup> December. This has been shared on VT socials as a way of supporting the Narrows initiative.

**ACTION:** CB to contact Pfrom Totnes Pulse to help raise the profile of Narrowing Nights for their event in December.

#### 10. **Sunday Markets update.**

Cllr Roberts, Cllr Auletta and KO attended a focus group with SHDC – Rebecca McKee (food and agricultural officer), Tom Worthington (Markets officer) and Laura Eames (Project Officer CEP) in October to discuss the markets. It was agreed that the Sunday markets needed a re-focus and the 2 days a month wasn't working.

Since then SHDC have agreed to drop the first Sunday of the month from January.

KO has requested from SHDC the notes from the focus group and to be kept in the loop regarding further decisions around the markets. There has been concerns raised by local traders that there is a feeling of unfairness and that market traders are benefitting more in the town with regards to outside seating and space available for them to use.

KO has not received any feedback from SHDC despite emailing a few times since the focus group.

**ACTION:** KO to chase focus group notes and to contact Emma Forster regarding comms for the Sunday markets.

#### 11. **Bike rack proposal update**

The proposed bike rack location of underneath the Civic Hall steps from TTC has been denied by SHDC, on the ground that there is now a permanent trader located there; location is inaccessible on markets days and it goes against the ambition to open up the market square.

SHDC have requested that if TTC would like new cycle storage in the town members must suggest another location.

Discussion was had around locational constraints, but it has been decided that the discussion cannot be re-opened just yet due in part to a 6-month rule on decisions from Full Council.

If the EWG feel they would like to discuss this again, it can be added to a future agenda.

Proposal for next meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> February: 6pm – 7.30pm APPROVED

## ITEM 4 – DEVON LIBRARIES CONSULTATION

Devon County Council is running a consultation of the future of Devon’s library service. The proposal for Totnes is to act as a hub library, seeing a reduction in opening hours from 38 hours per week to 34.5 hours per week (and no chance to being closed on Thursday).

There is more impact on hours to the services provided in Dartmouth (and to a lesser extent Ivybridge), and Dartmouth Town Council has proposed sending a combined response to register an objection to the reduction in opening hours. The Committee is asked to consider the signing of a joint/combined letter and make a recommendation to Full Council, the draft letter is below:



The Guildhall, Victoria Road, Dartmouth, Devon, TQ6 9RY | 01803 832281  
clerk@dartmouthtowncouncil.gov.uk | www.dartmouthtowncouncil.gov.uk

To whom it may concern

### **Subject: Strong Objection to Proposed Reduction in Opening Hours at Dartmouth Library**

On behalf of Dartmouth Town Council, we write to formally and unequivocally oppose the proposed reduction in opening hours at Dartmouth Library.

The Town Council considers it fundamental that Dartmouth Library remains fully open and accessible to the community it serves. The library is not simply a place to borrow books; it is an essential and irreplaceable community hub that provides vital support to a wide cross-section of our residents.

Dartmouth Library plays a crucial role in supporting individuals experiencing loneliness, social isolation, mental health challenges, and deprivation. For many residents, particularly older people and those living alone, the library offers a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space for social interaction and human contact. Reducing opening hours would disproportionately affect those who rely most heavily on these services.

In addition, the library provides essential access to IT facilities and online services. Many residents depend on the library for assistance with digital access, including applying for services, managing accounts, and paying bills. At a time when more public services are moving online, reducing library hours directly undermines digital inclusion and risks further marginalising vulnerable members of our community.

Councillors have also questioned the justification for this proposal in financial terms. Any savings achieved by Devon County Council through a reduction in Dartmouth Library’s opening hours are likely to be minimal when weighed against the significant and lasting negative impact on the community. We therefore ask Devon County Council to clearly set out what the actual financial saving would be from this reduction, and how such a saving can reasonably justify the loss of services and support that residents depend upon.

Dartmouth Town Council strongly urges Devon County Council to reconsider this proposal. Reducing library hours is a short-term measure that risks long-term harm to community wellbeing, social cohesion, and access to essential services. The Town Council believes that protecting and sustaining Dartmouth Library should be a priority, not a casualty of marginal cost-cutting. We look forward to your response and to receiving clarity on the proposed savings, and we trust that Devon County Council will give due consideration to the profound importance of Dartmouth Library to our town.

Regards

Charlie Pritchard-Williams  
Town Clerk  
On behalf of Dartmouth Town Council

The information below is taken from the DCC website see [www.devonlibraries.commonplace.is](http://www.devonlibraries.commonplace.is)

### **Shaping the future of Devon's library service**

Devon County Council is committed to ensuring that library services continue to meet the needs of our communities, but financial pressures mean we must now look at how services are delivered. We are inviting you to give your views on the proposed changes to the library service and any alternatives you may wish to propose. [Have your say on the proposals](#) before 22 February 2026! Young people can [complete our survey for young people](#).

**Background to the Consultation:** Devon County Council has a legal duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all those who 'live, work or study and want to access the service.'

This includes lending books and other materials to both adults and children, free of charge to those who live, work or study in the area.

We must also continue to encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service and provide advice and support on how to make use and access services, information, and resources.

We want to make sure that Devon's Library Service continues to meet the needs of local communities. We're also committed to meeting our legal duty to provide a library service that is both comprehensive and efficient.

Devon has one of the most geographically diverse library services in England. Devon County Council is responsible for the library service with 50 council-commissioned libraries delivered by Libraries Unlimited—a charitable social enterprise—the service reaches communities across cities, towns, and rural areas.

It also includes a Home Library Service and outreach programmes, such as community bookshelves, to support residents and those living in more isolated parts of the county.

Libraries in Devon are much more than places to borrow books. They are trusted community spaces offering access to digital resources, warm spaces, meeting rooms, cultural events, and support for health, wellbeing, education, and economic resilience.

They play a vital role in tackling rural isolation, digital exclusion, and literacy challenges, particularly in a county where 30% of households are occupied by people over pension age.

However, the way people use libraries is changing. Since the pandemic, physical book borrowing has declined, while digital engagement has grown significantly. More people are accessing eBooks, audiobooks, and online newspapers, and using library Wi-Fi, even as public PC sessions fall.

Libraries have also adapted to support communities during the cost-of-living crisis—providing warm spaces, community fridges, and essential items.

At the same time, Devon itself is changing. The population is growing and ageing, with a 76% increase in residents aged 85+ expected by 2040.

Economic and educational challenges persist, including lower-than-average wages, high housing costs, and gaps in literacy and digital skills.

Libraries help bridge these gaps, offering free internet, learning programmes, and support for jobseekers, families, and small businesses.

### **Why we're consulting**

Devon County Council is committed to ensuring that library services continue to meet the needs of our communities, but financial pressures mean we must now look at how services are delivered.

The library service budget has been reduced year on year, and all realistic efficiency savings have already been made. The current model is no longer sustainable.

Like all councils, Devon must deliver a balanced budget. Rising costs and limited funding mean difficult decisions are needed across all services—including libraries. Financial constraints are a key reason for this consultation. Standing still is not an option.

This consultation is your opportunity to help shape the future of the library service. We want to hear how you use libraries, what matters most to you, and what changes could help ensure libraries continue to support Devon's communities—within the budget we have.

The Council's financial position continues to face increasing pressure, and substantial savings and demand management will be required over the medium term. Costs have been increasing year on year as the impact of inflation due to the increases in utilities costs and employers' national insurance contributions have taken effect.

This will have a direct impact on how services are delivered, and will require difficult decisions, innovation, and a collective focus on prioritising resources to protect the most critical outcomes for our communities.

## **What's Changing?**

### **Reduction and standardisation of opening hours**

This proposal and the consultation process is looking at the reduction and standardisation of opening hours across the county.

The total weekly staffed core opening hours of libraries in Devon will go from 1,294 hours and 45 minutes per week to 914 hours and 30 minutes per week – the equates to retaining 70.63% of the current hours.

Currently the large library network in Devon has a varied range of opening hours across its 50 libraries which have been the result of various changes over the years.

It should also be noted that in the last 12 months that there have been temporary reductions to staffed opening hours at multiple locations due to financial constraints and local operating requirements.

### **What's being proposed?**

Each library's opening hours have been reviewed.

The proposal introduces a standardised approach to opening hours. Libraries will be grouped into eight geographical areas based on size, demand, and community need.

The geographical areas are as follows (use the links to find out more about the proposed changes to individual libraries in each area):

Dartmoor and Tavistock  
East Devon and Exmouth  
Exeter city and Crediton  
Mid Devon and Tiverton  
North Devon and Barnstaple  
South Devon and Totnes  
Teignbridge and Newton Abbot  
Torridge and Bideford

Within each area, libraries are organised into bands (A–D), with each band having the same set number of opening hours. This helps ensure consistency across the county.

Three libraries—Barnstaple, Exeter, and Newton Abbot—are designated as 'Centre Libraries'. These play a key role in supporting the entire network, including logistics, supply chains, and service coordination and have the longest proposed opening hours.

Please note that Exeter Library has additional opening hours compared to the other designated centre libraries due to it being the largest population centre with the highest usage. For Exeter Library, the proposed hours include more evening opening and Sunday opening hours as different usage patterns are seen in a city centre location.

### **Banding structure**

Library classification	Total staffed opening hours per week	Additional comments
Centre 55*/43.5	*Exeter Library only as per above note	
A 34.5		

- B 27  
C 15  
D 6\*\* \*\*Libraries based in schools will have differing hours due to operational reasons. Details can be found in the separate operating hours document

To see the area structure, current staffed opening hours and the proposed staff opening hours please refer to the separate opening hours document.

### **What does this mean for you?**

Libraries will be coordinated in area-based groups, with either a Centre or a Band A library as the key coordinating library for each group.

In some areas there might be more than one Band A library in the group due to the size of the area.

Under the proposal, every group will have at least one library that is open Monday to Saturday.

Most libraries will be open on Saturdays, as this is when demand is highest. In a few cases, where Saturday use is very low, libraries may be closed, but this is based on clear evidence of local need and could be subject to change.

This proposal has been developed using data on usage, demand, and community need while also making the service more efficient and sustainable as we look to the future.

We are committed to maintaining as many of the currently run events and activities in each library as possible.

Alongside the proposed core staffed opening hours the following additional support will be actively pursued and introduced, where applicable, across the library network:

Increased use of volunteers – supporting library services and helping extend access during non-staffed hours

Open access technology – allowing registered users to enter and use the library outside of the core staffed hours

Community-managed libraries – where local organisations help operate the library and manage the day-to-day running

### **Additional considerations**

The proposal under consultation is based on retaining the network of 50 staffed libraries operating 52 weeks throughout the year. To help shape future thinking we are seeking your views on the following:

- all 50 Libraries open for 48 weeks a year, replacing the current 52 weeks a year mode
- a mix of 52, 50 and 48 week a year staffed libraries linked to the new library bands
- reducing the number of libraries, based on library usage, footfall and proximity to nearest library
- some of the 50 libraries operated solely by volunteers

### **Equalities considerations**

Throughout this consultation we are mindful of the equalities considerations that need to shape and inform any future delivery of libraries in Devon.

To help support the consultation we have produced an equalities impact needs assessment to be read alongside the libraries needs assessment.

### **The proposed new opening hours:**

#### **Totnes**

The Mansion, Fore Street, Totnes TQ9 5RP

Totnes Library - Libraries Unlimited

2025/26 current opening hours per week: 38 hours

2026/27 proposed opening hours per week: 34.5 hours

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
Current hours	9 am to 6 pm	9 am to 5 pm	9 am to 6 pm	Closed	9 am to 5 pm	9 am to 1 pm	Closed
Proposed hours	9.30 am to 5 pm	9.30 am to 5 pm	9.30 am to 6 pm	Closed	9.30 am to 5 pm	9.30 am to 1 pm	Closed

#### **Learn about the proposed changes to library opening hours**

Libraries are vital to communities across Devon. That is why, even as there are tighter budgets, we are committed to keeping all 50 libraries open. To do this fairly and sustainably, a new model has been developed for opening hours.

#### **How were the new opening hours designed?**

##### **1. Keeping all libraries open**

No libraries are closing. We're simply adjusting hours to reflect how and when people use them, so we can continue to offer a strong, sustainable service across Devon.

##### **2. Data**

A review was completed to identify best practice on how other councils managed library services. Data was then gathered on:

- library usage (borrowing, computer use, Wi-Fi)
- community needs
- geographic access

##### **3. Libraries were grouped into local areas**

Devon is large and diverse, so libraries were grouped into eight local areas, each led by a hub library. These hubs are larger libraries that will open longer and offer more services. Smaller libraries will support access across the area. Each area will have:

- at least one hub (some have two due to a larger geographic area and a larger number of libraries)
- a mix of smaller libraries with coordinated opening hours

##### **4. Opening hours are matched to when people use libraries most**

Usage patterns were analysed down to the half-hour to understand when people visited the libraries most. This data was used to help shape opening hours, so libraries are open when they are most needed within a working, geographic model.

## **5. A creation of a clear and consistent model**

Libraries were grouped into five types, each with a standard number of weekly hours. This structure helps manage staff and resources more efficiently while ensuring fair access across the county.

## **6. Ensuring local access six days a week**

Even if your local library is not open every day, the new model ensures that within each area, at least one library is open every weekday and most on Saturdays. This means you will still have access to library services six days a week nearby.

### **Opportunities to extend opening hours:**

#### **Volunteers in your library**

Volunteers in our libraries are a valuable resource. Libraries Unlimited already has many volunteers that support the running of libraries and additional activities.

In some libraries volunteers already help support additional hours and further use of volunteers to do this and extend opening hours can be a benefit to local communities.

We are looking to expand volunteering opportunities across the network of libraries.

If you are interested in volunteering, please [fill in our expression of interest form](#).

#### **Open access technology**

We are exploring how technology can help extend access to library buildings outside of staffed hours. This approach, known as 'open access', allows approved registered library users to use their local library at times when staff are not present helping to increase flexibility and make libraries more accessible to more people.

Open access is not a replacement for staffed services. It is designed to complement them by offering additional hours, especially in communities where demand is high but staffing resources are limited. It also enables access to the library for those people who are unable to visit the library during the normal opening hours.

The technology has been used successfully in other parts of the UK and internationally.

#### **How does it work?**

The system works by allowing approved registered users to enter the library using their library card and PIN. This then allows the user to:

- borrow and return books
- use computers
- use the Wi-Fi
- print or photocopy documents
- use study spaces

It is possible to open the entire building or just specific areas, depending on local needs and the layout of the space.

#### **What are the benefits of open access?**

- Access to the library for those who are unable to visit the library during the staffed opening hours.
- Access to the library at quieter times for library users with additional needs.
- Enables groups to meet and use spaces in the evening.
- Supports additional access to study places and facilities.
- Can allow access to libraries on occasions when the opening hours cannot be supported, for example, due to staff sickness.

Safety is a key consideration and those who wish to use open access will need to undertake an induction including an individual risk assessment where appropriate.

CCTV will be in constant operation at all open access sites. Emergency phones will be available for users to report any issues or contacting the emergency services.

A full risk assessment will be carried out before any site begins offering open access to ensure health and safety standards are met.

Please note open access may not suit everyone. For example, children without an accompanying adult cannot use the service, as they would not be able to safely evacuate in an emergency. Additional limitations may apply to ensure the safety of all users.

This technology could help Devon's libraries offer longer opening hours and provide more flexible access for residents who may not be able to visit during traditional times.

We are piloting open access in Cullompton with an expected launch in December 2025. A second pilot is planned for the New Year.

### **Community-managed libraries**

Part of the model for the future could include support for community-managed libraries as part of our statutory duty.

This could involve taking over the running of an existing library or delivered through another community building like a village hall, community café or community centre.

We would support local organisations by continuing to provide access to all the wonderful library assets including access to books, computers, printing and the online catalogue.

Community libraries have been successfully delivered in other areas across the country for some time. They can take many different forms, and we are looking to explore how it could look in Devon.

If you are interested in finding out more, or want to get involved in shaping the future of community-managed libraries in Devon please contact us at [communitiesconsultation@devon.gov.uk](mailto:communitiesconsultation@devon.gov.uk)

## ITEM 5 – SHDC CLIMATE NATIONAL EMERGENCY BRIEFING MOTION

At Full Council it was **AGREED** to refer the South Hams District Council {SHDC} Climate National Emergency Briefing motion set out in District Councillor Birch’s report to the Town Matters Committee for discussion. The motion is set out below:

### **Motion**

This Council [SHDC] **RESOLVES** that:

1. It supports the work and message of the National Emergency Briefing and calls on the government, politicians, businesses and organisations to heed its call for effective and urgent action.
2. It recognises and thanks Nick and Simon Oldridge for all the hard work they are putting into raising awareness of the real and imminent threats of climate change.
3. It will ask that all members of the UK100 network of Local Authorities consider passing similar motions that support the National Emergency Briefing initiative.
4. It reaffirms the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency it declared in 2020 and recognises that with the passage of 5 years the climate crisis has deepened and it is more important than ever to be guided by that declaration in everything the Council does.”

## ITEM 6 – EMERGENCY PLAN UPDATE

The Totnes Town Council Emergency Plan is due to be reviewed in January 2026, making recommendations to Full Council. However, it is suggested that this review is postponed following a recent meeting between the Town Clerk and local Clerks in South Hams, notably those for Kingsbridge and Salcombe. In the wake of the gas leak in early January 2026 which affected Kingsbridge and Salcombe, and the recent unexploded bomb in Exmouth, it has become clear that the statutory duties and roles to be performed in an emergency at town, district and county level has not functioned in the way parties had expected. Of particular concern is the communication between the various tiers of local government and the authorities dealing with the incident.

A wash-up/lessons learned meeting between the three levels of local government over the handling of the gas leak emergency is expected over the next couple of months. The Clerk proposes delaying the review of the Totnes Emergency Plan until the outputs of this meeting are known, as it is hoped that there will be clarification of roles and responsibilities that will in turn update and inform the review of the Totnes Plan.

## ITEM 7 – COMMUNITY AWARDS TIMELINE

Nominations for the 2026 Community Award (individual, organisation and Judy Westacott award for lifetime achievement) will open on 2<sup>nd</sup> February and run until Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March.

A press release will be put on the Town Council website, shared on social media, included in the Council's 'Totnes Matters' article in the March edition of the Totnes Directory and will be sent to the Totnes Times.

The timeline for considering the nominations by the Council is:

16<sup>th</sup> March – Nominations close.

23<sup>rd</sup> March – Town Matters Committee to consider nominations in confidential session (personal information) and make a shortlist recommendation to Full Council. Invitations to the awards will follow this meeting.

13<sup>th</sup> April – Full Council to consider the Town Matters recommendation. Invitations to the awards for the winners will follow this meeting.

28<sup>th</sup> May – Awards to presented at the Annual Town Meeting (with certificates for runners up).

ITEM 8 – OPEN SPACES, SPORTS, RECREATION AND WELLING PLAN UPDATE – REVISED GREENWAYS MAP

