



MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF COUNCIL MATTERS MONDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2026 AT 6.30PM IN THE GUILDHALL

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

Apologies: Cllr M Trant.

In Attendance: 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

There were no members of the public present.

The Committee reconvened.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 12th January 2026 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. Environment and Public Realm Working Group, 21st January 2026.

Cemetery – Wild Area Maintenance. It was **AGREED** unanimously that £495 is allocated from the Climate Change Projects budget for the proposed late-April topping cut/frame/general tidy of the site.

Public Realm - SHDC Asset Refurbishment Plan (Bins and Benches). It was **AGREED** unanimously that funding is allocated from the Town Improvement Fund for:

- Purchase of two benches as part of the SHDC work at Vire Island and Heath Gardens (approx. £1k).
- Funding the difference in cost of SHDC installing Highlands rather than Tivoli benches (approx. £1k).

- Purchase of two benches for installation on Fore Street and The Plains once Devon Highways approval has been received (approx. £1k).

b. Economy Working Group, 4th February 2026.

Fringe Festival – It was **AGREED unanimously** that the Guildhall be offered to the Fringe Festival for two performances on one date (one afternoon and one evening with a Councillor present, so no staffing implications).

Support for the Totnes Business Forum – It was **AGREED** unanimously that £4000 from the Economy budget (paid incrementally) be confirmed for the setting up and support of the new Business Forum.

Christmas Markets – It was **AGREED** unanimously that the Christmas Markets start on the second Tuesday of December (dates 8th, 15th and 22nd December). This will require the Town Maintenance Team to work on the 23rd December which is the first day of the office Christmas closure.

Littlehempston Cycle Way consideration – It was **AGREED** that £2000 from the Active Travel allocation of the Economy Budget is confirmed for the Littlehempston cycle way.

5. COUNCIL RISK ASSESSMENTS

To consider a summary of the Council's Risk Assessments.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council to note the Council's Risk Assessment Summary with the following amendments:

- Fire resisting doors in the Civic Hall – it was felt that the remedial works carried out on the doors, in conjunction with the other fire warning system and evacuation plan is sufficient to negate risk.
- Compartmentation of Birdwood House – work on high risk areas such as the electrical cupboard has been completed and the areas hirers have access to have protect escape routes and detection. This was felt sufficient to negate risk without further works to the wider Birdwood building that is listed, and used solely for storage.
- Familiarisation visits by the fire service at the Civic Hall – this is imminent now, the Totnes team were waiting on new recruits joining before undertaking this exercise.
- Fire Extinguisher training – it was felt a desk top based training for staff should be implemented, potentially during one of the monthly team meetings. Advice to staff remains to exit the building in event of fire, not to try to fight it.

6. COUNCIL GRANTS REPORT

To consider a summary of the reports on the Council Grants awarded in June 2025.

Noted. The Committee were pleased to see the positive updates and asked for some Council communications to be released about individual cases.

7. GUILDHALL DISPLAY CASES

To consider the minor re-organisation of some Guildhall display cases before the season opens in April.

It was **AGREED** unanimously to re-organise the Guildhall display cases as proposed.

8. CEMETERY FEES

To consider a review of the Cemetery Fees for financial year 2026/27.

It was **AGREED** unanimously to increase the cemetery fees from 1st April 2026 by 2.5 percent.

9. PENSIONS DISCRETION POLICY

To review the Pensions Discretion Policy.

It was **AGREED** to adopt the revised Pensions Discretion Policy.

10. FIXED ASSET REGISTER

To note the Council's Fixed Asset Register.

Noted.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Council Matters Committee – Monday 9th March 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)*

12. BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS (Standing Item)

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

These were reviewed and **AGREED** unanimously.

13. GUILDHALL GARAGE OWNERSHIP

To consider an update on the ownership of the Guildhall Garage (legal).

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the response to South Hams District Council (SHDC) is that: ‘Councillors would prefer a wider conversation about asset transfers from SHDC to the Town Council, rather than to engage at this current time about an individual asset’.

14. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS AUDIT

To consider the budget and staffing implications of the Marketing and Communications Audit (staffing).

It was **AGREED** unanimously to purchase two business phones for the Economic Support Officer and Marketing and Communications Officer.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it:

- Approves the restructure of two distinct roles from October 2026: Community Communications Officer (24 hrs); and Business and Economic Support Officer (24 hrs).
- Agrees that Visit Totnes is repositioned within the economic development and business support function.
- Agrees the outsourcing of agreed Visit Totnes elements to reduce officer workload and improve efficiency.

- Notes and approves the proposed interim arrangements from April to September 2026 – this means limited capacity and management of expectations when considering output.
- Approves the financial implications as outlined.

15. GUILDHALL WALL

To note an update on the structural survey carried out on the Guildhall Wall and the remedial works required (commercial).

It was **AGREED** unanimously to instruct Croft to write the LBC for the rebuild of the wall. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council to agree the increase the spend to undertake this work from £10,118.20 to £23,951.80. Councillors noted that £5,600 has already been spent, leaving a balance of £18,351.80.

14. STAFFING UPDATE

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

Noted.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm

Catherine Marlton
Town Clerk
February 2026