



**MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MONDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2026 IN THE GUILDHALL**

Present: Councillors M Trant (Deputy Mayor and Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, J Chinnock, S Collinson, T Cooper, J Cummings, J Hannam, J Hodgson, D Peters, A Presswell, E Price, N Roberts and T Robshaw.

Apologies: Cllrs Bennett and Smallridge.

In Attendance: Members of the public, District Councillor Birch, 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.**

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

*It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders.*

a. County Cllr (C Cllr) Hodgson had not submitted a report and gave a verbal update on: the Traffic and Transport Forum, passing on her thanks to the Chair of the group; the Devon County Council Community Protocol; air quality discussions with the Public Health Officer; concerns about some Devon County Council assets; and liaising with the Environment Agency and Devon County Council about flood mitigation measures (an incident report for the recent Warlands flooding is being prepared).

b. District Cllr Allen had not submitted a report and was not present.

c. District Cllr Birch (DCllr) had submitted a report and updated on: the budget challenges faced by South Hams District Council which are being managed from reserves rather than through cuts in services; and outlined the disparity of central Government investment in the South West in

comparison to other areas.

d. District Cllr Presswell had submitted a report and Councillors asked about: the cutting back of laurel bushes on Heath Way; Longmarsh boardwalk - a fallen tree across it which needs signage, and non-slip coatings need to be applied to the boardwalk itself; and concerns about the waste capacity of the proposed dual waste bins to be installed in the town.

*The Council reconvened.*

### **3. CLERK'S REPORT**

**To note the Clerk's Report for November and December 2025 and January 2026 (general updates and correspondence).**

Noted.

### **4. 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 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

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

**To note the following minutes:**

#### **b. Council Matters Committee 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

Noted.

#### **c. Planning Committee 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

Noted.

#### **d. Town Matters Committee 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

Noted.

### **5. 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 5<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

No matters arising.

#### **b. Council Matters Committee 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Item 6. Safeguarding Policy – It was **RESOLVED** that the revised Safeguarding Policy is adopted.

Item 7. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy – It was **RESOLVED** that the Responsible and Safe Use of AI policy is adopted.

Item 8. Members IT and Data Protection Policy – It was **RESOLVED** that the Members IT and Data Protection Policy is adopted.

**c. Planning Committee 19<sup>th</sup> January 20265**

Item 4. Devon County Council Community Protocol – It was **RESOLVED** that the following points are passed to the County Councillor:

- Concern that there is one protocol to cover both the wardens and traffic measures, which are different schemes.
- Document content – lacking in detail, with embedded links not working or reference to documents that cannot be found on the DCC website.
- Training – inadequate training is currently offered for the voluntary warden roles.
- Insurance – concerns about the personal liability of volunteer wardens. For example, snow wardens who may spread grit - if an accident/injury occurs, are they personally liable?
- Emergency Planning – little cross-reference to the warden roles in emergency planning situations.
- No mention of vehicle activated sign installation, which would be of use to many parishes and towns.
- Concern that if a town/parish were to sign up to this document for warden scheme, does this then mean that they accept liability to self-fund road schemes and traffic calming? The introduction of a box check system to say which elements of the protocol a town/parish wishes to sign up to (rather than an assumption that it is all elements) would be beneficial and clearer.
- More support is required from Highways Neighbourhood Officers. The most reliable way for towns and parishes to undertake road safety/traffic measures would be to commission DCC on a payment basis to draw up feasible schemes and costs for programmes/proposals. Using external contractors is no guarantee that they will be acceptable to DCC Highways and this approach could help alleviate this problem.

**d. Town Matters Committee 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026.**

Item 3b. Environment and Public Realm Working Group.

i. SHDC Asset Refurbishment Plan - bins and benches – It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Town Council:

- Bins - writes to South Hams District Council (SHDC) to request the return of the XL heritage style bins purchased by Totnes Town Council when the new bins are installed; and registers its concern about the proposal to remove four of the existing bins on Vire Island as it will increase littering, increasing river pollution and increase the litter picking burden for the SHDC street cleansing operative, and request the retention of two bins at least.
- Benches – writes to SHDC to request that all the replacement benches are in the same style to have conformity – Highland rather than Tivoli design - with the Town Council content to pay the difference in purchase cost; and that the Town Council funds the bench proposed for removal on Vire Island and a new bench to be installed in Heath Gardens along the footway/hedge.
- Benches – to request permission from Devon Highways to install two new benches on The Plains near the taxi rank and on Fore Street [see minutes for images of the proposed locations].

ii. Borough Park Vision - It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council's priority for SHDC and S106 investment in Borough Park is resurfacing and enhancement of the multi-use games area (MUGA); and that other areas to be considered for investment are: the Station Road entrances to the park; and solar lighting for the skate park and MUGA.

iii. Vire Island - It was **RESOLVED** that the Council makes a request to South Hams District Council to begin a programme of laurel removal on Vire Island and planting of hazel in its place.

Item 4. Devon Libraries Consultation. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council submits its own letter to Devon County Council as part of the consultation (not as a signatory to the Dartmouth Town Council letter). The wording of the draft letter was **AGREED** (see Annex A).

Item 5. South Hams District Council Climate National Emergency Briefing Motion - It was **RESOLVED** that the points in the SHDC motion are adopted by Totnes Town Council; and that the Town Council puts out its own communications on support for the Climate National Emergency Briefing.

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.

## **6. 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:

Economy Working Group – Cllr Roberts updated that the first Business Forum has been held and was well attended. There was discussion about pedestrian safety which Cllrs Roberts and Auletta explained is part of a Traffic and Transport project.

Environment and Public Realm Working Group – Cllr Hodgson briefed on a positive meeting on Borough Park with the South Hams District Council officer who is trying to secure capital funding for improvements. Cllr Collinson asked that pathways are considered to improve accessibility as part of discussions.

Community Working Group – no updates.

## **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. In her Link Councillor role, Cllr Price updated on the KEVICC Elmhirst site which has now had permission from the Secretary of State for Education for the site to be sold. Kennicot will no longer form part of the sale as the Sixth Form is remaining and the Bothy has been converted and upgraded to provide SEN education places. There is an education organisation interested in the Lowerfield school buildings, although no further details are available at this time. The possibility of considering Biodiversity Net Gain fundings as way of securing parts of the site was discussed. It was **AGREED** to table this through the Environment and Public Realm Working Group.

## **8. NEXT MEETING**

**To note the next meeting dates of Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 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)*

**9. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE (Standing Item)**

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

Council Matters Committee - It was **RESOLVED** by majority that the Town Clerk would meet with the member of staff involved to discuss the proposals on adjusting hours and priorities.

**10. GUILDHALL WALL**

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

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously to grant Council Matters delegated authority to consider a report on the remedial works required and to approve a way forward and expenditure as needed, on this basis the work is urgent and a matter of health and safety.

**11. COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PLAN PROJECTS**

**To note a report on the Community Economic Plan's proposed projects and how this aligns with the Town Council's strategic objectives (staffing).**

Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Cllr Matt Trant  
Chair

**Annex A - DCC LIBRARIES CONSULTATION: TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL LETTER OF REPRESENTATION**

At the meeting of Full Council on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026, Totnes Town Council considered the Devon County Council consultation 'Shaping the Future of Devon's Library Service'. Totnes Town Council is concerned that the consultation materials focus primarily on the operational configuration of the library service, without sufficiently recognising the wider public value that libraries provide as part of Devon's social, health and community infrastructure. Modern libraries are no longer solely repositories of books; they are trusted, inclusive civic spaces that support learning, wellbeing, inclusion, digital access and community resilience. In a context of rising health inequalities, loneliness, digital exclusion and cost-of-living pressures, libraries play a preventative role that reduces pressure on other public services. They offer free access to information, connectivity, warmth, skilled staff support and informal social contact, all of which are known contributors to population health and wellbeing. These wider benefits are particularly important for people who are older, on low incomes, digitally excluded, socially isolated, or otherwise vulnerable. Totnes Library exemplifies this expanded civic role and should be understood not only as a library service, but as a key part of the town's community and wellbeing ecosystem. The building is rare in Totnes in providing ramp access and an internal lift which makes physical access to those with mobility needs and young children possible to a library space that has sufficient room for people to be able to manoeuvre around. Our view is that any proposed changes to staffing models, opening hours or access arrangements therefore need to be considered in terms of their impact on the library's ability to continue fulfilling this wider civic role, as well as proposing to do so in 2026 which is designated the National Year of Reading.

Role of the Library in Totnes – the current location of Totnes Library provides a central location, accessible to all, with knowledgeable staff and good facilities. There is sufficient space to accommodate a number of activities that enrich the lives of all ages of the community in Totnes, from the toddlers ‘Bounce and Rhyme’ sessions to the Knit and Natter Group, IT help sessions and for groups such as the British Sign Language conversation group, weekly visits from Bidwell Brook Special Education School, the Death Café, Book Chat informal reading group. Totnes Library also provides a safe, warm space for five days a week which is open to all (particularly the lonely and vulnerable) to access - this secondary role performed by the library as a community hub helps to address social and health needs and is a role that Devon County Council should be looking to strengthen, not weaken.

Proposed Opening Hours – Whilst there is a proposed minimal reduction in hours at Totnes from 38 hours to 34.5 hours per week, this will have an impact on the regular users of the library, and there are concerns that this could be the beginning of more radical cuts to the service in the town in the future. Beyond its existing activities, the library provides an essential informal safety net. As a free, warm, welcoming and supervised space, it offers dignity and choice to people who may not otherwise access support services. During recent periods of acute pressure — including the COVID-19 pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis — libraries have demonstrated their value as resilient community assets, supporting public health messaging, digital access and social connection. This role should be explicitly recognised and strengthened in future service planning.

Library Hub – Totnes already serves as an informal hub for many of the neighbouring villages, a number of which have seen an increase in resident numbers through house building in recent years. In serving as a formal Library Hub, it means that Totnes library will be busier, and facilities like the IT equipment that is often booked up will become even more popular through access by those from neighbouring towns and villages facing a cut in hours. The level of some of the proposed reductions in opening hours in other towns is of concern to the Town Council, particularly for those with accessibility needs and who may be reliant on infrequent and in some places non-existent public transport links to get to Totnes to access the hub library.

Community Library – The value added to the library by the paid staff should not be underestimated. The specialist knowledge that the Libraries Unlimited employees provide, supplemented by volunteers, ranges from being able to help locate or order in a book/resource, assist with IT, printing, photocopying, to providing weekly story telling events or facilitating community groups in a safe and warm environment. The paid library staff are trained to deal sensitively with vulnerable members of the public who are struggling with mental health problems and other challenges, which volunteers are not. In addition, the paid staff are also trained to respond appropriately to instances of antisocial behaviour or medical emergencies, which do occur in libraries from time-to-time. A Community Library run by volunteers would simply not have this level of expertise, or guaranteed opening hours. Nor is there any detail of how, for example, access to books/resources outside of those physically held in your local library work (e.g. inter-library loans). A move to a solely volunteer-based library system would mean job losses and considerable risk to being able to sustain a library in a larger town like Totnes where we know that local community groups are currently struggling to secure sufficient volunteers to provide the service that they strive to deliver.

Open Access Libraries – Concerns that operating an unstaffed facility could see: the space being misused; the theft of books and IT equipment; the building damaged leading to costly repairs; the library potentially becoming a space that no longer feels safely accessible for all people to use, particularly young adults and vulnerable people.

Totnes Town Council notes that Devon County Council states that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken in relation to the proposed changes. However, the Council has been unable to locate this assessment on the consultation website or within the published materials. Given the potential impacts of reduced staffed hours, increased reliance on hub provision, open-access libraries and volunteer-led models on vulnerable groups — including older people, disabled residents, those with mental health needs, people experiencing poverty and those who are digitally excluded — it is essential that the EIA is made publicly available and clearly referenced within the consultation. If it has been published, it is not currently easy to locate or readily accessible. Without access to this assessment, it is difficult for respondents to understand how equality considerations have informed the proposals or to have confidence that the impacts on those most reliant on library services have been fully considered.