



DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL MONDAY 13TH APRIL 2026 IN THE GUILDHALL

Present: Councillors T Bennett (Mayor and Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, J Chinnock, S Collinson, T Cooper, J Hodgson, A Presswell, E Price, N Roberts, L Smallridge and M Trant.

Apologies: Cllrs Cummings, Hannam, Peters and Robshaw, and District Cllr Allen.

In Attendance: District Councillor Birch, a representative of the Devon Community Foundation, C Bewley (Finance and Assets Manager) S Halliday (Governance and Projects Manager) 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: crisis and resilience fund assistance for domestic heating oil costs; Devon Highways – various site visits (including Bridgetown Hill and under Eastgate) and pothole repairs with 2500 being completed each week across the county; local transport management has transferred to the Devon and Torbay Combined Local Authority; the Parish Protocol is being developed into a guide for Councils; Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) concerns; and the tenth anniversary of TRAYE (Totnes and Rural Area Youth Engagement project). Councillors asked about: AQMA designation, what particulates are/ have been monitored by South Hams District Council (SHDC) and how.

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

c. District Cllr Birch (DCllr) had submitted a report and was questioned about: the terms of the District Council's transfer of community assets policy; and the Community Economic Plan and lack of District Council funding to progress the projects identified – DCllr Birch explained that £1.3M had been allocated to keeping leisure centres in the district open after the problems with Fusion and therefore no funding is available.

d. District Cllr Presswell had submitted a report and Councillors asked about: a small number of planks that still need replacing on the Steamer Quay mooring; and the Civic Square surface condition and the continued problems with cobble sets lifting creating a health and safety issue.

The Council reconvened.

3. CLERK'S REPORT

To note the Clerk's Report for February and March 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 2nd March 2026.

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

To note the following minutes:

b. Council Matters Committee 9th March 2026.

Noted.

c. Planning Committee 16th March 2026.

Noted.

d. Town Matters Committee 23rd March 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 2nd March 2026.

No matters arising.

b. Council Matters Committee 9th March 2026.

Item 4. Ear Marked Reserves – See item 8 on the Full Council agenda.

Item 5. Community Audit Report – See item 7 on the Full Council agenda.

Item 7. Community Funding Policy – It was **RESOLVED** unanimously to adopt the Community Funding Policy.

Item 9. Civic Budget and Mayoral Allowance Policy - It was **RESOLVED** unanimously to adopt the Civic Budget and Mayoral Allowance Policy.

c. Planning Committee 16th March 2026.

No recommendations.

d. Town Matters Committee 23rd March 2026.

Item 3. Environment and Public Realm Working Group.

a. the Weir – It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council writes to the Dartington Hall Trust (copied to Dartington Parish Council and South Ham District Council) to make them aware that some concerns have been raised about the condition of the pontoon and that the Council would be willing to meet someone on site about how to make it safe.

b. Castle Meadow – It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that:

- The Town Maintenance team removes all barbed wire in the meadow as it presents a health and safety hazard to those using the meadow and that a single wire is erected to demark the boundary line; and
- The Council responds to the resident to say that: the barbed wire will be removed; direct access to the meadow via a gate or stile cannot be agreed to due to health and safety concerns; and if they wish to erect a fence inside their boundary line then we advise them to follow any planning permissions required for works in a conservation area (SHDC will be able to advise).

c. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council writes to the Dartington Hall Trust to see if they have any BNG plans for the estate as the land is included in the Totnes Open Spaces, Sport, Recreation and Wellbeing Plan as a valuable resource in a neighbouring parish.

d. EPR01.3 – National Landscape area – It was **RESOLVED** that the Council writes to Devon County Council (copied to District Councillors) in support of extending the existing National Landscape area along the Dart to include Totnes through to Buckfastleigh as this will bring biodiversity benefits and ensure that suitable mitigation is put in place for future housing number requirements.

Item 4. Public-facing Emergency Plan – It was **RESOLVED** unanimously to adopt the public-facing emergency plan, with Council communications used (website, social media, Totnes Directory 'Totnes Matters' article) to publicise the plan.

Item 5. Climate National Emergency Plant-Based Council – It was **RESOLVED** that food provided for Council functions is locally produced and sustainably sourced, with a balance in favour of vegetarian and vegan options catered for.

6. STRATEGY DELIVERY WORKING GROUP UPDATES

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

- Community Working Group. Cllr Bennett updated that there will be a meeting on 14th April which all members are welcome to attend to discuss the funding of core services in the town.
- Economy Working Group. Cllr Roberts updated that: the Business Forum are looking to form a Community Interest Company (CIC); discussions have taken place with Bike England about an event but it would be a substantial cost to the Town Council; and meetings have been held

with businesses in The Narrows who have formed an active group to look at events, identity and signage for the area.

7. COMMUNITY AUDIT

To consider the findings of the Community Audit report.

Cllr Chinnock gave a summary of the report which had been presented to members at a meeting in March. It was **AGREED** that this is a useful report which highlights levels of deprivation around the town, and that further discussion of the findings and what the Town Council can do at a practical level will be discussed in the Community Working Group. It was **RESOLVED** to accept the report.

8. EAR MARKED RESERVES

To consider the Council Matters Committee recommendation for the Council's Earmarked Reserves allocation for FY 2026/27.

The following Ear Marked Reserves (EMR) for 2026/27 were **RESOLVED**:

Review of EMR	Agreed EMR £	Detail/comments
Green Travel & S106 monies	5993	Earmarked monies from Baltic Wharf
Van Replacement	20000	Existing EMR
Council Websites	15000	New EMR for upgrading both the Town Council and Visit Totnes websites.
Christmas Lights	35000	Existing EMR, added £5k from underspend
Civic Funeral	1000	Existing EMR
Emergency Capital Repairs	140000	Existing EMR, added £40k from underspend for known asset work required and to protect against unexpected remedial works.
Devolution Transfer of Assets	50000	Existing EMR for localism/LGR work and possible reactive spend outside of budget setting.
Community Economic Fund	22000	New EMR for implementation of Community Economic Plan projects, including new Business Forum.
Transport Feasibility	10000	New EMR from underspend in Economy WG for known project.
Active Travel	12000	New EMR from underspend in the Economy WG. Possible VAS/Cycle paths contributions.
Total	£310,993	

9. ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR 2026/27

To elect the Mayor and the Chair of the Council for the Council Year 2026-2027 (effective May 2026).

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously to elect Cllr Bennett as Mayor for 2026-27. Cllr Bennett appointed Cllr Trant as his deputy.

10. MAYOR MAKING AND MAYORAL ELECTION

To appoint Councillors to undertake the following duties at the Mayor Making ceremony on 21st May:

a. To propose the election of the new Mayor;

Cllr Price.

b. To second the election of the new Mayor;

Cllr Smallridge.

c. To propose and endorse the election of all other Council positions and Committees;

Cllr Auletta.

d. To propose a vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor.

Cllr Trant.

11. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND LINK COUNCILLORS FOR 2026/27

To elect members to committees, outside representatives and link councillor roles.

The following appointments were proposed for 2026/27 [note: no preferences for Cllr Robshaw are included]:

Committee	Proposed Membership 2026/27
Full Council	ALL CLLRS ATTEND
Council Matters Committee (between 6-8 members)	Cllrs Auletta, Beavis, Bennett, Chinnock, Hannam, Peters, Price, Trant
Planning Committee (between 6-10 members)	Cllrs Auletta, Bennett, Collinson, Cooper, Cummings, Hodgson, Smallridge, Trant
Town Matters Committee (between 6-10 members)	Cllrs Auletta, Beavis, Chinnock, Collinson, Cummings, Presswell, Price, Roberts
Working Group	
Community Working Group	Cllrs Bennett, Chinnock, Collinson, Hannam, Presswell, Trant
Economy Working Group	Cllrs Auletta, Beavis, Chinnock, Roberts
Environment and Public Realm Working Group	Cllrs Auletta, Collinson, Cooper, Cummings, Hodgson, Peters
Link Councillors	
Cultural Links	None
Arts	Cllr Hannam
Elderly and Vulnerable People	Cllrs Hannam & Hodgson
Young People/Youth	Cllr Hannam
Heritage	Cllrs Auletta, Bennett & Price
Open Space, Sports Provision and Leisure	Cllrs Auletta, Price & Roberts
Traffic and Transport	Cllrs Auletta, Hodgson, Presswell & Roberts
Environment, Sustainability & Air Quality	Cllrs Cummings & Hodgson
Disability	Cllrs Hodgson & Price
Business and Employment	Cllr Roberts

Representatives on Outside Bodies	
TADPOOL	Clrs Hannam, Peters
Totnes Allotments Association	Clr Hodgson
Vire Twinning Association	Clrs Cooper, Hodgson & Price
Totnes Municipal Charities and Totnes Bounds Charity	Clrs Bennett & Hannam
KEVICC Foundation Governors	Clrs Beavis, Bennett, Hannam & Price
Parish Paths Partnership	Clr Bennett
Totnes Hospital League of Friends	Clrs Bennett & Hannam
DALC Larger Councils Committee	Clr Bennett
Dart Harbour Community Group	Clr Peters
Totnes Chamber of Commerce	Clr Roberts
Fairtrade	Clr Hannam
Museum Trust	Clr Presswell
Caring Town	Clr Price
Network of Wellbeing	Clr Cummings
Bridgetown Alive	Clrs Bennett, Hodgson & Presswell
Friends of Totnes Museum	Clr Presswell
Daisy and Rainbow Childcare	Clr Bennett
Inclusive Totnes [Disability]	Clrs Cummings, Hodgson & Price
Police & Crime Commissioner Councillor Advocate	Clr Peters?
The King Edward VI College Site Foundation (The Mansion)	Clrs Beavis & Price
Devon Countryside Forum	Clrs Auletta & Hodgson
Rural Service Network	Clr Hodgson
Friends of Salfit	Clr Price
TQ9 Partnership	Clrs Bennett, Chinnock, Hodgson & Price
Schools Engagement	Clr Bennett
Stepping Stones	Clr Hannam
Totnes Lantern Festival and Carnival	Clr Bennett

Totnes Fringe Festival	Cllr Bennett
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12. TOTNES CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION

To consider any response to the South Hams District Council consultation on the Totnes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (deadline for comments 26th April 2026).

It was **RESOLVED** to respond to the Totnes Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan Consultation to:

- Thank the SHDC Heritage Officer for getting the proposed plan to this stage; and
- Reiterate the Town Council's support for the conservation area extensions to include Leechwell Gardens, Maudlin Road, and Somerset Place and Brooklands.

13. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

To consider any planning applications whose deadline falls before the next Planning Committee on 27th April 2026: 0478/26/HHO – Householder application for conversion of an integral garage to habitable space and alterations to the northern (front) elevation. 12 Birchwood Close, Totnes, TQ9 5GB.

Cllr Hodgson abstained from the vote. Support.

14. 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.

15. NEXT MEETING

To note the next meeting dates of Monday 11th May 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)*

16. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE (Standing Item)

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

Town Matters Committee recommendation: Item 9. Community Awards. It was **RESOLVED** to agree two winners for the individual award, one winner for the group award and one winner for the Judy Westacott award, as outlined in the confidential report.

It was **RESOLVED** to review the Community Award policy and concept through the Town Matters Committee over the summer.

17. SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL ASSET TRANSFER

To consider any asset transfer request to South Hams District Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to pursue option 3 with an amendment on time-limiting retention of current market arrangements: to apply for the transfer of the Civic Square only, with South Hams District Council retaining a time-limited licence to operate markets on agreed days until a unitary/successor authority forms.

18. TOTNES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ADVICE

To consider a quote for advice to specific questions related to the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan not covered by the recent health check (commercial).

It was **RESOLVED**:

- To proceed with the meeting to discuss the Totnes Neighbourhood Plan health check on 15th April 2026;
- That the Planning Committee considers the additional information requirements post-meeting and makes a recommendation; and
- That delegated authority is given to the Clerk to authorise any additional costs based on the Planning Committee's recommendation.

19. GUILDHALL GARAGE OWNERSHIP

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

In light of new information and a revised offer from SHDC, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- Accept the new terms of a freehold transfer (subject to legal advice);
- Give delegated authority to the Clerk to make a decision based on said legal advice; and
- Retain the March 2026 Full Council resolution to pursue adverse possession in principle, should the SHDC position change.

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

CLlr Tim Bennett
Chair