



DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE TOWN MATTERS COMMITTEE

MONDAY 23RD MARCH 2026 IN THE GUILDHALL

Present: Councillors N Roberts (Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, J Chinnock, S Collinson, J Cummings and T Robshaw.

Apologies: Councillors Peters and Price.

Not Present: Councillor Presswell.

In Attendance: Member 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

A member of the public representing the Totnes Lifehouse group explained the aims of the group in creating neighbourhood resilience, with communities supporting each other and sharing resources in a number of eventualities such as flooding, power cuts, food security and other emergencies. The group is still in its early stages of formation (the first meeting was held in September 2025) but it wishes to co-operate with the Town Council in its emergency planning, is interested in finding volunteers as flood wardens and working with Devon County Council to ensure that the volunteers have the necessary training to carry out these roles. The Committee thanked the member of the public for coming along and will bear these points in mind when discussing item 4, Emergency Plan.

The Committee reconvened.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 26th January 2026 and update on any matters arising.

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

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 3b. Environment and Public Realm Working Group.

i. SHDC Asset Refurbishment Plan - bins and benches – It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Town Council writes as proposed to South Hams District Council on bins and benches and Devon Highways about the installation of two new benches.

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).

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.

3. STRATEGY DELIVERY GROUP AND WORKING GROUP

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

a. Community Working Group, 10th February 2026.

Noted. No recommendations to consider.

b. Economy Working Group, 4th February 2026.

Noted. No recommendations to consider.

c. Environment and Public Realm Working Group, 18th March 2026.

Noted. To make the following recommendations from the 18th March 2026 meeting:

Item 3a – the Weir. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it 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.

Item 3b – Castle Meadow. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council 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
- It responds to the resident to say that: the barbed wire will be removed; direct access to the meadow via a gate or style 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).

Item 4 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it 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.

It was **AGREED** not to write to KEVICC/Education South West to suggest that they consider BNG for the lower field site as it falls under the 5 hectares required for BNG.

EPR01.3 – National Landscape area. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it 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.

4. EMERGENCY PLAN

To consider the draft public-facing Emergency Plan and make a recommendation to Full Council.

A number of amendments to the draft plan are required including reference to working with local community groups, medical emergencies, hot weather, pollution emergencies, and out of hours contact details. It was **AGREED** to circulate the revised document to members for comment and to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the revised draft public-facing emergency plan is adopted, with Council communications used (website, social media, Totnes Directory 'Totnes Matters' article) to publicise the plan.

5. CLIMATE NATIONAL EMERGENCY – PLANT-BASED COUNCIL

To consider a request from the public to be a plant-based Council in light of its support for the climate national emergency declaration it made in February 2026.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council 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. 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).

There were no updates.

7. LINK COUNCILLOR REPORTS

To consider link councillor reports from Committee members.

Cllr Roberts updated that he has stepped down as a trustee of Transition Town Totnes and is now Chair of the Dartington Trust Community Group.

Cllr Auletta had attended a Heritage Festival meeting which is preparing for the event in September. Consideration has been given to making sure that exhibits are sensitive to younger peoples understanding of UK history in terms of empire.

Cllr Robshaw updated on a recent Vire twinning event which celebrated local cultures and that the twinning group is looking at ways of engaging young people.

Cllr Cummings made members aware of a Friends of the Dart film being shown in Totnes Cinema on 30th March about a wild swimmer and their interactions with South West Water.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Town Matters Committee – Monday 22nd June 2026 at 6.30pm.

Noted. Cllr Roberts gave his apologies.

*The Committee 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. (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. COMMUNITY AWARD SCHEME

To consider the nominations for the Community Award scheme individual and group categories, and the Judy Westacott award and make a recommendation to Full Council (personal information).

The Committee considered the nominations received. A confidential report with the recommendations will go to Full Council for consideration.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Sara Halliday
Governance and Projects Manager
March 2026