



MINUTES FOR THE TOWN MATTERS COMMITTEE

MONDAY 26TH JANUARY 2026 IN THE GUILDHALL

Present: Councillors N Roberts (Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, J Chinnock (from 1834), S Collinson (from 1834), J Cummings (from 1840), D Peters, A Presswell, E Price and T Robshaw (from 1840).

Apologies: None.

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

A member of the public (who is a market trader) raised concerns about: the closure of the toilets on the Civic Square for refurbishment, the costs and the length of time that this will take; and the lack of advertising for markets, particularly the Sunday market.

A second member of the public (also a market trader) spoke about the surface of the Civic Square and concerns about the repairs that have been made and the trip hazards that remain. The Committee agreed with the concerns raised about the Civic Square surface which have been raised with the district council, but that the Civic Square surface, toilets and markets are all matters that come under the control of South Hams District Council (SHDC), not the Town Council.

Councillor Presswell spoke about bike racks and the hope to find new locations for the CAT bikes in Bridgetown. It was confirmed that the Town Council has suggested a location for an additional bike rack in Totnes (Civic Square) but that this has been rejected by SHDC.

The Committee reconvened.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 24th November 2025 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 4. William Wills Project. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council:

- Supports the proposed update to the Burke and Wills display space, led by the Heritage Trust;
- Cllr Bennett 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
- Cllr Bennett works with the Heritage Trust to liaise with the First Nation people in Australia.

Item 5. Vire Committee President. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Mayor becomes the ex officio President of the Vire Twinning Association.

3. STRATEGY DELIVERY GROUP AND WORKING GROUP

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

a. Economy Working Group, 3rd December 2025.

Noted. No recommendations to consider. Cllrs Roberts gave a quick update on the Community Economic Plan projects which will be considered by the Working Groups and be discussed at a meeting open to all Councillors to attend.

b. Environment and Public Realm Working Group, 21st January 2026.

Noted. To make the following recommendations from the 21st January 2026 meeting:

Item 3a - SHDC Asset Refurbishment Plan (car parks, bins and benches) (PRD2.F & PRD2.Q).

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



Item 3b - **Borough Park Vision (PRD2.I)**. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council 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.

Item 3c - **Vire Island (PRD2.P)**. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it 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 6 – **Community Economic Plan Projects, Water Quality**. It was **AGREED** to invite the Friends of the Dart to give a report to the Committee on an annual basis. The Officer will email Friends of the Dart to determine the optimum time for such a report.

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 (deadline 22nd February 2026).

Committee members made a number of comments about the proposals set out in the consultation around possible operating practices, reduction in opening hours in Totnes and neighbouring towns, Totnes' role as a hub library, and the role of the library being broader than the basic services provided.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it submits its own letter to Devon County Council as part of the consultation (not as a signatory to the Dartmouth Town Council letter). It was **AGREED** that the Officer will draft a letter and email to Committee to members for their comments by midday Friday 30th January 2026 so that this can be circulated to members before Full Council on 2nd February 2026.

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.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council 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. EMERGENCY PLAN UPDATE

To consider an update on the timing for review of the Totnes Emergency Plan.

It was **AGREED** to defer the Emergency Plan review until other meetings have concluded, and to consider setting up a Task and Finish Group to carry out the task.

7. COMMUNITY AWARDS TIMELINE

To note the timeline for the 2026 Community Awards.

Noted.

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).

Cllr Auletta presented the updated greenways map and the Committee thanked her for her work.

9. LINK COUNCILLOR REPORTS

To consider link councillor reports from Committee members.

No points were raised.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

Noted.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Sara Halliday
Governance and Projects Manager
January 2026