

**MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL**

**MONDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2024 IN THE GUILDHALL**

## Present: Councillors E Price (Chair), L Auletta, C Beavis, J Chinnock, T Cooper, J Cummings, J Hannam, J Hodgson, D Peters, A Presswell, L Smallridge and M Trant.

Apologies: Cllrs T Bennett, S Collinson, N Roberts and T Robshaw, and District Cllrs Allen and Birch.

## In Attendance: Member of the public, 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.**

The apologies were received and accepted. There were no amendments to declarations of interest.

***The Committee will adjourn for the following items:***

**Reports from County and District Councillors.**

1. **County Cllr Hodgson**
2. **District Cllr Allen**
3. **District Cllr Birch**
4. **District Cllr Presswell**

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

a. County Cllr (C Cllr) Hodgson was present and had circulated prior to the meeting. Cllrs asked about: the 20 mph application score; pedestrian crossings; and Totnes old bridge proposals.

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

c. District Cllr Birch was not present and had submitted a report.

d. District Cllr Presswell was present and answered questions on her written report, including: South Hams District Council delivery of services in Totnes (commercial bin locations, litter bins); Great Western Railway (e-bikes, mosaics and artwork on the railway bridge); repair/replacement of the Galleon play area on Steamer Quay; unauthorised group use of the Shady Gardens; and tennis club drainage problems.

*The Council reconvened.*

### **3. CLERK’S REPORT**

**To note the Clerk's Report for September and October 2024 (general updates and correspondence).**

### Noted. The Clerk gave an update on Guildhall volunteer numbers. Cllrs asked about reasons for the increase in Guildhall numbers, Civic Hall bookings tailing off towards Christmas, and signage for the Guildhall on both sides of the alleyways.

### **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 Part 2)***

**a. Full Council 7th October 2024.**

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

**To note the following minutes:**

**b. Council Matters Committee 14th October 2024.**

Noted.

**c.** **Planning Committee 21st October 2024.**

Noted.

**d. Strategy Delivery Group 22nd October 2024.**

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 Part 2)***

**a. Full Council 7th October 2024.**

No matters arising.

**b. Council Matters Committee 14th October 2024**

Item 6 – Community Awards Policy. To be considered under item 7.

**c. Planning Committee 21st October 2024**

Item 5 – Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that Full Council responds to the consultation with the following:

On behalf of Totnes Town Council, we welcome the opportunity to comment on the Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan.

LTP4 commits to "unlocking development" by working "with partners to deliver infrastructure to support the Plymouth and South Devon Freeport" (p18). We believe this must include addressing capacity and safety issues on the A385/381 within Totnes, as the promised economic benefits and job creation at the Freeport will inevitably lead to increased traffic volumes along this road.

The anticipated growth in jobs, especially at Sherford / South Devon Freeport, coupled with the high number of car-based inter-town commuters in Torbay and the Growth Areas, suggests that without strategic improvements to the A385, this key route will become increasingly congested. See Key Statistics Summary Consultation: "highest proportions of commuting by car" in the region are found in these locations, and specifically from Paignton (p30 Consultation Draft). The knock-on effects will be felt not only in Totnes but across South Devon. P34 states "We will expect development proposals, particularly those on the outskirts of Paignton, to mitigate their impact on the operation of the Major Road Network. This includes sections of the A380, A385 and A3022 on the ring road. We will expect this mitigation to include enhancing the active travel infrastructure along the ring road. This will encourage more short distance trips to be made sustainably and free up capacity" but this does not address negative impacts accruing from longer distance travel.

Therefore, while we support the broader aims of the Plan, we have a number of concerns specifically in relation to the absence of investment in critical transport infrastructure along the Major Road Network that passes through Totnes (which also causes knock-on congestion within our town centre).

A385 Congestion and Lack of Investment

The A385/A381 running through Totnes represents a significant bottleneck; this route carries 21,000 AADF vehicle movements (DfT figure 2023) plus an additional 4,000 vehicles which cut through Totnes town centre to avoid congestion on the A roads during peak hours - 70% of this traffic is through traffic. As noted above, the Local Transport Plan does not propose any tangible investment to alleviate delays. Deliverable interventions need to be identified to improve resilience on this route, such as the use of technology to improve vehicle flow and reduce noise levels.

Changes to Redworth Junction were delivered under LTP3, completed in 2013, but long tailbacks continue to occur here. To assist with easing traffic flow we would request that the phasing of the traffic lights is adjusted to favour the heavier flow of traffic at peak hours (towards Plymouth in the morning, and Torbay in the evening). Mitigations to decrease severance across the main road and, thus, to smooth traffic flow within the AQMA zone, should result in faster regional journeys and better local air quality.

Regional Connectivity and Inward Focus of Proposals

Proposals for Torbay predominantly address local transport issues within the bay and do not adequately take into account the wider context of regional connectivity towards the south (northern links towards Newton Abbott and Exeter were improved under LTP3). Given the proximity of Torbay to the Plymouth Urban Fringe and Freeport, and Plymouth City itself, the plan should consider improvements that enhance transport links between these key growth areas. The absence of tangible improvements to connectivity between these regions is a missed opportunity to create a more integrated transport network that can support economic growth across South Devon.

Totnes is currently categorised under “Rural Devon, Market & Coastal Towns” within the LTP4. We believe this underplays the strategic location of the town which is critical to the growth agenda of Torbay. We urge a reassessment of Totnes’ categorisation to better reflect its pivotal role in regional connectivity.

Improvements within Coastal and Market Towns

Whilst we recognise the importance of improvements within strategic urban centres (Torbay and Exeter), the LTP4 does not currently adequately address the need to improve connectivity both between and within settlements that are included in the Market and Coastal Town place-based strategy and action plan. The aim to 'enhance town centres through reducing the dominance of vehicles and improving the public realm' is listed in the Growth Area place-based action plan, but applies equally to the Coast and Market Towns in order that they can fulfil the aims of places "to be naturally active".

We strongly support the aims identified on p50 'Town squares and similar public spaces can help support the vitality of town centres and host seasonal and community events that enrich people’s sense of place. We will focus on improving these spaces where we can also improve road safety, noise levels, air quality or access to local active travel networks.' but note that no specific actions have been identified that address these. We would be pleased to work with you to achieve these aims.

BSIPs - We support the general intention to improve bus services but are concerned that Totnes will not benefit from specific proposals outlined in LTP4. Connections between Torbay and the Growth Areas need enhancing, and this would naturally facilitate additional provision through Totnes. We note the use of 'Bob the Bus' as a Case Study (p52). Additional support for this service is required and collaborative working as outlined to 'support and broaden community transport services... tailored to specific needs' would be welcomed.

20mph Communities - We strongly support this initiative which we believe should be rolled out universally in settlements as a matter of priority. Reducing speed within towns and villages would significantly support active travel and is an inexpensive way to improve safety, health and wellbeing (p61 'We will also increase the number of 20mph villages and town centres where the limit is justified and locally supported.')

LCWIP - The focus on specific Multi Use Trails should be extended outwards. There is a strong need to create a joined-up network of cycle routes which would enable better commuter travel to encourage behaviour change. Without this people will be deterred from using routes regularly as part of their day to day lives. The Totnes - Buckfastleigh cycle route should be included as it already has significant land owner support.

Green Lanes - 'quiet routes for cycling, walking and riding' are strongly supported but none are identified to be taken forward. Our Traffic and Transport Policy and Open Space, Sports, Recreation and Wellbeing Policy include specific proposals that could be utilised towards this aim.

Additional EV Charging and a 'Hub and Ride' would also be welcomed in town.

Section 9 Asset Management and Road Safety

We support the following initiatives and ask that Totnes is included in rolling these out:

• tune our traffic signal timings to make them more responsive to changing travel patterns and improve traffic flow.

• trial changes to speed limits to improve safety and reduce emissions.

• provide green lanes that enable active travel. We will continue to explore and trial options to do this where it aligns with this plan’s objectives and is supported by local communities.

Section 14 Our action plan for rural Devon and market and coastal towns

We strongly support the general measures listed but consider that there needs to be a step-change in delivery, noting that none of the specifically identified schemes include Totnes despite its importance as both a gateway for visitors to South Devon and its strategic location between growth areas.

Conclusion

Totnes Town Council is committed to working with the Torbay, Devon County Council and other stakeholders to address the transport challenges facing our town and the wider region. We urge the CCA to reconsider its approach to investment in regional connectivity, particularly in relation to the A385, and to include Totnes in future infrastructure plans that align with the broader goals of LTP4, the Devon Carbon Plan, and LCWIPs.

Item 6 – Devon Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan Consultation. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that Full Council responds to the consultation with the following:

Totnes Town Council is saddened that Totnes has not been included in the DCC LWIP for any projects and has the following comments to make:

• We would wish to see the Buckfastleigh to Totnes Sustrans cycle route included in the list of projects, as it is a route that will enable safer cycling to work and school, rather than being predominantly a leisure route.

• Health and Wellbeing section – makes no mention of air pollution or the ‘20’s plenty’ scheme.

• There needs to be a joined-up network of routes as without this, people will be deterred from using them.

• The South Hams District Council LCWIP should be added to the list of LCWIPs in development/adoption. The Council would very much encourage the discussion between Devon County Council and South Hams District Council to encourage joined up thinking on their respective LCWIPs.

Item 7 – South Hams District Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Consultation. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that Full Council responds to the consultation with the following: Totnes Town Council strongly supports the South Hams District Council LCWIP and would welcome funding for the projects. The Council acknowledges that further work is required to fully develop the projects/proposals. The Council would very much encourage the dissemination of this work with Devon County Council to encourage joined up thinking on their respective LCWIPs.

Item 9 – Bob the Bus Letter of Support. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Mayor drafts a letter of support (circulated to Cllrs) to nominate Bob the Bus for The King’s Award for Voluntary Service.

**d. Strategy Delivery Group 22nd October 2024**

It was **AGREED** to defer a decision about the format and frequency of future Strategy Delivery Group meetings until the Budget Setting day in late November.

### **6. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**To consider:**

**a. Cllr Hodgson’s resignation from the Council Matters Committee; and**

It was **RESOLVED** to accept Cllr Hodgson’s resignation.

**b. Cllr Robshaw joining the Council Matters Committee.**

### It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Cllr Robshaw to the Council Matters Committee.

### **7. COMMUNITY AWARDS POLICY**

**To consider the revised Community Awards Policy, as recommended in the Council Matters Committee minutes.**

It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the revised Community Awards Policy is adopted.

**8. TMO FINANCIAL DELEGATION**

**To consider updates to Financial Regulations and the Scheme of Delegation for the Council to reflect the financial delegation for the Town Maintenance Officer.**

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the updated Financial Regulation and Scheme of Delegation documents.

**9. CHRISTMAS PARKING**

**To consider a date for free parking in Totnes in the lead up to Christmas following an offer made by South Hams District Council.**

Cllr Trant declared an interest. It was **RESOLVED** to request a half day (afternoon) free parking on Wednesday and Thursday in second week of December (11th and 12th) or alternatively all day on Wednesday 11th December 2024.

**10. LIST OF MEETING DATES** **AND COMMUNICATIONS POINTS**

**To note a list of upcoming meeting dates (including a 2025 meeting calendar), Council communications points and link Councillor/Councillor representatives on outside bodies updates.**

Noted.

### **11. NEXT MEETING**

**To note the next meeting date of Monday 2nd December 2024, 6.30pm public session, 7.00pm formal meeting in the Guildhall.**

Noted.

*The Council 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.*

### **12. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE (Standing Item)**

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

None.

### **13. SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL PROPOSAL**

**To consider a proposal from South Hams District Council and how to respond (commercially sensitive).**

### This matter was discussed at length and Councillors outlined their proposed response. It was **RESOLVED** to give the Town Clerk delegated authority to respond on behalf of the Town Council in this consultation, subject to a draft being circulated for comment in advance. See response submitted in the attached Annex A.

### **14. ELMHIRST PROJECT (Standing Item)**

**To consider any update on the Elmhirst Site project (commercially sensitive).**

An email from the Council’s legal advisor was noted.

**15. STAFFING**

**To consider giving delegated authority reference a consultation process (staffing).**

It was **RESOLVED** to give the Town Clerk and Mayor delegated authority to act as outlined in the presented report. It was **RESOLVED** to give the Town Clerk delegated authority, up to a specified financial limit, to respond to the requests from a member of staff.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Cllr Emily Price

Chair

**ANNEX A –** **Totnes Town Council Response to South Hams District Council ‘Differential Car Park Charging’ Proposal**

1. **Do you support the principle of consistent tariffs across the District?**

No, we do not support a blanket approach to consistent tariffs across the District. While we understand the need for some uniformity, we believe that each town has its own unique character, parking demands, and usage patterns. For example, we feel that the Longmarsh and Leisure Centre car parks should be designated as **Zone 2**, given their different nature and location in Totnes (and the need to provide some cheaper parking that also encourages active travel to the town centre).

1. **Do you support the principle of differential charging?**

We are not opposed to differential charging in principle, but we would like to see more detailed figures for what this would entail—particularly the scale of increases for the visitor rate against directly comparable towns. Before forming a firm view, we are requesting a clearer understanding of what the impact of the proposed visitor rate increases would be, and whether a blanket increase for both residents and visitors might be a fairer option to consider. A flat rate for both residents and visitors might be simpler and easier to administer, but we would like to review the financial implications in full before making a final decision.

**Concerns Raised**:

* + We feel that comparison benchmarking with towns like Exeter and Padstow are not appropriate for Totnes, as our town is quite different in size, character and visitor type. We believe that comparisons with towns like Ashburton or Tavistock would be more fitting.
	+ We are also concerned that the consultation process has not provided enough time for meaningful engagement with local businesses and residents, especially in terms of understanding the broader community impact of these proposals.

1. **Do you support freezing residents’ tariffs until October 2025?**

Totnes Town Council would only support freezing residents’ tariffs until October 2025 **if the differential charging system is implemented**. However, it should be noted that the proposed 6-month delay on increasing car parking charges for residents does not outweigh the significant increases proposed for visitor car parking. The burden of these visitor rate increases would be felt more immediately and more heavily, and we believe the financial impacts of these increases on local businesses, residents, and visitors should be fully understood before any final decision is made.

1. **In terms of climate change and biodiversity, would you like to see a reduction in reliance on the car and introduce parking charge increases in an attempt to discourage car usage?**

While we recognise the importance of reducing car dependency for environmental reasons, we do not believe that parking charge increases should be the primary strategy for achieving this goal. Other measures, such as improved public transport, better walking and cycling infrastructure, and incentives for using alternative modes of transport, may be more effective in reducing car use while also supporting the local economy.

1. **Are there alternative ways the same income could be generated by the town in an alternative way?**
	* **From the precept?**
	No, we do not believe it would be appropriate to raise funds through an increase in the precept to cover parking-related income. This would place an additional burden on local taxpayers. We also feel that the proposed £418,000 in revenue from parking increases is intended to benefit the wider District, and it should not fall solely on the shoulders of Totnes taxpayers. The revenue generated from car parking in Totnes is projected to be the highest in the District, and it seems unfair for our town to bear a disproportionate share of the financial burden.
	* **Flat increase for both residents and visitors?**
	Yes, we are open to exploring the possibility of a flat increase for both residents and visitors. However, as mentioned earlier, we would like to see the figures for how much the median between an overall rate increase would be before forming a final opinion on whether this would be the best approach.
2. **Additional Points Raised**:
	* **Economic Impact Assessment (EIA)**: We would appreciate clarification on whether a full Economic Impact Assessment has been carried out to assess the potential impact of the proposed changes on local businesses, including how it might affect footfall and trade.
	* **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**: We also request confirmation that an Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to ensure that the proposals do not disproportionately affect certain groups, such as people with disabilities or those with limited access to alternative transport options.
	* **Visitor Rate Application**: We would like a broader geographic area for the application of the visitor rate, beyond just the South Hams District. This would help mitigate the impact on workers who commute from areas like Plymouth and Torbay, particularly part-time workers who might not be eligible for the resident permit system, and ensure those who visit from these closely located regions do not head elsewhere.
	* **Alternative Fee Structure**: We would like to see the figures for what a blanket increase in parking fees would look like, as this would allow us to consider all options before deciding whether differential charging is the most equitable solution.
3. **Service Cuts**:

While the threat of cuts to services is district-wide and not just focused on Totnes, we are concerned that Totnes—given its projected role in generating the majority of additional revenue—might be unfairly burdened. The town has a long history of under-investment, and members feel as though Totnes is "getting the short end of the stick." It is important to note that the success of this parking revenue proposal depends largely on visitors wanting to come to the town. Therefore, maintaining the town’s attractiveness—including its street cleanliness, appearance, and available facilities—is key to ensuring that visitors continue to support the local economy. Totnes Town Council already heavily invests in destination management and marketing to attract visitors and support local businesses. However, we are concerned that even with these efforts, the proposed increases to car parking charges could deter visitors, ultimately reducing footfall and undermining the very revenue these increases are intended to generate.

**Request for Further Dialogue**:
Totnes Town Council would appreciate the opportunity for further discussion with South Hams District Councillors and officers to consider these points in more detail, including reviewing potential financial models and understanding the broader impacts of the proposed changes on both the local economy and residents.