



AGENDA FOR THE MEETING OF COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE MONDAY 13TH JANUARY 2025 AT 6.30PM IN THE GUILDHALL

There are stairs to the Council Chamber but if any member of the public has mobility issues the Council can relocate to the lower Guildhall.

You are hereby SUMMONED to attend the **Council Matters Committee** on **Monday 13th January 2025 at 6.30pm** in the Guildhall for the purpose of transacting the following business:

Committee Members: Councillors D Peters (Chair), C Beavis, T Bennett, J Chinnock, J Hannam, E Price and T Robshaw.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair will read out the following statement:

Welcome to everyone attending and observing the meeting.

A reminder that open proceedings of this meeting will be video recorded. If members of the public make presentations, they will be deemed to have consented to being recorded. By entering the Council Chamber attendees are also consenting to being recorded.

This meeting is limited to 90 minutes and therefore members are asked to raise their points succinctly and not repeat the same view expressed by colleagues if it does not add to the debate.

To receive apologies and to confirm that any absence has the approval of the Council.

The Committee will adjourn for the following items:

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A period of 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make comment regarding the work of the Committee or other items that affect Totnes.

The Committee will convene to consider the following items:

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 9th December 2024 and update on any matters arising. Document attached.

3. RESERVES POLICY

To review the Reserves Policy. Document attached.

4. BUDGET MONITOR

To consider the Budget Monitor including (document attached):

- a. The reserves projection.
- b. Proposed earmarked reserves and budget expenditure.
- c. The Community/Economy /Environment and PR and Strategic Priorities budgets.

5. DRAFT 2025/26 BUDGET

To consider an initial draft budget for financial year 2025/26 (document attached). Recommendations to Full Council needed on:

- a. Annual budget for 2025/26.
- b. Anticipated spend from Reserve in 2025/26.

6. MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS AND BUDGET

To consider the Mayor's engagements since October 2024 and the current budget. Document attached.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Council Matters Committee – Monday 10th February 2025 at 6.30pm in the Guildhall. No document.

*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)*

8. BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS (Standing Item)

To consider the bank statements and reconciliations for December (financial). Documents attached.

9. STAFF ATTENDANCE

To note sickness and overtime balances (personal details). Verbal update.

10. STAFFING UPDATE

For any general or urgent updates that required confidential sharing with Councillors (staffing). Verbal update.

Catherine Marlton

Town Clerk

8th January 2025

USE OF SOUND RECORDINGS AT COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The open proceedings of this Meeting will be audio and video recorded. If members of the public make a representation, they will be deemed to have consented to being recorded. By entering the Council Chamber or Zoom meeting, attendees are also consenting to being recorded.

Televised, vision and sound recordings or live broadcastings by members of the press or public at Council or Committee debates are permitted and anyone wishing to do so is asked to inform the Chairman of the respective Committee of their intention to record proceedings.



DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF COUNCIL MATTERS MONDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2024 AT 6.30PM IN THE GUILDHALL

Present: Councillors D Peters (Chair), C Beavis and J Chinnock.

Apologies: Cllrs Bennett, Hannam, Price and Robshaw.

In Attendance: Cllr Auletta and C Marlton (Town Clerk).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair read a statement about how the meeting would be conducted and recorded. The apologies were accepted.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of 11th November 2024 and update on any matters arising.

The minutes were **AGREED** unanimously as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. STRATEGY DELIVERY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

To consider any budgetary recommendations from the following:

a. Environment and Public Realm Working Group, 27th November 2024.

Item 2 - It was **AGREED** to spend £300 on the consultation around community composting. The other items of proposed expenditure will be considered as part of the budget discussions in January 2025.

Item 3, PRD2.E – It was **AGREED** to remove the Seagull Survey from the project list.

b. Community Working Group, 3rd December 2024.

The spend on 50% of a new generator for Council use was noted.

c. Economy Working Group, 4th December 2024.

None.

d. Councillor Away Day, 30th November 2024.

The proposals around ear marked reserves and Community Development expenditure will be considered during the budget discussions in January 2025. It was **AGREED** that the Town Clerk would write to the TQ9 Partnership for an indication of further funding needs specifically linked to fuel, food and child poverty.

4. DRAFT 2025/26 BUDGET

To consider an initial draft budget for financial year 2025/26. Recommendations to Full Council needed on:

a. Precept for 2025/26.

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the precept is increased by 5 percent, from £656022 to £688823.10. Because of the increase in the tax base (currently in draft form) this represents a 2.15 percent increase for the taxpayer. The Band D would increase from £218.65 to £223.35 per year, an increase of £4.70, which is £0.39p per month.

b. Annual budget for 2025/26.

This was deferred to the January Council Matters Committee.

c. Anticipated spend from Reserve in 2025/26.

This was deferred to the January Council Matters Committee.

5. BURIAL AND CREMATION CONSULTATION

To consider the Law Commission's consultation on 'Burial and Cremation' in relation to Totnes Cemetery and make any recommendation to Full Council (deadline 9th January).

It was **AGREED** to give the Projects and Governance Officer delegated authority to draft a consultation response for Full Council to consider.

6. PAYMENTS TO COUNCILLORS

To review the Payments to Councillors Policy

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the Payments to Councillors Policy is adopted. The annual allowance for elected members has increased to £487.50 per annum, subject to PAYE and attendance requirements as outlined.

7. ASSET TRANSFER POLICY

To consider a draft Asset Transfer Policy for the Council

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the Asset Transfer Policy is adopted.

8. RECRUITMENT

To consider delegated authority for the Clerk in terms of recruitment (subject to checks and references).

It was **AGREED** to give the Town Clerk delegated authority to appoint the Economic Support Officer as recommended by the interview panel, to be held Tuesday 17th December. This is subject to the usual checks and references. If the interview panel do not wish to appoint it was **AGREED** to readvertise the vacancy in January 2025.

9. MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND ADOPTION POLICY

To review the Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy.

It was **AGREED** to adopt the updated Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of the next meeting of the Council Matters Committee – Monday 13th January 2025 at 6.30pm in the Guildhall.

Noted.

*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)*

11. BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS (Standing Item)

To consider the bank statements and reconciliations for November (financial).

These were reviewed and **AGREED**.

12. IT SOFTWARE

To consider expenditure on IT software (commercial).

It was **AGREED** to purchase the IT software as detailed.

13. GUILDHALL COTTAGE

To note an update on the Guildhall Cottage (legal).

It was **AGREED** to:

- Replace the bathroom fan as soon as possible.

- Apply for Listed Building Consent to add a fan to the kitchen, ventilation in the chimney and resurfacing the south facing elevation of the building to remove modern paint and replace with traditional materials.
- Defer the 2025 rent review until the listed building consent has been granted and the works completed.
- Write to the tenants to underline some requirements regarding habitation of the property and the monthly rental amount.

14. STAFFING UPDATE

For any general or urgent updates that required confidential sharing with Councillors (staffing).

Noted.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm

Catherine Marlton
Town Clerk
December 2024



Reserves Policy

TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL

AGREED FEBRUARY 2023

FOR REVIEW FEBRUARY 2025

1. Introduction

Totnes Town Council is required to maintain adequate Financial Reserves to meet the needs of its operations and to ensure financial security. The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will determine and review the level of reserves.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide (JPAG) (2024 edition) advises:

“As with any financial entity, it is essential that authorities have sufficient reserves (general and earmarked) to finance both their day-to-day operations and future plans.”

Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require local authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. However, there is no specific minimum level of reserves which an authority should hold, and it is the responsibility of the Responsible Financial Officer to advise the Town Council about the level of reserves and to ensure that there are procedures for their establishment and use.

2. Types of Reserves

These may be categorised as either General or Earmarked.

2.1 General Reserves

General Reserves are funds which do not have any restrictions on their use. They cushion the impact of uneven cash flows, offset budget requirements, if necessary, or can be held in case of unexpected events or emergencies. Setting the level of General Reserves is agreed with the Annual Budget.

JPAG (2024 edition) advises:

“The general reserve of an authority comprises its cash flow and contingency funds to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances.

The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a smaller authority’s general reserve is that this should be maintained at between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure.

In all of this it is important that each authority adopt, as a general reserve policy, the level appropriate to their size, situation, risks and plan their budget so as to ensure that the adopted level is maintained. Consideration of the minimum level of reserves requires not only consideration of level of income and expenditure but also the risks to that income.”

The primary means of building General Reserves will be through a reallocation of funds (underspend on a completed project) and allocation from the annual budget. This will be in addition to any amounts needed to replenish reserves which have been spent in the previous year. If in extreme circumstances General Reserves were exhausted due to major unforeseen spending pressures within a particular financial year, the Town Council would be able to draw down from its EMRs to provide short term resources. Totnes Town Council has set a reserve of a minimum of six months’ operational costs.

2.2 Earmarked Reserves ‘EMR’s

EMRs must be held for genuine and intended purposes and their level should be subject to annual review and justification. They should be separately identified to prevent query from internal and external auditors.

EMRs are held for several reasons and shall only be used for the purpose for which they were created:

- Renewals – to enable the planning and financing of an effective program of equipment replacement and property maintenance/refurbishment. The funds required are built up incrementally over several years when considering asset conditions and asset life. They are a mechanism to smooth expenditure without the need to vary budgets.
- Carry forward of underspend on an uncompleted project – expenditure committed to a project but not spent in the budget year. Reserves can be used as a mechanism to carry forward those resources.
- Developers Contributions – proceeds from developers which can only be used for specified purposes.
- Other Earmarked Reserves – these may be set up from time to time to meet known or predicted liabilities.

Where the purpose of an Earmarked Reserve becomes obsolete, or where there is an over-provision of funds, the excess may, on the approval of the Town Council, be transferred to other budget headings within the revenue budget, to General Reserves or to one or more other Earmarked Reserves.

EMRs will be established on a “needs” basis in line with anticipated requirements and these are to be reviewed annually when the budget is agreed.

Any decision to set up an EMR must be approved by Town Council. If the EMRs are used to meet short term funding gaps, they must be replenished in the following financial year. However, EMRs which have been used to meet a specific liability would not need to be replenished, after having served the purpose for which they were originally set up.

3. Management and Control of Reserves

Movements in Earmarked Reserves and General Reserves shall be reported to the Council Matters committee as part of the budget monitor documentation. The use of Reserves shall be approved by the Town Council.

The level of General Reserves shall be reviewed at minimum on an annual basis during the annual budgetary review and agreed by the Town Council. The minimum level of General Reserves shall be recommended to the Town Council by the Town Clerk (who is the Responsible Financial Officer). This will form part of the recommendations for the Annual Budget and Precept request by the Town Council and is currently set at six months' operational costs.

Earmarked Reserves shall be reviewed on an individual basis. Approval for the creation, amendment, cessation or continuation of Earmarked Reserves will be considered by Council Matters and ratified by the Town Council.

ITEM 5 – DRAFT 2025/26 BUDGET

Officer note to follow.

ITEM 6 – MAYOR’S ENGAGEMENTS AND BUDGET

Mayoral Engagements October – December 2024

October		
11	LM of Plymouth Charity Dinner	Crown Plaza Hotel
12	Vire Twinning Lunch	
21	Forestry Commission and Environment Agency Event	Civic Hall (first hour of the day)
23	Totnes Hospital League of Friends AGM	
24	Book Launch for Tom Vowler	Eastgate bookshop
November		
2	Lighting the Bonfire at Dartington	Dartington Estate
5	Host for Mayor of Okehampton	
6	Totnes Walk and Talk 15 Yr Anniversary	Steamer Quay
7	Guildhall Volunteers Thank You Cream Tea	Guildhall
10	Remembrance Service	St Mary's Church
11	Poppy Train Wreath Laying	Totnes Train Station
11	Remembrance service by memorial	St Mary's Church memorial
21	Totnes and District Flower Club Christmas Open Evening	Civic Hall (Deputy Mayor)
23	Totnes Hospital League of Friends AGM	Totnes Hospital
26	Christmas Light's Switch On event	Market Square
30	Atmos Trust/Friends of Palestine Event	Civic Hall
30	Food For Children AGM	Royal Seven Stars (Deputy Mayor)
December		
4	Christmas Window Display Judging	
5 - 8	Trip to Vire - Twinning association	
6	Kingsteignton Carol Service	Kingsteignton Town Main Hall (Deputy Mayor)
9	Litter Picking with Park School	(Deputy Mayor)
9	Totnes Chess Club Event - With international Grand Master	Royal Seven Stars
13	Evening Reception with Bishop of Exeter	The Bishop's Palace, Exeter
15	Rowcroft Carol Service	Buckfast Abbey
17	Lantern Procession	Meet at the Rotherfold
23	Men's Cookery Course	St John's Church (Deputy Mayor)

Civic Events Budget 24/25

As at 30/12/24

**Mayoral travel Budget
24/25**

Allocation 3500.00

Allocation 330.00

ExpenditureExpenditure

Stamps for invitations 10.20
 Plymouth Mayor's dinner x 2 tickets 104.00
 Bellringer for Mayor Making 160.00
 Catering for Mayor Making 231.00
 Medal engraving 39.75
 Groceries for Mayor Making 57.79
 Lanyards for medals 6.57
 Flowers and groceries for Mayor Making 29.85
 Organist for Mayor Making 60.00
 Enscribing Mayor's board 95.00
 Poppy Wreaths x 2 40.82
 Murder Mystrey deposit 50.00
 Plymouth Mayor's dinner x 2 tickets 100.00
 GH Volunteers thank you tea 59.27
 Xmas cards 23.60
 Xmas party food & wine 128.92

Rail tickets to Plymouth x 2 21.40
 Rail ticket to plymouth x 1 12.00
 P.Bethel travel claim 13.50

 46.90

 Balance remaining 283.10

Balance remaining

2303.23Event costs

Mayoral Choosing 578.69