|  |
| --- |
| Great Torrington Town Council Fleur de Lis logoGREAT TORRINGTON TOWN COUNCIL |

## Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd April 2025 at 7pm in the Community Hall, Castle Hill, Great Torrington

## Fr. Steve Turner led prayers at 6:50pm prior to the meeting commencing.

## MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cllrs L Bright, B Callaghan-Martin, P Cloke (Chair), J Insull, J Isaac, D Maisey, S Mills and D Parish

### **ALSO, PRESENT:**

Jennie Smithson, Town Clerk and Charlotte Kirby, Deputy Town Clerk

### COUNCIL REFLECTION

Cllr Cloke read the Council Reflection to start the meeting.

Prior to the meeting starting, Cllr Cloke reminded Members of council meeting etiquette to ensure smooth running of the meeting.

### APOLOGIES

Cllrs K Allin, C Bright, and D Smith gave their apologies for this evening’s meeting.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mills declared a personal interest in agenda item 18 (Events Update) as a trustee at the Town Hall. Cllr Maisey declared a personal interest in agenda item 16 (Funding Request: The Globe Hotel) as his wife is a Director of The Globe. Cllr Parish declared an interest in agenda item 16 (Funding Request: The Globe Hotel) as he was originally invited to be a director of the project, however is not currently involved. Cllr Lauren Bright declared a personal interest in agenda item 27 (Howe Plate Award) as one of the nominees is a family member.

### POLICE REPORT

Members requested both web-links and hard copies of the latest police report for next month’s meeting.

*Cllr Insull proposed Standing Orders be suspended for the County Councillor to speak. Cllr Callaghan-Martin seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR: CLLR SAYWELL

Cllr Saywell’s report can be found in Appendix A.

This was Cllr Saywell’s final meeting before he steps down as County Councillor in May. Cllr Cloke thanked Cllr Saywell for all his support over the years he has been both a district and county councillor and wished him all the best for his new career.

Cllr Saywell will attend Mayfair on his last day as County Councillor.

### REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

 Please see Appendix B for the District Councillor’s report.

### PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

A representative from Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service updated Members on a current consultation regarding potential changes to the way the service responds to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA). Currently the service nationally attends approximately 55,000 AFAs annually however only 42 last year were real fires. The consultation ends on 9th April 2025.

*Cllr Callaghan-Martin proposed to reinstate Standing Orders; Cllr Parish seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

### Full Council meeting minutes: 05 March 2025

Cllr Brown proposed that minutes were correct and approved; Cllr Mills seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: 8 in favour; 1 abstention (Cllr L Bright due to being absent at the last meeting).

1. **HR Sub-committee meeting minutes:** 05 March 2025: NOTED
2. **Planning Committee meeting minutes:** 12th and 26th March 2025: NOTED
3. **Policy and Finance Committee meeting minutes:** 18 March 2025: NOTED
4. **Annual Parish Meeting minutes:** 19 March 2025: NOTED

### MATTERS ARISING

**Full Council 05 March 2025: Minute Item 312:** **Torridgeside Lease:** The Town Clerk fed back to members that a rolling lease would not fit the requirements of the football club to facilitate applications for grant funding. The club requires security of having at least 10 years on the lease. This item will be brought back to a future meeting for further discussion and a decision to be made.

### CORRESPONDENCE AND MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR AS A MATTER OF URGENCY

The Council has received a complaint from a local resident regarding weed killer which was recently sprayed in a small area of the town. This complaint will be added to the agenda for the next Environment Committee meeting next week.

### QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN NOON, TUESDAY 01 APRIL 2025

None.

### THE AGENDA WAS AGREED BETWEEN PART A AND PART B (CONFIDENTIAL AND RESTRICTED INFORMATION)

### PART A

### FUNDING APPLICATIONS: THE GLOBE HOTEL

*Cllr Mills proposed Standing Orders be suspended to permit the Project Manager at The Globe, to speak. Cllr Insull seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

The Project Manager at The Globe, presented the project’s current financial situation and requested funding of £5000 from Great Torrington Town Council. Other potential funding sources to help with an immediate cash-flow issue, which will facilitate exchanging contracts on the building and providing revenue costs for a further three months, include up to £5000 from Devon County Council (DCC) and the early release of some of the Levelling Up funding announced recently. The project has also applied to Great Torrington Town and Lands for a grant.

Members thanked them for the presentation. Cllr L Bright proposed to add this agenda item to Part B of this meeting; Cllr Callaghan-Martin seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

*Cllr L Bright proposed standing Orders be reinstated; Cllr Parish seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Town Clerk reported that the lift at Castle Hill is still not in use but the landlord is working on having it repaired as soon as possible.

April is ‘Work related stress month’. The Town Clerk is looking at some online training with Learning Minds for Town Council staff.

### TRAINING

The Town Clerk is looking to arrange Code of Conduct training for all Members in June. She will send a selection of date options to Members to agree on. The cost of the training (to be delivered by DALC) will be £300 plus mileage. Cllr Mills proposed to accept this training plan; Cllr Maisey seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

### TOWN TIDY

Members agreed that a Town Tidy will take place on Saturday 26th April 2025, in advance of Mayfair. Cllr Cloke offered to oversee the arrangements if Cllr Allin (who is currently on Maternity Leave) is unable to.

### EVENTS UPDATE

* **Annual Parish Meeting:** The Council received feedback from a member of the public who attended the meeting regarding the lack of use of microphones during the meeting which made it difficult to hear the contents of the meeting. Members agreed that next year, microphones will be used and more visual aids will be used to share information about the Council’s work.
* **Mayfair:** Members were asked to advise if they will be attending Mayfair this year.
* **Mayor’s Introduction:** This event is booked for Wednesday 21 May 2025 at the Town Hall. Invitations are currently being issued.
* **VE Day 80:** Plans are moving ahead with this event, however, the budget originally set for the event is proving insufficient. Additional costs including hire of staging, first aid and security are taking the costs over the £2000 originally budgeted. The Town Clerk advised that there is £1,000 in a general event fund which could be used to boost the budget for this event. Cllr Callaghan-Martin proposed to increase the budget by £1000 to £3000. Cllr L Bright seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

### CRIER ARTICLES

All Members are being asked by the Chair to write a short piece about themselves in up-coming Crier articles. The first will be written by the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Parish, and will be published in the May edition of The Crier. Members will then be asked in alphabetical order.

### ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

* Town Centre & Play Parks: There have been numerous examples of antisocial behaviour in the town centre and play parks recently, including several which have been reported directly to the Council. The Council is aware that the police are looking to recruit a new part-time PCSO to help support the town and Members emphasised the need for all incidents of antisocial behaviour to be reported to the police. The Town Clerk confirmed that the topic of CCTV in the town centre will be discussed at next week’s Environment Committee meeting.
* Tarka Trail: The Town Council received an anonymous letter regarding incidents of antisocial behaviour on the Tarka Trail by a local hunt group, which included large groups of dogs running loose on the trail along with quad bikes which are not permitted on the trail. Members agreed to make DCC aware of this issue.

### OUTSIDE BODIES:

**Torrington Museum:** The museum has reopened, and visitor numbers are very good. The team is currently working on a new leaflet, children from Bluecoat School visited last week and work has started on renewing the ceiling in Market House.

### FINANCIAL UPDATE AND ACCOUNTS PAID

Members were provided with the following documents in advance:

1. Accounts Paid for February 2025: Cllr Brown proposed acceptance of February 2025 Accounts Paid; Cllr Callaghan-Martin seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
2. Bank Reconciliation to end February 2025: Cllr Mills proposed acceptance of the bank reconciliation document to end February 2025; Cllr Maisey seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
3. Fund Transfers for February 2025: Cllr Parish proposed acceptance of the fund transfers for February 2025; Clr Insull seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
4. Summary of payments £500 and over (including copies of relevant invoices) to end February 2025: Cllr Callaghan-Martin proposed the summary of payments of £500 and over to end February 2025. Cllr Maisey seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

### PART B: Confidential and restricted information:

*Cllr Parish proposed the meeting enter Part B; Cllr Mills seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### TREE SURVEY QUOTES

Following the tree audit completed in December 2024, the Council has received two quotes from local tree surgeons to undertake the work identified in the audit.

In addition, this week some emergency work on trees in the bank between Dartington Crystal’s car park and Trafalgar Drive has been identified. Two quotes for this work have also been obtained.

Cllr Parish proposed to accept the quotation from Jason Golder of Chops Tree Services for the emergency works at Dartington Crystal/Trafalgar Drive and Andy Winsbury for the work to address the issues identified by the tree audit. Cllr Mills seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

### TARKA ILLUSTRATIONS QUOTES

Members reviewed two quotations for illustrations for the Tarka Story, funding for which will come from the marketing budget. Cllr Isaac confirmed that the Council would own the images created in order to be able to use them for other marketing purposes.

Cllr Mills proposed that the Council continues to support the overall Tarka Story project; Cllr Insull seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

Members voted via a show of hands for each of the quotations. With a majority vote of 8 to 1 Members elected to choose Joseph Witchall to illustrate the story.

### MAYOR’S GOOD CITIZEN AWARD

The Mayor nominated Mr Al Mitchell for his Good Citizen Award 2024/25. Mr Mitchell supports the town in a number of ways, including as Head Ranger for Torrington Commons and as Town Crier, Flag Raiser and Town Marshall. He always goes beyond the call of duty in all of his roles and is an extremely valued member of the community.

### HOWE PLATE AWARD

Members considered two nominations for the Howe Plate award 2024/25. Following consideration of both nominations, Members voted to award the Howe Plate to Torrington Police Amateur Boxing Club.

### YOUNG PERSONS AWARD

Members considered three nominations for the new Young Person’s Award. Following careful consideration of all nominations, Members voted in favour of awarding the Young Person’s Award to Elliott Ashelford in recognition of his support of numerous Town Tidy events, lobbying to have a new waste bin installed near Bluecoat School and for his fundraising activities, most recently for the RNLI.

### HR UPDATE

The Town Clerk updated members on the current situation regarding staff sickness and that all new contracts have been issued to staff within the last week.

### FUNDING REQUEST: THE GLOBE HOTEL

Members discussed the presentation made by the Project Manager from the Globe earlier in the meeting. Cllr Cloke proposed that the Town Council awards £5000.00 to The Globe Hotel project contingent on this value being matched by DCC. Cllr Insull seconded the proposal. A vote was taken: 8 in favour; 1 against.

*Cllr Brown proposed to exit Part B of the meeting; Cllr Callaghan-Martin seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Members noted that the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion were considered during today’s meeting.

### DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Annual Business Meeting: Wednesday 14th May 2025 at 7pm.

Meeting closed at 9:16pm.

Signed ………………………………………… Date ………………………..

**Appendix A: County Councillor’s Report: Cllr Andrew Saywell**

*Devolution/Local Government Reorganisation*

As previously reported, the Government set a deadline for March 21st for interim local government reorganisation proposals to be submitted. Following meetings with Government officials, the Council has received guidance that multiple indicative proposals can be submitted.

A Special Full Council meeting was held on March 20th to discuss this matter and a huge amount of work has taken place on these indicative proposals, working with a myriad of community partners to assess the pros and cons of the following potential models:

* two unitary authorities – one covering Plymouth and another covering the rest of Devon
* a two unitary north Devon/South Devon split, with one council for Plymouth, Teignbridge, South Hams and Torbay and another for Exeter, East Devon, North Devon, Torridge, West Devon and Mid Devon
* a two unitary south west and north east split, with one council for Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon and another for Exeter, East Devon, Torbay, Teignbridge, North Devon, Torridge and Mid Devon
* a three unitary option of Plymouth, greater Exeter (formed of Exeter, East Devon and Mid Devon) and the rest of Devon
* a three unitary option, with Plymouth remaining on existing boundaries, a new unitary council formed of Exeter, East Devon, Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge and another made up of Torbay, South Hams, Teignbridge and West Devon
* Also modelled for benchmarking purposes only is the option of a single unitary authority covering the whole of Devon.

**The proposals align with ministerial guidance which says that new unitary councils should have minimum populations of 500,000 people each and align with existing district council boundaries.**

These proposals are **indicative** only. Within the tight deadline the Government gave us, none of the Councils in Devon have the data available or analysed properly to work out which options work or do not work.

With the County Election on the 1st of May, it’s important that this document is a sound basis for the new Council to pick up the work over the coming months. The new Council will make the decision on what to submit to government on the 28th of November 2025.

The two key points I would make, whatever is finally agreed is 1. **The Unitary/Unitaries has to work for the residents of Devon.** 2. **It has to be financially sustainable**.

*Other Matters*

*DCC Budget* – The final budget was agreed by DCC Full Council in February. Despite the loss of the rural services grant, additional income from the second homes council tax has ensured we have a balanced budget and no major service reductions or cuts. There will be an additional £4m going into the Highways Budget… though had the Rural Services Grant not been taken away I think we could have found an extra £10m from the Second Homes Council Tax for Highways. Instead, this funding has had to go into other services to prevent major cutbacks within Adult Social Care or Children’s Services.

Overall, the net revenue budget rises to £784 million. Of which approx. £383 million is for Adult Social Care (up 8.2%) and £237 million is for Children’s Services (up 5.5%). That leaves a rather more modest circa £164 million for everything else from roads to libraries to public health… And a reminder, the Council simply cannot cut someone’s care package to fund highways. DCC has legal statutory care duties and if someone is entitled to support the Council has to deliver it regardless of the cost. Unless the Government changes legislation around Children’s and Adult’s Services this situation is going to continue for a long time.

*And finally* – as you may have seen, I will be standing down from the County Council in May to pursue a new career in the aviation industry as a commercial pilot. I have outlined my reasons why in the email I sent to the Parish Clerk so won’t repeat them here. However, I would like to thank the Town Council for their support over the eight years I’ve had the honour to represent them in local government.

I will miss working with you all. But I have one final piece of what I hope is good news for you...

In February this year Active Travel England announced Active Travel Fund 5, the latest round of their current active travel funding programme. Devon County Council were pleased to be awarded £973,119, whilst this allocation is smaller than previous rounds it compares favourably with those given to similar authorities.

I wanted to notify you in advance that the Council are proposing that Crossing on the A386, New Road, Great Torrington scheme receives some of this funding (£110,000) to develop and construct the crossing.

As you know the Council has struggled to recruit a permanent lollypop person and this new, permanent crossing will make this a lot safer for children and adult pedestrians alike.

The spend for Active Travel Fund 5 needs to be committed by March 2026 and spent by March 2027.

So, some good news to end on. I will miss working with Great Torrington Town Council, it is a lovely town and community to represent, and, despite all of the challenges, we have got things done for the good and improvement of the town.

I remain fully committed to my role until polling day on May 1st so any problems between now and then please do get in touch as I am still here to help until then!

**Appendix B: District Councillor’s Report: Cllrs C Bright, L Bright and D Smith**

*New PCSOs promised for Torrington*

At the most recent meeting of Full Council, we had a briefing from Police Superintendent Toby Davies, who was speaking to councillors for the last time in this role before he is due to retire in mid-April. He gave an update on police staffing in Torrington and confirmed that a new PCSO has recently started their mentoring in the town and there is hopefully another potential PCSO for our area in the pipeline. A Devon and Cornwall Police senior rank review is underway, with the aim of rebalancing a ‘top heavy’ force and putting 60 more PCs on the ground in our region. Superintendent Davies asked for help from councillors and members of the public to report anti-social behaviour to the police – please call 101 or report via the Devon and Cornwall Police Website; there is also the option to report to CrimeStoppers.

*Housing Strategy Consultation*

Officers in TDC’s planning team thanked all those who submitted a response to their consultation on Torridge’s Draft Housing Strategy; feedback has been carefully worked through and the strategy updated accordingly. The agreed ‘vision’ for the housing strategy is to ‘Meet our communities’ housing and related needs by addressing affordability, enabling the right homes in appropriate places and facilitating delivery.’ Full Council voted to adopt the strategy in this amended form and work will now begin on a delivery plan for achieving its objectives.

*Shared Prosperity Fund*

TDC has been assigned £259,184 through the Shared Prosperity Fund for 2025-2026 and councillors agreed revised investment plan priorities for this money which, among other things, will include retention of key roles for the District, including the Cultural Development Officer, Nature Tourism Officer and Clean Maritime and Green Energy Officer. The fund will continue to support the work of Bideford and Torrington’s Regeneration Boards, and there will be another round of the Town Centre Beautification Scheme, which has been on offer in previous years to support renovation of shop fronts in the District’s town centres. Further funding for the Business Boost programme which is managed by North Devon Plus will mean that small and micro-businesses in North Devon and Torridge will continue to have access to free one-to one business support, with the aims of growing and developing businesses, creating jobs and improving sustainability. If you think this service could help your business, please get in touch via boost@northdevonplus.co.uk to learn more about the programme and to book an appointment.