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

## Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Wednesday 18th June 2025 at 7pm in the Committee Room, Great Torrington Town Council, Castle Hill, Great Torrington

## Fr. Steve Turner, Mayor’s Chaplain, led prayers at 6:50pm prior to the meeting commencing.

##

## MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cllrs C Bright, B Callaghan-Martin, P Cloke (Chair), J Insull, J Isaac (joined at 7:17pm), D Maisey, S Mills, D Parish and D Smith

### **ALSO, PRESENT:**

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

### COUNCIL REFLECTION

Cllr Cloke read the Council Reflection to start the meeting.

### APOLOGIES

Cllrs M Brown, L Bright and J Isaac gave their apologies for this evening’s meeting, although Cllr Isaac may be able to join later this evening.

Cllr K Allin also sent her apologies and submitted a request to extend her maternity leave for a further three months. Cllr Mills declared a personal interest in this agenda item as Cllr Allin’s mother. Cllr Cloke proposed to accept Cllr Allin’s extension request; Cllr Smith seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: 7 in favour; 1 abstention.

1. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Cllrs Mills and Parish declared interests in agenda item 15 (Health & Safety: Flagpole) as Trustees of the Town Hall. Cllr Mills declared an interest in agenda item 16 (Asset Register) as a Trustee of the Museum. Cllr Mills declared an interest in agenda item 19 (Funding for The Plough Arts Centre) as her son-in-law works at The Plough. Cllr Maisey declared an interest in agenda item 19 as a former trustee of The Plough Arts Centre.

### POLICE REPORT AND CRIME ISSUES

Links to the Devon and Cornwall Police reporting tool had been provided to Members in advance. The Town Clerk confirmed that two new PCSOs have been patrolling the town centre.

*Cllr Parish proposed to suspend Standing Orders to permit Cllr Cottle-Hunkin to speak; Cllr Smith seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR: CLLR COTTLE-HUNKIN

Cllr Cottle-Hunkin had shared her report with Members in advance of this evening’s meeting: see Appendix A.

*Cllr Smith proposed to reinstate Standing Orders following Cllr Cottle-Hunkin’s report; Cllr Callaghan-Martin seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### REPORT FROM TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Cllr C Bright shared a report from the district councillors in advance of the meeting: see Appendix B.

### PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

 None.

### CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

### Annual Business Meeting minutes: 14th May 2025

Cllr Callaghan-Martin proposed that minutes were correct and approved; Cllr Parish seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

 The following meeting minutes were noted by Members:

### Draft Planning Committee minutes: 21st May 2025

### Draft Policy & Finance Committee minutes: 10th June 2025

### MATTERS ARISING

**Planning Committee Meeting Minutes 21st May 2025: Minute Item 30a: Application** 1/0326/2025/FUL: Erection of a temporary structure for celebration bonfire – 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue (Affecting a Public Right of Way)

Cllr Maisey raised concerns over the theme of the proposed bonfire in 2027. He is concerned it could be viewed as an insult to, and a symbolic attack on America. Following discussion, including clarification provided by the Town Clerk that the building proposed to be constructed by the Cavaliers is a replica of an older-style White House which was burned down in the 1800s and was a theme suggested previously in 2013 for the bonfire in 2015, Members agreed that it would be prudent for the Mayor to discuss their concerns about the theme with the Cavaliers directly.

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

**Lease of Committee Room:** The Town Clerk is in discussion with the landlord regarding their proposal for a Heads of Terms Lease for the Committee Room, which is deemed unacceptable by the Policy & Finance Committee.

**Pedestrian Crossing:** The Mayor has received a letter from a local student regarding the lack of a crossing point on Calf Street to East Street. A new pedestrian crossing is currently under discussion with Devon County Council (DCC) and Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin.

### QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN NOON, WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2025

None.

*Cllr C Bright proposed to suspend Standing Orders to permit Sarah White from Supershoes to speak; Cllr Insull seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

### SUPERSHOES: SARAH WHITE

Sarah White, Co-founder and CEO of Supershoes presented her charity to Members. It is a national children’s cancer charity and has recently relocated it’s office to Great Torrington from Milton Keynes. After explaining the work of the charity, Sarah outlined her plans to involve the town in Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in September during which she would like to ‘Go Gold’ in Great Torrington. Supershoes would like local businesses to decorate their shopfronts and can provide a social media tool kit. Schools and nurseries will be encouraged to wear gold and shops will be encouraged to sell gold-themed products.

Cllr Cloke thanked Sarah for her time this evening and wished her and her charity success.

###  THE PLOUGH ARTS CENTRE: EMMA MARSTON

Emma Marston, the CEO of The Plough Arts Centre, joined the meeting with Fran Hardiman, Chair of The Plough, to discuss their request for additional funding and to present their recovery plan for the venue.

*Cllr C Bright proposed to reinstate Standing Orders following Emma Marston’s report; Cllr Smith seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.*

###  MAYORS & CLERKS MEETING FEEDBACK

The Town Clerk and Mayor met with the Leader and CEO of Torridge District Council (TDC) yesterday, who gave more of an insight into the current situation regarding the proposed Local Government Reorganisation. Nothing has been finalised yet but they will keep us updated. The Town Clerk reminded the Leader and CEO about the delays with the transfer of Jubilee Wood to the Town Council.

###  CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY

A letter has been received from a local resident regarding the lack of wraparound childcare facilities for working people with children.

Members empathised with the concerns raised by the local resident but concluded that they are unlikely to be able to help directly in this matter. The Town Clerk has already shared the concerns with Cllr Cottle-Hunkin who has also raised it with DCC. The Town Clerk will discuss this issue with local childcare providers and Bluecoat School.

### HEALTH & SAFETY: FLAGPOLE

The Deputy Town Clerk updated Members on the current situation with flag raising in Great Torrington. The Council is currently unable to raise any flags using the flagpole on the Town Hall as it requires an inspection, quotes for which range from £3000 to £7000 annually. In addition, the Town Hall’s insurance company has confirmed they are unable to insure an uninspected pole and the Town Council’s insurance company will not insure a fixture on a building unless the building is owned by the Council.

Due to the significant costs associated with maintaining the existing flagpole and the risks associated with raising flags on this pole, Officers would like to investigate alternative options, including finding a suitable ground-level location for a new pole and costs associated with removal of the existing pole on the Town Hall. It was noted that the Town Council does not own the Town Hall and therefore is not responsible for the removal of the flagpole. How this will be done and how much it will cost will be the subject of future discussions.

Members were in support of the plans to investigate alternative options further and then feedback at the next meeting.

###  ASSET REGISTER: REVIEW & RESTATE

Members were presented with an updated version of the Asset Register which has been updated to reflect AGAR requirements.

Cllr Callaghan-Martin proposed that the updated Asset Register be accepted by Members; Cllr C Bright seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

###  ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

1. **Internal auditor report:** Cllr Mills proposed to accept and approve the Internal Auditor Report for FY24/25; Cllr Maisey seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
2. **Annual governance statement:** Cllr Callaghan-Martin proposed to accept the Annual Governance Statement for FY24/25 in section 1 of the AGAR document; Cllr Parish seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
3. **Annual accounting statement:** Cllr Smith proposed to accept the Annual Accounting Statement for FY24/25 in section 2 of the AGAR document; Cllr Maisey seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
4. **Transfers to Reserves Account:** Cllr Smith proposed to accept the recommendations in the report of the Town Clerk regarding a transfer of residual funds totalling £22,709.51 for the FY24/25 to the general reserves; Cllr Mills seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

### TRAINING

The Town Clerk has registered for the CiLCA qualification and has commenced training.

###  FUNDING REQUESTS

1. **The Plough Arts Centre:**

Members discussed the presentation given by Emma Marston and Fran Hardiman earlier in this evening’s meeting. Members were impressed with the progress made so far with the recovery plan to stabilise the finances of The Plough and expressed their concern at the significant impact the loss of the arts centre from Great Torrington would have on the town.

Following a detailed discussion, Cllr Isaac proposed that the Town Council contributes £15,000.00 from its reserves towards the £60,000.00 being sought by The Plough and that the organisation keeps the Town Council up to date on a regular basis on their progress towards recovery. Cllr Smith seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: 7 in favour and 2 abstentions (Cllrs Maisey and Mills).

1. **South West Ambulance Charity:**

Members debated a funding request from South West Ambulance Charity to go towards a new first responder vehicle for the North and East Devon region. The Town Clerk was asked to obtain clarification on whether the district of Torridge would benefit from this vehicle before deciding on whether the Town Council can contribute. This agenda item will be discussed further at the next meeting.

1. **Grosvenor Church: Growbaby**

Grosvenor Church was awarded a grant of £1000 for FY25/26 to go towards the Growbaby project to assist with fitting out a vacant shop in the town centre to be used as a base for Growbaby. Their situation has now changed, and they will now be utilising a space at Bluecoat School rather than a town centre shop. This space will require some refurbishment and new furniture. They have approached the Town Council to ask whether it would consider still giving the grant awarded despite the changed location.

Cllr Callaghan-Martin proposed the Town Council continues to give the grant of £1000 to Growbaby for FY25/26 as previously agreed. Cllr Parish seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

### EVENTS UPDATE

1. **Mayfair:** Cllr Mills informed Members there will be a meeting on 18 July 2025 in the Town Hall to facilitate feedback from the general public about Mayfair and the Carnival this year. This year the committee struggled to secure sufficient volunteer stewards so this is an area they will be working on specifically for next year.
2. **Mayor’s Introduction:** This event was a success – the Mayor has received very positive feedback from people who attended.
3. **Remembrance:** Officers are hoping to be able to offer the recycled wreath option to attendees again this year.
4. **Christmas plans:** Officers will commence planning for this event very soon and hope to be able to incorporate using the Pannier Market for part of the event.
5. **VJ Day:** Fr. Steve has kindly agreed to lead a short service at the war memorial in Torrington Cemetery on the anniversary of VJ Day (15th August). Torrington Silver Band are hoping to play a wartime medley in the town centre on Saturday 9th August with the local branch of the Royal British Legion having a stall in the Undercroft.

###  CRIER ARTICLES

Cllr C Bright has provided an article about himself for the next edition of The Crier. Cllr L Bright will be asked next.

###  WEED CONTROL

The town centre has started to look untidy in some areas due to significant weed growth recently. Following a discussion, Members agreed that targeted weed spraying can be undertaken to manage the worst areas but that weed spray must not be used on the edges of houses that abut the pavement.

### ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: STREET WARDENS

Cllr Smith proposed to move this agenda item to the July Full Council meeting. Cllr Mills seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

### FINANCIAL UPDATE AND ACCOUNTS PAID

1. Accounts Paid April 2025: Cllr Parish proposed to accept the April 2025 Accounts Paid summary; Cllr Mills seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
2. Bank Reconciliations to end March and April 2025: Cllr Maisey proposed to accept the Bank Reconciliations for March and April 2025; Cllr Callaghan-Martin seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.
3. Summary of payments/invoices over £500 to end May 2025: Cllr Smith proposed to accept the summary of payments/invoices to end May 2025; Cllr Insull seconded the proposal; a vote was taken: all in favour.

**Items to be discussed which exclude the press and the public.**

### HR UPDATE

The Town Clerk provided Members with a short update on the current staffing situation.

### DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Full Council: Wednesday 23rd July 2025 at 7pm.

Meeting closed at 9:23pm.

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

### Appendix A: County Councillor’s Report: Cllr Cheryl Cottle-Hunkin

It’s been an extremely busy few weeks since being elected as a county councillor, especially with the added responsibility of being Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs! This appears to have an extremely wide remit... A huge amount of work involved but I am hoping it will give me the opportunity to have a really positive impact on the council and will allow me to have a much stronger voice for our communities up here in Torridge and North Devon, which as we know are extremely rural and isolated and are so often forgotten about in favour of urban areas such as Exeter and the Southern half of Devon…

I attended the Devon County Show this year and was pleased to speak on BBC Radio Devon alongside our new leader Cllr Brazil about rural isolation here in Devon, including the lack of public transport and poor access to services as well as the isolation experienced by farmers and the farming community.

At our first full council meeting and AGM, as well as voting for our leaders and chairs, we also voted to install “swift boxes” to some of DCC’s buildings, a quick and easy way to protect this declining species, and we will be lobbying central government to require all new builds to install “swift bricks” as standard.

At our first cabinet meeting we heard about plans to improve support for foster carers and agreed to bring allowances in line with national levels, reduce council tax charges for registered foster carers in line with neighbouring authorities, and also introduced an “equipment fund” to provide carers with equipment such as new mattresses, buggies and car seats. We hope this will show how much we value our foster carers and the important job they do, and increase retention rates across Devon. [https://www.devon.gov.uk/children-families-education/news/councillors-agree-improved-support-for-devon-foster-carers/](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.devon.gov.uk%2fchildren-families-education%2fnews%2fcouncillors-agree-improved-support-for-devon-foster-carers%2f&c=E,1,00vDk8vcujWzecZkO9lEj6DJBlw-OO43Kf8mjAgr7MXzS8J7ytBA9RGazMq7u0dofxabPJbT5G2u6vaSxEYH7lDJq53xVoADphYs-ULxpgr7KT8hSUY,&typo=1)

I have had lots of informal meetings too, some training, and briefings on a wide range of issues affecting the County, from Broadband to Childcare provision. Luckily most of these can take place online so I haven’t had to travel to Exeter too much!

You will be pleased to hear I spent a day traveling throughout Torrington Rural in the Highways van with our neighbourhood highways officer. We were looking at the state of our roads, and I was learning about different methods and processes and finding out about what has been prioritised for future work. As well as this, it was the opportunity for me to highlight the many roads and areas that have been raised with me by local residents in the past few months, and I made sure we drove up Mill St!

I attended the public meeting in the pannier market from Torrington Regeneration Board to find out what has been happening and some of their planned projects. As you all know as many of you are involved in this, they have created a new website for the town, building on the original OneGreatTorrington website that was set up 5 years ago. This website has new branding and will be updated regularly to show all of the local events taking place etc. I was particularly interested to find out about the Tarka the Otter Trail initiative which will involve a number of sculptures across Great Torrington and the Commons, and a dedicated book linking to the trail. The regeneration board is looking for people to join them, so if you would like to join or have any ideas for the town please email great-torrington@torridge.gov.uk

As your county councillor I have £8000 available through the locality budget! Very exciting! This can be used for projects that benefit the local community. Please get in touch with me first if you are interested in applying. The application form is very simple and can be found here along with more information about who can apply and what it can be used to support: [Locality budgets - Democracy in Devon](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.devon.gov.uk%2fdemocracy%2fcouncillors-info%2flocality-budgets%2f&c=E,1,HdASP2t_66bvpRFStKJwCi7RH4ba86I_BDyte7TEiy_D2FkWqvGQulvrCgShJNH4CsvXtW0ENHd2WSTtDiDLgleM5H4gsfOYJbc2qrSOTU4jUXA05fG4Bg,,&typo=1) My first grant is £600 which has gone to Winkleigh football club towards a mower!

I was really pleased to be invited to the Friends of Great Torrington Library’s AGM and to hear from their guest speaker Alex Kittow, Chief Executive of Libraries Unlimited. I heard about the numerous craft events, message in a bottle, bounce and rhyme, walk and talk, plans for a repair café, and being the only place to print in Great Torrington. The friends have raised £1500 from book sales and do such a fab job volunteering at the library. Summer ‘25 has a new reading scheme with an underwater adventure theme, launching 12th July! The importance of the summer reading challenge was really emphasised, and I learned that children drop two reading levels at school if they don’t read over the summer holidays! There was a reminder too that libraries are a charity. Libraries Unlimited run 54 libraries across Devon, have 2.3million visits, and receive help from more than 700 volunteers offering more than 24,000 volunteer hours (including teenagers doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award!). Yes reading is a tool to increase life chances. But libraries are much more than a place to borrow books. The slogan for Libraries Unlimited is “Enriching lives, building communities”, they are a community hub where everyone is welcome and libraries are for everybody. And in terms of looking after the environment, libraries are the ultimate form of recycling. Why buy when you can borrow?

I was shocked to hear on the news the plans to phase out fire service co-responders across the Southwest and put forward a response on the same day, and I am looking to find out the details and whether the decision can be reconsidered. [Devon County Council's concern at plans to phase out co-responder service - News](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.devon.gov.uk%2fnews%2fdevon-county-councils-concern-at-plans-to-phase-out-co-responder-service%2f&c=E,1,ac-idgP6dZdwYfFuOVEJxdyLGziabUN7bgs-RqWjl_f9qqodHMivaftn6ZZ0UEMQdgE4fDsZDbbq9zXKWJ1ozYO7Ru_YTVzDQ4Q7lCIsF5QpAH-G&typo=1)

I am also asking you to please support The Globe Hotel community project if you are able, and I’m sure many of you already have being residents of Great Torrington (I am also sharing this with local villages). There is currently over £124,000 raised (over halfway!) but the goal they need to reach is £230,000. I understand they may be able to extend the deadline to raise the money, but this is still very urgent! Once this amount is raised the hotel will be owned by the community and a grant of more than half a million pounds will be released by central government towards its renovation. The aim of the globe project is to provide a training hotel to train young people in the hospitality sector. It would raise aspirations and would transform our town centre. Wouldn’t it be great to have a hotel right next door to our Plough Arts Centre! Community shares start at just £50. Please spread the word with everyone and encourage them to invest. Link to crowdfunder here: [The Globe Hotel Torrington - a Community crowdfunding project in Torrington by The Globe Hotel Torrington](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.crowdfunder.co.uk%2fp%2fthe-globe-hotel-torrington&c=E,1,GUN0sCxivWAiVD0KPHnlI4KUSWJZFk0BpnMmNgieHEs5O3W9mJMFNp-L4RiFVWWlvHYVTIy45CUh43yPM7_fBQTxuL_4aPu2NsUNvLnihKteBYNdOA,,&typo=1)

I’ve also been told that DCC is looking to install a pedestrian crossing where the lolly pop lady (person?) used to be, from Dick Hill’s lane across the main road to the health centre. I would welcome your thoughts and have asked DCC to consult the school etc as we’re not sure if things/walking routes have changed from what they were historically, particularly now there is more housing in different parts of the town.

### Appendix B: Torridge District Councillor’s Report

**Town regeneration**

There was a good turnout of shop owners, businesses, and community groups at a public meeting in early June about the current projects of the Torrington Regeneration Board. Attendees learned more about the development of the town’s website and new town branding, opportunities for local traders to upskill and to boost their businesses, and ways they could get involved in the new Tarka the Otter Trail. If you would like to find out more about the work of the Regeneration Board or get involved in these and future projects, please email great-torrington@torridge.gov.uk.

The town’s pannier market has recently undergone a significant refurbishment programme to ensure it remains a vibrant hub for residents and visitors alike. As part of the transformation, a set of new doors has been installed. TDC’s aim was to create a more inviting and welcoming atmosphere for visitors. Ceilings, walls, roof supports, pillars and gates have all been given a fresh coat of paint. Improvements to the available lighting, power and ventilation mean that food vendors are able to use the space alongside other market stall holders. A new high-security external storage shed for the market’s tables and chairs has also been constructed. If you haven’t had a chance to see the refurbishment for yourself yet, head on over on a Friday or Saturday to take a look and browse the market stalls. Thanks to the officers involved in seeing this project to completion.

**Car parks**

This month, there are some updates on the theme of car parking. The Electric Charging points in the car parks in Torridge have not been operational for over a year, and this was the fault of the company who installed and owned the charging points, despite TDC’s best efforts to make the company repair them. The threshold for non-performance has now been reached and the contract has been terminated. TDC officers have already started a bidding process for 24 new electric vehicle charging points across the district and are planning for them to be in place by the end of summer.

There are soon to be new parking machines installed across the district because the old ones have reached end of life, particularly the ones corroded by saltwater in coastal areas. The new machines will still use cash sales, but they will also use 75% less energy than the current models, they will have LED displays allowing for us to advertise community events on screen, and on top of that they will have solar panels on them (location dependant).

And the last update on parking is that next year Torridge will be joining the National Parking Platform. This system, led by the Government, is to make parking apps work together. This will allow all parking apps to be able to pay for parking at any car park, instead of people having to download new apps for specific car parks across the country.