

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILFULL COUNCIL MEETINGCaddsdow Business Support Centre - Caddsdow Bideford EX39 3BEMonday, 3 November 2025 - 6.30 pm

PRESENT Councillors S Andrews, L Bach, A Brenton, D Brenton, C Bright, L Bright, C Cottle-Hunkin, J Craigie, A Dart, T Elliott, P Hackett, P Hames, S Harding, R Hicks, C Hodson, S Inch, K James, T Johns, N Kenneally, C Leather, W Lo-Vel, R Lock, P Pennington, L Piper, T Tinsley, H Thomas, C Wheatley and J Whittaker

ALSO PRESENT S Hearse - Chief Executive  
 S Dorey - Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer)  
 S Kearney - Head of Communities & Place  
 P Hudson - Finance Manager (S151 Officer)  
 H Smith - Planning Manager  
 T Vanstone - Elections, Legal & Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)  
 L Glover - Corporate Services Officer

500. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Due to the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Chief Executive opened the meeting. As such, a Chair needed to be elected for the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor T Tinsley, seconded by Councillor K James and –

Resolved:

That Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin be elected as Chair for the meeting.

(Vote: For – 28, Against – 0, Abstentions – 1).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Bushby, Councillor J Gubb, Councillor K O'Rourke, Councillor P Shepherd and Councillor D Smith.

Councillor J Whittaker confirmed that Councillor S Gibson was unable to attend.

501. COUNCIL MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor R Lock, seconded by Councillor K James and -  
 Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(Vote: For – 23, Against – 0, Abstentions - 6)

502. PUBLIC CONTRIBUTIONS

There was one public speaker, Mr Stephen Boulton from Stop Beacon Solar. Mr Boulton spoke for three minutes in relation to the Solar Beacon Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

503. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were reminded that declarations of interest should be made as and when the specific agenda item to which they related was under discussion.

504. AGREEMENT OF AGENDA ITEMS PART I AND II

Members were informed that the agenda contained a Part II item.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor P Hackett, and –

Resolved:

That the agenda, as circulated, be agreed.

(Vote: For – 28, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0).

505. TO CONSIDER CORRESPONDENCE OR OTHER BUSINESS ESPECIALLY BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE DIRECTION OF THE CHAIR

Councillor T Tinsley spoke on behalf of local residents and praised the efforts of the emergency services and the community in responding to the recent fire on Honestone Street.

506. PLANNING CODE OF CONDUCT & DELEGATIONS TO OFFICER

The Planning Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was for Members to consider a proposal to adopt an updated Planning Code of Conduct and to approve amendments to the Delegations to Officers for Planning and Building Control.

Councillor R Lock provided support and proposed the recommendations in the report.

Members referred to Page 14, and discussed the process for consultation with Ward Members on community planning. The Planning Manager explained that the existing Constitution does not refer to the allocation of Section 106 money, however there is a requirement for Officers at the planning application stage to engage with Ward Members at the stage of Section 106s being agreed. This ensures that

Members are made aware of the contributions that are being sought. Members were informed of the Member spreadsheet which receives monthly updates to set out what monies are held for section 106s within each Parish. Furthermore, the Planning Manager referred to the process followed by the Council if monies are requested by a Parish Council or Community Group.

The Planning Manager explained that, following the recommendations in the report, if the total sum that is being applied for exceeds £20,000 then it would have to be approved by the Community and Resources Committee to increase transparency.

Briefly, Members requested clarification on the changes.

The Planning Manager explained that there were no changes in relation to the time allowed for Ward Members to speak at Plans Committee.

Members questioned permission and principle applications and their timelines, and suggested the need for Councillor training. The Planning Manager outlined that the changes seek to bring in shorter call-in periods, and that training could be provided where necessary.

In relation to the call-in process, the Planning Manager explained that the changes would mean that call-ins no longer require a planning reason. The Planning Manager highlighted that a requirement to consult with the Chair of Plans Committee on call-ins could be added.

In response to a question on the new planning enforcement provisions, the Planning Manager explained that changes to enforcement reflect the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.

Members expressed support regarding the changes to the call-in process. In response to a question, the Planning Manager explained that further call-in reasons can be added to applications where necessary. The Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) suggested that further representations could be added at the Plans Committee.

Councillor P Hackett seconded Councillor R Lock's proposal.

It was proposed by Councillor R Lock, seconded by Councillor P Hackett and –

Resolved:

- That the updated Planning Code of Conduct, as set out at Appendix 1, and that it is incorporated into the Constitution be approved;
- That the proposed amendments to the Planning and Building Control Delegations to Officers, as set out at Appendix 2, be approved;
- That the proposed amendments to Chapter 5 Public Participation at Plans Committee, as set out at Appendix 3, be approved; and
- That the amended planning call-in form, as set out at Appendix 4, be agreed.

(Vote: For – 28, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0).

507. SOLAR BEACON NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

The Planning Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to notify Members of a new Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project within the District and for Members to consider a proposal for the establishment of a Member Working Group to support the Council's inputs to the associated Development Consent Order process.

A discussion occurred. Members expressed support for the creation of the Working Group and referred to the Xlinks Working Group to highlight its' uses and benefits. Members noted that other elected Members can come to certain meetings.

Briefly, Members questioned energy provisions. The Planning Manager explained that the Council have been informed that it will be at least 100 megawatts. Members noted that there will be extensive pre-application engagement to establish what energy will be generated.

The Planning Manager clarified that the operating procedures, stated in the Terms of Reference, outline that the Working Group can support and inform the Council of suggestions for community benefit packages. Members noted that various community benefits can be explored.

Councillor R Lock proposed the recommendations in the report.

The Committee sought clarity on the transparency of the Working Group. The Planning Manager explained that the Terms of Reference states that other Members/ Officers/ relevant parties can be invited to meetings, although meetings will be held in private. Members were informed that meeting notes will be taken, with a focus on actions. The Planning Manager outlined that the notes are not likely to be formally published, but that the Council's NSIP section of the website will have regular updates. The Committee acknowledged that the Working Group would take reports to Full Council.

The Chair stated that public speakers are always welcome at Committee.

The Planning Manager referred to the Xlinks project to provide Members with insight into the level of consultation that occurred, and emphasised the importance of Ward Members being present in the Working Group.

Members raised concerns over the membership of the Working Group. Councillor C Hodson proposed an amendment to the recommendation wording, but did not receive a seconder. The Head of Communities and Place explained that if the recommendations in the report be approved, and there are amendments following the approval, that the Leader of the Council could address these.

Councillor K James seconded Councillor R Lock's proposal, with the amendment that authority be delegated to the Leader in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning.

Councillor K James informed Members of recent meetings with Parish Councils in the affected areas.

Councillor R Lock agreed to Councillor K James's amendment.

Members expressed concern for the Solar Beacon project.

In response to a question regarding economic loss to the rural economy, the Planning Manager clarified that should a Development Consent Order (DCO) come forward, an Environmental Impact Assessment will follow. Members noted that within this assessment, economic loss will be addressed.

Councillor L Piper proposed a further amendment to Councillor K James's original amendment, suggesting that the responsibility for determining the membership of the Working Group be delegated to Group Leaders, in addition to the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Planning.

Councillor T Tinsley seconded Councillor L Piper's recommendation.

Briefly, the Working Group questioned where the energy would go and the Planning Manager explained that there is a lack of information on this.

Members noted the importance of receiving feedback from Parish Councils to inform the Working Group.

Councillor L Piper withdrew his proposal.

The Chair emphasised the scale of the project, but reminded Members that decisions regarding the project will be made by the Central Government.

It was proposed by Councillor R Lock, seconded by Councillor K James and –

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be approved, with Councillor K James's amendment to delegate the Working Group's membership decision to the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Planning.

(Vote: For – 28, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0).

508. COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

The Chief Executive presented the report, the purpose of which was to seek Full Council's approval of a programme of Committee meetings for 2026/27.

A brief discussion occurred.

Councillor K James proposed the recommendations in the report, and asked Members to refrain from altering scheduled meeting dates.

Councillor C Leather seconded Councillor K James's proposal.

Members raised concerns around the time of Member Briefings. The Chief Executive explained that the meeting time of these briefings can be changed where necessary.

Questions were raised regarding the call-in cycle and timeline of Plans Committee meetings, and Members acknowledged that the Planning Manager would be able to provide a response following the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor C Leather and –

Resolved:

That Full Council approve the proposed programme of committee dates for 2026/27.

(Vote: For - Unanimous).

509. EXTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor H Thomas presented the annual report, the purpose of which was for Members to note the work of the External Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Thanks were expressed in relation to the work of the Committee.

Overall, Members noted the report.

510. INTERNAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor C Hodson presented the annual report, the purpose of which was for Members to note the work of the Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor C Hodson commended Councillor S Newton for the report, and the work of the Committee.

Overall, Members noted the report.

511. ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor K James presented the annual report, the purpose of which was for Full Council to note the Annual Report, approve it for publishing on the Torridge District Council website and agree to circulate to partners.

Councillor K James commended the work of the Council and celebrated successes.

In relation to a question, the Chief Executive apologised and advised Members that the Non-Aligned political group had been omitted from Page 117 of the report due to a clerical oversight. Members noted that the report had been amended.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor R Lock and –

Resolved:

That the Full Council approve the publication of the Annual Report.

(Vote: For – Unanimous).

512. APPOINTMENT OF LEAD MEMBER

Councillor K James presented the report, the purpose of which was to inform Members of the requirement to appoint a Lead Member for Legal & Democratic Support.

Councillor K James encouraged Members to apply for the role, and the Senior Leadership Team will review the applications.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor J Whittaker and –

Resolved:

That Members submit applications to appoint a Lead Member for Legal & Democratic Support.

(Vote: For – Unanimous).

513. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURAL RULE A9

There were no questions submitted under Procedural Rule A9.

514. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

515. NOTICES OF MOTION

## (a) Written Notice of Motion from Councillor H Thomas

The Chair advised Councillor H Thomas that he had three minutes to present the following Notice of Motion:

*TTVS has played a key role in our local voluntary sector for years, supporting residents across Torridge through various projects, anything from supporting young carers to organising memory cafes for those suffering dementia.*

*TTVS projects have enormous social benefit, much of which can't be measured in financial terms. Others can. One project helps residents secure benefit payments that would otherwise go unclaimed. This alone has brought more than £1.7M back into our local economy.*

*However, many funding awards TTVS receive, including Children In Need grants, do not provide for core costs such as premises, staffing, insurance etc.*

*As a result, TTVS faces a £40-45,000 shortfall in order to cover its core costs. Without this, it is likely that TTVS will have to begin to wind down and could cease operating by June 2026.*

*In light of the vital role that TTVS plays within the voluntary sector across Torridge, the Council wishes to take urgent action to address this funding shortfall. Members request a report is put before the next Full Council setting out options for how TDC could provide the required financial support for the immediate term and going forward beyond 2026.*

Councillor D Brenton seconded Councillor H Thomas's proposal, and had three minutes to express support for the motion.

It was proposed by Councillor H Thomas, seconded by Councillor D Brenton and –

Resolved:

That a report is put before the next Full Council setting out options for how TDC could provide the required financial support for the immediate term and going forward beyond 2026.

(Vote: For – 27, Against – 2, Abstentions – 0).

The Motion was carried.

(b) Written Notice of Motion by Councillor T Tinsley

The Chair advised Councillor T Tinsley that she had three minutes to present the following Notice of Motion:

*That it be recorded that this Council has no confidence that Government plans for Local Government Reorganisation will bring any tangible benefits to rural areas such as our own. We have not seen any evidence that would justify such a major structural change with the costs and disruption to services that it will bring.*

*We are concerned principally about:*

- 1. Loss of local representation: a smaller number of Councillors serving a larger number of residents and parishes whilst taking on increased responsibilities.*
- 2. Decision-making being taken further away from residents affected.*
- 3. Amalgamation with areas with more favourable socio-economic indices is likely to disguise the needs of Torridge residents and divert attention from our own economic strategy and important regeneration efforts.*
- 4. The risks to services associated with merging with councils whose financial situation is less stable.*
- 5. The short timetable for presenting proposals has cut short proper consideration of significant issues for the future of our local democracy – e.g. the role of Neighbourhood Area Committees.*
- 6. The time and expense of the process itself is distracting officers and members from their core functions and will continue to do so for several years to come.*

Councillor T Tinsley proposed the motion, which was seconded by Councillor P Hames, who expressed support.

The Chair reminded Members that the Motion could not be discussed openly, but a five-minute period for comments was permitted. Further comments of support were made.

The Chair questioned if an amendment could be made, to write a letter as a record of the concerns, and the Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) explained that this would not be possible. Members noted that they were required to vote on the

Motion as published.

Councillor C Cottle-Hunkin declared an interest as a Devon County Councillor.

It was proposed by Councillor T Tinsley, seconded by Councillor P Hames and –

Resolved:

That the Notice of Motion be approved.

(Vote: For – 16, Against – 9, Abstentions – 4).

The Motion was carried.

Briefly, the Chair apologised and welcomed Councillor N Kenneally to the Council.

Councillor P Hames left the meeting at 8pm.

516. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor S Andrews and –

Resolved:

That the meeting enter the Part II session.

(Vote: For – 27, Against – 1, Abstentions – 0).

517. PART II - (CLOSED SESSION)

518. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS REPORT - MOORINGS

Councillor K James presented the item, the purpose of which was for Members to discuss a recommendation from the Community and Resources Committee (13/10/25), following a recommendation from the Internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee (2/9/25).

Councillor K James put forward a proposal, which was seconded by Councillor D Brenton.

A discussion occurred.

Councillor T Elliott put forward an amendment to Councillor K James's proposal, but did not receive a seconder.

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor D Brenton and –

Resolved:

That the relevant party receives a grant equivalent to the mooring fee for two years, subject to a yearly report to the Community and Resources Committee, with regard to its financial position and the number of adults and children that had visited it in that period of time.

(Vote: For – 20, Against – 5, Abstentions – 3).

It was proposed by Councillor K James, seconded by Councillor D Brenton and –

Resolved:

That the meeting exit the Part II session and close.

(Vote: For – Unanimous).

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.09 pm

Chair:

Date: