

Report to the Torquay Place Leadership Board on Pride in Place activities April 2026

1. Introduction

Torbay Communities continued to support the development of Pride in Place initiatives during January and February 2026. This report outlines the activities that have taken place and their outcomes, some guidance for the decision-making at the April Board meeting and an independent reflection on immediate priorities.

By the close of 2025 a long list of 30 potential projects had been identified by the Board for further development. These projects were considered to have the potential to meet the aims of the Pride in Place funding which are:

Thriving places - People take immense pride in their local areas but too many of our high streets and estates have become neglected and left behind. Town centres and neighbourhoods must evolve and regenerate to better reflect the needs and habits of their community, and residents should have a greater say in how they're designed.

Stronger communities - Resilience in some of the most disadvantaged communities has been eroded over time...we want to empower boards to tackle the root causes, rebuild relationships, and restore a collective sense of belonging to their community, bringing people together so they can feel proud of their area and safe in their neighbourhood.

Taking back control - Talent is spread equally but opportunity is not. We want to make sure children have the best start in life and that adults can live the life they want to....We will empower people to enter the workplace, workers to progress, and businesses to grow. This will in turn help kickstart local economic growth. Empowered people will also have more of a say in how their local area is shaped, a central component of this programme and this government's vision for communities.

These projects were also considered to have the potential to meet the priorities identified by the Board, informed by public engagement:

- Physically improving our town centre, including crime and safety
- Physically improving our neighbourhoods, including crime and safety
- Work and skills.

2. February Workshops

In early January 2026 relevant groups were invited to submit business cases for the 30 shortlisted projects. This process was initiated through 4 thematic workshops in February bringing together applicant groups, members of the Torquay Place Leadership Board and additional stakeholders. The aim of the workshops were to:

- Provide an update on the Pride in Place process
- Explore collaboration between the shortlisted projects
- Identify any gaps which might prevent us achieving our aims
- Briefing on the available business planning support and capacity building funding

Workshops were held on the three priorities outlined above, plus a specific session was held on creative, culture and heritage initiatives. While culture was not identified as a priority in the public engagement a significant number of the shortlisted projects were seeking to use cultural approaches to deliver against the above priorities, so applicants were given the opportunity to meet to look at collaborations in this area.

At each workshop there were a key set of questions on how to deliver against the priorities and time was also allocated to test the business plan template with applicants, and describe the next stage of the process. The workshops were well attended and very interactive. Feedback indicated that participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss how their project might fit into the wider delivery of the priorities and they also appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on the business plan template and clarify the next stages.

Main recommendations from the workshops:

2.1 Improving the Town Centre including crime and safety

Presentations from the Council's ASB Team and the Devon and Cornwall Police Designing Out Crime Officer indicated that in enforcement terms all that can be done is being done in the Town Centre. There has been a reduction in crime over the past 12 months, but this has not yet changed the perceptions of the Town Centre as not being safe. Action now needs to focus on environmental improvements, safe access to the Town Centre, increasing the level of activity in the Town Centre to provide natural surveillance, creating a greater sense of ownership and better management and maintenance.

All present agreed there needs to be a 4 part approach to the Town Centre challenges:

1. Long term regeneration
2. Improving the current appearance of the Town Centre
3. Providing alternatives for the street-attached community

4. Re-utilising spaces in the Town Centre for non-retail use asap to increase the footfall.

Those present felt that the Pride in Place funding should focus on 2,3 and 4 as substantial investment has already been allocated through Levelling Up funding for long-term regeneration, and that all 2, 3 and 4 all needed to happen simultaneously. The business community were very willing to lead on the physical improvements of the Town Centre, but it was agreed they needed additional capacity to deliver these improvements as they are busy with their own businesses. They were aware the Council was hoping to recruit a Town Centre Manager, but that post was to cover all 3 Town Centres in the Bay. All present felt that what was needed was a full time Torquay post to pull together all of the initiatives and that post needed to be outside of the Council.

2.2 Improving our neighbourhoods, including crime and safety

The shortlisted projects in this area mainly focused on Community Centres and Community Hubs all of whom are aiming to improve the opportunities and the quality of life of the local residents in areas of deprivation. Applicants were very supportive of each others initiatives and areas of cross over and ways that they could support each other were discussed. Applicants recognised that the Place Leadership Board would have a difficult choice to make in this area as there was not enough funding for all of the initiatives. Three main lines of questioning emerged:

- Is there a benefit to creating a network of hubs? In short yes – but this would take time to develop. This has obvious links with the NHS 10 Year Plan and aspirations for Integrated Neighbourhood Teams bringing health and wellbeing support closer to people’s homes. It has strong linkages with the work Children’s Services originally did regarding Family Hubs – where a local Hub and Spoke model had been developed. Sadly this model was abandoned when Government legislation required a different offer. Interestingly the staff from the 3 Family Hubs in Torbay are finding they have to move out into community venues to reach the families they really want to support, indicating the original plan was probably better. Does Pride in Place offer an opportunity to invest in these neighbourhood based hubs that the community do trust and hence reach the most vulnerable residents in our community.
- How can neighbourhood hubs support the aims of Pride in Place eg work and skills, physical improvements in the neighbourhood etc. All were committed to extending a skills offer if there is Pride in Place investment into work and skills. It was recognised that Community Centres and Hubs can galvanise local residents and businesses to improvement the local area and this sits at the core of the Pride in Place aims.
- How to sustain hubs in the long term? Some Centres are able to generate income from their assets, if this was complemented by statutory commissions to deliver

services through the centres and hubs eg via public health, children's services, NHS etc this could make for improved viability.

2.3 Work and Skills

This workshop focused on current needs in light of new funding streams such as Connect to Work. Need for support is still high in the 25-49 group (DWP Figures), and also young people. While new funding has come into these areas there is already indication that referrals for support will be vastly oversubscribed, leaving many without help. It was concluded that while some projects will come forward for the April Board meeting that have elements of work and skills support, a focused work and skills proposal needed come back slightly later when we have a clearer sense of the impact of the new funding streams.

2.4 Creative, culture and heritage initiatives

A considerable amount of collaborative work had already taken place since the September workshops amongst the applicants proposing creative related projects. This workshop brought everyone up to speed on the new joint applications and focused on how the projects could help deliver the improvements needed in the Town Centre, in neighbourhoods and in the area of work and skills.

3. Where we are now?

Of the 30 shortlisted projects 16 have come forward for consideration for the April Place Leadership Board. These have been reviewed by the Council quality assurance panel. Two additional projects are at a 2nd draft stage on their business plans and hope to have these ready for the June Place Leadership Board. The remaining 12 projects require some further project development before completing a business case.

3.1 Pipeline

Pride in Place is a long-term initiative which is a space we do not often find ourselves in. While we want to show progress on the ground as soon as possible, we have also advised groups to make sure they take the time to get their projects right. We also need to be able to respond to the external environment as we progress. The work that has been done over the last 6 months has strengthened the project ideas that originally came forward and they are beginning to become greater than the sum of their parts. We believe this is the overarching aim of Pride in Place. It seeks to achieve a major shift forward in Torquay. It is not a simple grant funding pot to support individual initiatives. With this in mind we would recommend that the pipeline remains open, that each application is considered not only on its own merits, but also in what it contributes to other initiatives and the overall aims of Pride in Place. We would therefore also recommend that not all of the 4 years of funding is allocated at the April meeting.

3.2 Considerations for decision-making at the April Place Leadership Board

The current priorities were identified for the first 4 years of Pride in Place funding. The funding available is:

Grant Type	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Capacity Building	tbc	0	0	0
Revenue	£232,000	£256,000	£432,000	£432,000
Capital	£360,000	£1,736,000	£1,605,000	£1,605,000
Total	£742,000	£1,992,000	£2,037,000	£2,037,000

The majority of the applications are asking for a mix of revenue and capital, some are also asking for capacity building funding, and some are only asking for capacity building funding.

At the April Board meeting we will be looking for the Board to identify the projects that they feel should be funded, but there are a number of options.

The Board could:

- Agree to support a project in its entirety as costed
- Agree to support a project with an element of the amount costed
- Agree to support a project but in recognition of the relatively small amount of funding in year 1, defer that support to a future year.
- Request more information on the project before making a decision
- Agree not to support a project – but refer to the commissioned community support organisation to identify an alternative source of funding.

The allocation of funding to one project will obviously have an impact on that available for another.

Some business cases have outlined costings for a number of options, some have not. We therefore suggest that the Board indicates a level of monetary support at the April meeting, but this be discussed with the relevant groups following the meeting and final figures are confirmed at the June Board meeting. This allows us the opportunity to maximise the spend, understand the implications for initiatives that cannot be fully funded and keep within the revenue and capital allocations.

Funds are expected to be received by Torbay Council in June.

3.3 Independent opinion

Torbay Communities has welcomed the opportunity to support this Pride in Place process, and Torbay has been recognised nationally for its good partnership and engagement work which we can all be proud of. The support role we have provided has afforded us a unique position in running the public engagement activities, liaising with

all applicants, facilitating 7 workshops and setting this work in the context of wider funding opportunities and challenges and changes in the external environment. We support all of the projects that coming to the Board for assessment in April. We are also aware that there is not enough money to fund all of the projects.

Our independent opinion is that to build pride in place and get the community on board with this initiative so that it can be truly community led, we need to bring about some very obvious changes to our town. The most universal call from the public through the engagement activities last year was to improve our Town Centre – this was the number one priority identified and 56% of the people identifying this as a priority live in an area of deprivation. Our discussions have shown that to improve our Town Centre we need to do 3 things simultaneously –

- Improve the current appearance of the Town Centre
- Provide alternatives for the street-attached community
- Re-utilise spaces in the Town Centre for non-retail use asap to increase the footfall.

This is a complex piece of work and not all of the applications have been received yet in support of Town Centre improvements. We would hope that this can be born in mind when assessments are made at the April meeting.