



Minutes of the Torbay Place Leadership Board

21 September 2026

-: Present :-

Anne-Marie Bond, Tracey Cabache, Carolyn Custerson, Alan Denby, Vince Flower, Rt. Rev. James Grier, Nema Hart, Alison Hernandez, Stephen Kings, Nathan Kiyaga, Jim Parker (Chair), Jerome Tait and Councillor David Thomas

42. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Kirsty Brodest, Steve Darling MP, Steve Reynolds and Ross Simmonds.

43. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Torbay Place Leadership Board held on 20 July 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

44. Local Government Reorganisation (Anne-Marie Bond and David Thomas)

The Board received an update from Anne-Marie Bond and Councillor David Thomas on the latest position regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution proposals across Devon.

Members were advised that the LGR process had been paused pending further direction from Government, and that the longer term position remained uncertain. The Board heard that local elections scheduled for May 2027 would proceed on existing governance arrangements and boundaries for Torbay Council. Whilst it was considered possible that any new authority arrangements could vest from April 2029 should the procedure recommence, it was recognised that this remained speculative and subject to future Government decisions.

Discussion focused on the emerging proposals for a Mayoral Strategic Authority across Devon. Members were advised that the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (DTCCA) was already established and that Plymouth was now exploring the possibility of joining the arrangement. Formal consultation had commenced regarding both the expansion of the DTCCA footprint and progression towards a Mayoral model. Members noted that decisions were expected in late 2026 or early 2027 to enable any statutory processes to commence, with the potential for a Mayoral election in late 2027 or early 2028. It was also noted that

future Policing boundaries and governance arrangements may require review as part of any wider devolution proposals.

The Board discussed the decision to undertake wider public consultation in addition to stakeholder engagement, recognising the importance of ensuring residents understood the potential implications of any governance changes. It was noted that whilst Cornwall had shown little appetite for a shared arrangement, Devon authorities were keen to progress conversations in order to maximise future opportunities for investment through devolved powers.

45. Torbay's Priorities Update (Alan Denby – Director Pride In Place)

The Board received a presentation from Alan Denby, Director of Pride in Place, on the Council's strategic priorities and major projects across Torbay.

Members heard how the "Torbay Story" was informing a range of local and regional initiatives and supporting discussions with neighbouring authorities regarding future investment opportunities. The Board noted ongoing work with Plymouth and Exeter partners to develop a regional prospectus intended to support economic growth and future investment opportunities through devolved powers.

The Board was advised that preparations were underway for future Spatial Development Strategies. Whilst the final geography had not yet been confirmed, Officers indicated that a wider strategic geography would enable a more comprehensive approach to housing, education, infrastructure and economic development planning.

Members discussed the implications of changes to the planning system and the National Planning Policy Framework. It was noted that proposed reforms could alter decision-making arrangements and increase the number of smaller planning applications determined by Officers under delegated authority. Concerns were expressed regarding public understanding of the planning process and confidence in decision making.

The Board received an update on a number of major projects and programmes currently underway across Torbay, including:

- The Strand redevelopment;
- Port infrastructure projects;
- The Torbay Technology Park expansion;
- Oldway Mansion; and
- The Pavilion project.

Members were advised of ongoing work to support children and young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Discussion took place regarding the development of a NEET task force and the potential uses of the Better Futures Fund Programme. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring strong links with local employers and vocational education providers as proposals developed.

The Board noted that engagement with the business community would form part of the Programme's future development once the project scope had been further defined.

46. Matching the board's priorities with a work programme (Jon-Paul Hedge, Strategic Lead for Place)

The Strategic Lead for Place, Jon-Paul Hedge, outlined proposals for a future Board work programme designed to ensure discussions were evidence-led, clearly focused and linked to tangible outcomes.

Members considered a draft framework based around the following core themes:

1. A Thriving and Inclusive Economy;
2. Healthy, Connected and Confident Communities;
3. Great Places and a Naturally Inspiring Bay; and
4. Torbay's Voice, Identity and Investment.

The Board heard that the proposed approach would seek to better align Board priorities with the work undertaken, strengthen and encourage partnership activity and leverage the expertise of Board Members. Members discussed the role of the Board as a critical friend and strategic sounding board, helping to provide confidence to external investors, funding bodies and delivery partners.

Discussion also took place regarding the future composition of the Board and opportunities to strengthen representation from the education sector. Members recognised the value of involving schools, colleges and other educational organisations in future discussions, whilst acknowledging the practical challenges of securing regular attendance from education leaders.

The possibility of establishing task-and-finish groups to progress specific pieces of work between formal meetings was also discussed. Members recognised that smaller groups could provide additional focus whilst enabling the full Board to remain strategically focussed on the big picture.

The Board welcomed the proposed approach and requested that a detailed work programme be developed for consideration at its December meeting.

The following actions were agreed:

1. that the proposed thematic approach to the Board's future work programme be endorsed in principle, and that a detailed draft work programme be prepared and presented to the December meeting for formal consideration (Jon-Paul Hedge);
2. that opportunities to strengthen representation from the education sector be explored, including discussions with local education leaders regarding future involvement in the Board's work (Jon-Paul Hedge/Jim Parker); and

3. that options for task-and-finish groups and wider Board development be included within future proposals (Jon-Paul Hedge)

Chair