

Meeting of the Council, Thursday, 23 July 2026

Members' Questions Under Standing Order A12

A Member may only submit three questions for consideration at each Council Meeting. Each Member will present their first question in turn, when all the first questions have been dealt with the second and third questions may be asked in turn. The time for Member's questions will be limited to a total of 30 minutes.

First Round

Question 1

Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Councillor Bye)

When the Local Education Authority proposed to the DfE to decommission the Hearing Impairment Unit at the Spires & St Margarets Academy Torquay, the Local Authority committed to continuing to fund the support for individual young people as identified in their EHCPs. In light of the decision by the Spires to seek to end the Enhanced Resource Provision for Autism at the Spires, will the Local Authority make a similar commitment as it did with the Hearing Impairment Unit to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder at Spires College?

Response

The Local Authority did not propose, request or agree the decommissioning of the Autism Enhanced Resource Provision at The Spires; this is a school-led decision. The legal position is different from any local commitment about a particular unit: Under the Children and Families Act 2014, where a child or young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the Local Authority retains the statutory duty to secure the special educational provision specified in that plan. That duty is not removed by a school's decision not to continue an enhanced resource provision.

For pupils at The Spires with EHCPs, the Council will therefore continue to ensure that the provision set out in their plans is secured, and where the provision required by an EHCP is above the level normally expected to be met from the school's delegated budget, including its notional SEN funding, Element 3 high-needs top-up funding will continue to be considered and allocated in line with assessed need, the EHCP and the Council's funding framework. The Council will work with the school, families and other settings as required to ensure that any changes are managed safely and that children's assessed needs continue to be met.

Question 2

Councillor Harvey to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Many residents in St Marychurch and the wider Torquay area have been experiencing delays in household waste collection, in particular recycling over the last month. Many were unable to reach SWISCo through their helpline and the website did not allow missed recycling collections to be reported. What action are SWISCo taking to resolve this problem and improve their communication with residents when delays occur?

Response

Recent delays to recycling collections in St Marychurch and the wider Torquay area have been caused by a combination of operational pressures including staff availability, vehicle availability and the effects of recent hot weather. Recovery work is being prioritised, with resources being redirected to the areas most affected and round performance reviewed daily. SWISCo is also reviewing how residents are updated when delays occur, including updates through the Council and SWISCo websites, social media and customer contact channels.

The issues raised regarding the helpline and online missed collection reporting have been raised with the relevant teams, and work is underway to improve access to clear, timely information and reporting routes for residents.

Question 3

Councillor George Darling to the Chair of Planning Committee (Councillor Brook)

The Sladnor Park Planning Application was submitted over a year ago yet has not been brought to committee and no date has been set. Will the Chair of Planning inform us why this determination has been delayed and what action he is taking to see this resolved?

Response

This is a major planning application where drainage and flooding remain the fundamental issues that need to be resolved before the application can be brought forward for determination. Officers have been working proactively with the applicant, in line with national planning guidance, to seek to overcome planning issues where possible while also being mindful of the wider public interest in avoiding ongoing uncertainty and delay in the determination of the application. We have continued to press the applicant's agent for progress and for a clear timeline, particularly because the emerging drainage solution may represent a significant change in approach. There is public benefit in allowing a credible solution to be explored, but that has to be balanced against the uncertainty that continued delay creates for interested parties. Other matters, including highways and trees, have also been progressed, but drainage and flooding remain the principal focus. The application will be

reported to Planning Committee once the outstanding matters have been sufficiently resolved and the application is ready for consideration.

Question 4

Councillor Virdee to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

A business in Torquay Town Centre has reported to me that footfall was affected by the Bay of Lights and Christmas Market last year. How will Torbay Council try to ensure that events it organises benefits Torbay's Town Centres?

Response

The purpose of events such as Bay of Lights and the Christmas Market is to bring more people into Torbay during quieter parts of the year, increase dwell time, support the visitor economy and create reasons for residents and visitors to spend time in our town centres. They are not intended to displace trade from existing businesses, but to strengthen the overall offer and encourage more people to come into Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

The Council will continue to work with businesses, the English Riviera BID Company, town centre partners and event organisers so that events are planned in a way that supports surrounding businesses as much as possible. That means looking carefully at event locations, opening days and times, trader mix, signage, communications, parking, access and how we encourage visitors to move between the event itself and nearby shops, cafés, restaurants, pubs and other businesses.

The Council aspires to make events part of a wider town centre offer promoting local businesses alongside major events, encouraging visitors to explore the wider town centre, and making sure that the economic benefit is felt as widely as possible across Torbay.

Question 5

Councillor Pentney to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

When will all the 'vertical transport' (lifts, escalators etc) be working at Fleet Walk?

Response

The Council has invested significantly over the last 9 months on the 'vertical transport' plant and machinery at Fleet Walk. The plant equipment is over 30 years old in some cases and it has been difficult to source parts and equipment needed to undertake repairs. However, we are pleased to confirm that escalator 3, serving Sports Direct, is now operational. Lift 7, the main lift serving all car park decks and retail floors, has been refurbished and is now operational. Work on the refurbishment of Lift 3 is underway and will complete in early autumn. The TK Maxx

escalator is operational. A further review on whether to reinstate the escalator from the front section of Fleet Walk is underway.

Question 6

Councillor Law to the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

A number of companies (eg communication/mail etc) have infrastructure boxes on Torbay's pavements with a high proportion of which have attracted graffiti. How is Torbay Council working with those companies to have the graffiti removed?

Response

Following an initial focus to tackle the worst of this graffiti either by cleaning it off or painting over it, this program has evolved and become incorporated into the daily tasks of the Streetscene Ranger Team, they all carry with them the relevant products so that they can deal with any graffiti they come across on street furniture in the area they are working.

In addition, time is set aside each day for one member of the Team to focus on any hotspots or reports received. We are also now trialling a new product which is a clear coat applied after the paint which we are hopeful will mean that any graffiti will wipe off more easily without the need to repaint.

Question 7

Councillor Carter to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

How much did it cost converting the Crossways Shopping Centre into a car park, and how much has been collected so far from the car parking charges from the Crossways Car Park?

Response

In summary:

The cost directly associated with delivery of the Hyde Road Car park was £368,211.

The income for Hyde Road Car Park, this is up to the 05/07/2026.

	<u>Gross</u>	<u>Net</u>
24.25	£32,194.40	£26,828.67
25.26	£160,400.30	£133,666.92
26.27	£49,610.50	£41,342.08
Total	£242,205.20	£201,837.67

Question 8

Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

A constituent has reported overgrown bushes on a road junction in the Fairisle Close area of the Willows. They have reported this issue for 3 years running and for the first two years the bush has been trimmed back. However, this year the Council has refused to do so. The administration's Brighter Bay initiative is meant to make the "English Riviera more attractive and welcoming" - given the response to my constituent why does this not apply to the Willows?

Response

The area referred to is a shrub bed and is managed in line with seasonal maintenance requirements and environmental considerations. During the summer, vegetation will only normally be cut back where it presents a safety risk to the highway or public access, particularly given the need to avoid disturbing nesting birds. As in previous years, this area is scheduled to be cut back in autumn or winter as part of the winter works programme. The Brighter Bay approach is about maintaining attractive, safe and welcoming places across Torbay, while also managing green spaces responsibly and in line with ecological requirements.

Question 9

Councillor Penny to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance (Councillor Tyerman)

Councillors and Torbay's MP's have received complaints from residents about difficulties in getting hold of someone to speak to at the Council about their council tax, and also long waiting times on the phone. These concerns have been ongoing for many months. When will it become consistently easier for residents to get hold of someone to speak to regarding their council tax?

Response

Following a restructure within Finance, the Revenue Section has recently completed a recruitment exercise and appointed seven new staff from 1 July 2026. Once fully trained staff duties will include answering incoming telephone calls covering all aspects of Council Tax and Business Rates.

It is anticipated to take three months until new members of the Team reach a level where they are both confident and competent to give customers accurate advice and to be in a position to process changes in liability correctly.

We are also improving existing processes, introducing greater automation, which will improve staff productivity over the coming months.

We are carefully monitoring the resilience of the current service, however, we are aware the Team are currently experiencing high call demands. We are working towards lowering call answer rates. New Team members have been recruited and are currently being trained which should have a positive impact on call times over the coming weeks.

Question 10

Councillor Johns to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance (Councillor Lewis)

The Council were willing to sell Ocombe Farm direct to a private business, but sold the Polsham Centre at auction despite the interest of a Charity who would provide much social value to Torbay. Why has Torbay Council taken two different approaches to two of its assets?

Response

The Council seeks to obtain maximum value from the sale of any assets. The final sale price of Ocombe Farm was significantly more than the independent valuation undertaken on the site.

With regards to the Polsham Centre, the Council was in liaison with a Charity with regards to this asset. However, the price that the Charity was prepared to pay was significantly less than the estimated value, and eventual sale price.

Question 11

Councillor Douglas-Dunbar to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)

In January of this year there was a severe winter storm and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) was not implemented. In June there was a Red Alert issued for heat and SWEP was only partially implemented with no accommodation provided for homeless people on the streets to get out of the heat. Charities working with the homeless were not made aware of what actions the council were and were not taking. Will the Council commit to implementing SWEP fully and communicating better with homelessness charities when the next extreme weather event happens?

Response

The Council keeps its Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) arrangements under regular review to ensure they remain effective, proportionate and responsive to local circumstances.

In relation to the winter storm earlier this year, a Yellow Weather Warning was in place. SWEP is not automatically activated for all Yellow Warnings, as decisions are

based on a range of factors including forecast temperatures, wind chill, severity, duration, local conditions and the potential risk to life. Based on the weather information available at the time, the threshold for activating SWEP was not considered to have been met. However, with the benefit of hindsight, the conditions experienced were more severe than anticipated and it is recognised that activation of SWEP would have been appropriate.

In response, the Council has reviewed its approach and developed a revised Hot and Cold Weather SWEP Plan. This adopts a flexible, risk-based model that enables a wider range of emergency measures to be implemented in response to severe weather events, including periods of extreme heat.

During the June heat event, a number of measures were put in place, including increased outreach activity, welfare checks, and the provision of water and other support to people sleeping rough. Night accommodation is not routinely activated for every heat alert, as responses are determined by an assessment of local weather conditions, risk levels and the needs of those affected. We are aware that Teignbridge was the only neighbouring authority to activate emergency accommodation during this period.

We work closely with local charities and partner agencies through the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum, which meets regularly to address homelessness and rough sleeping across Torbay. SWEP arrangements have been discussed through this Forum to support partnership working and a coordinated approach.

Going forward, the Council remains committed to working closely with homelessness charities and partner agencies to ensure clear and timely communication regarding any SWEP activation, the measures being implemented, and the support available during periods of severe weather. This will help ensure a coordinated response and enable all agencies to effectively support vulnerable individuals across Torbay.

Question 12

Councillor Mandy Darling to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)

Now that Apple taxis have an operating licence in Torbay, what assurances have been put in place to cut back on “cross-border” hiring as has been reportedly happening with Uber, to ensure that Torbay’s licensed drivers work is not affected and reduced

Response

Cross-border hiring is currently permitted under national taxi and private hire legislation, and local authorities do not have the legal powers to prevent it. The issue has been raised by Councils and the taxi trade with Government, which has recently announced proposals for national standards and strengthened cross-border

enforcement powers. However, there is currently no confirmed timescale for these changes to be implemented.

Under the existing legislation, a private hire driver, vehicle and operator licensed by any local authority in England can lawfully undertake bookings across the country. As a result, Torbay Council cannot restrict operators or drivers licensed elsewhere from working in the area where they are operating within the law. The only Councils that restrict cross border hiring are Plymouth as they have their own legislation (Plymouth City Council Act 1976) and London compared to the rest of the Country who are all governed by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

The Council is legally required to grant a licence where an applicant satisfies the relevant criteria and cannot refuse an application based on concerns about lawful cross-border hiring.

Where issues arise involving licensed drivers or vehicles operating in Torbay, the Council works closely with the relevant licensing authorities and partner agencies to investigate complaints and take appropriate enforcement action where breaches of licensing conditions or regulations are identified. The Council will continue to monitor the impact of cross-border operations and support efforts to strengthen the national legislative framework.

Question 13

Councillor Fox to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

Local residents advise me that it has been ten years that many of them were assured by Cavanna Homes that this land at the end of Darwin crescent on the Willows Estate would be converted to public amenity land. Colleagues have made representations to the local authority repeatedly, and yet another school holiday is set to be upon us with no evidence of a clear way forward. What steps does the council have to make this land publicly accessible?

Response

The Council's ability to require public access to the land is limited by the planning permissions and legal agreements that apply to the site. Historic planning permissions granted before 2009 included requirements relating to landscaping and ongoing management of the land, but did not include a requirement for public access. The Council is aware that residents have raised concerns about the site and has reviewed the relevant planning history. However, officers do not hold information that would enable the Council to verify any assurances that may have been given by the developer outside of the planning process.

Second Round

Question 14

Councillor Harvey to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)

Residents using the fields off Easterfield Lane, Torquay have reported the fields being misused for motorcycle racing which has presented a danger to walkers and their dogs on the field. What action has the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team taken, and what action is the Council planning to take to prevent further misuse of the fields?

Response

The Council's ASB Team have been liaising directly with SWISCo and the Police to seek a remedy to the issues relating to motorbike use within the area. Efforts are being made to identify if there is a means by which certain access routes could be designed out, in a way that does not unduly restrict access to those using the site appropriately. Given the nature of the area and numerous points of access, this is not an easy task and there may not be a simple or cost-effective solution – one is yet to be identified.

To date there have not been any persons identified to the ASB Team to enable follow up action by way of warnings. However, the Team do routinely liaise with the Police and any leads will be followed up. In the meantime, people who report motorcycles on the field are being encouraged to report to the Police at the time as they are the agency who hold enforcement powers under Section 34 of the Road Traffic Act.

Question 15

Councillor George Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

The area between Walls Hill Car Park and the Babbacombe Cricket ground, in Torquay has become significantly overgrown over previous years. This detracts from the Walls Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest, and was previously used by the community for the fayre. What action is the Council taking to see this area better managed?

Response

The area referred to does not fall within the designated SSSI boundary of Walls Hill. Over time, the land has naturally developed into scrub habitat, with a network of informal footpaths becoming established through regular public use. Whilst these

paths provide access across the site, the area generally requires only a light-touch management approach. Intervention is therefore kept to the minimum necessary, with occasional vegetation management undertaken where required to maintain safe and practical access along the informal routes. This approach allows the area to retain its natural character and high ecological value while continuing to accommodate public enjoyment and access.

SWISCo have no record of any complaints about this area but would be happy to engage with local residents about the future management of the site.

Question 16

Councillor Virdee to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Residents have raised concerns that terraced houses and the challenges parking in areas such as Plainmoor and St Marychurch are creating barriers for residents wishing to use electric vehicles. What action is the Council taking to address this inequity of access?

Response

Public electric charging spaces are available in the Hampton Avenue Car Park in St Marychurch. Additionally, charging is planned for the St Marychurch Car Park. The Council is working to increase the roll out of charging opportunities across Torbay, including both on and off street. This is a partnership with Devon County Council which, last year, trialled grant supported cable channel installations across Torbay and Devon. The learning from that is being captured and, alongside the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority, proposals are being prepared for roll out, allowing residents to install chargers at their homes, and to charge on the street adjacent.

Question 17

Councillor Pentney to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

Will the administration be compensating those businesses on the upper levels of Fleet Walk who have suffered as a result of lift and escalator repairs taking such a protracted period of time?

Response

It is regrettable the work to the lifts and escalators has taken longer than originally planned. The Council / Centre Manager has, throughout the period when lifts have been out of action, maintained communication with tenants, keeping them informed of progress of the works and the delays. We have set out the level of investment being made and the improvements planned as a whole in Fleet Walk Shopping

Centre. The long-term objective is to increase the occupancy levels in the units in the Gallery and enhance the footfall for the benefit of all tenants. The Council does not however plan to offer concessions to cover the period when access to the Gallery was compromised.

Question 18

Councillor Law to the Cabinet Member for Tourism, Culture & Events and Corporate Services (Councillor Jackie Thomas)

A number of Councillors are reporting incredibly lengthy delays in processing payments from Community Ward Funds to the organisations they are destined for. What is being done to speed the process up?

Response

Regular monitoring has been put in place by the appropriate Head of Service to ensure that applications are reviewed and actioned promptly. Support from Members in obtaining bank account details and approval of the terms and conditions when grants are requested to be made would be appreciated so that payments can be made as promptly as possible.

Question 19

Councillor Long to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

What assurances can be provided that the legal and planning issues that East Devon Council have faced with the company that Torbay Council have sold the land at Ocombe Farm to, will not also happen here?

Response

We cannot comment on the suggestion of planning and legal issues between East Devon Council and Greendale. However, we can confirm Council Officers from the Estates, Planning and Legal Teams have all worked closely with Greendale to facilitate the disposal of Ocombe Farm. Consequently, a good working relationship has been established, and it is envisaged should any issues arise, these can be resolved through open discussions and communication on both sides.

Question 20

Councillor Johns to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

What assessment was carried out to check what impact the decision on Gadeon House would have on services provided at Torbay Hospital?

Response

Torbay Council purchased Gadeon House as an investment asset to provide a financial return to the authority. Negotiations between Torbay Council, as landlord, and Royal Devon University Hospital Trust were finalised in March 2026 which will provide a regional Pathology hub under a long-term lease arrangement, providing income certainty for the Council. A secondary agreement was negotiated with Torbay & South Devon NHS Trust to take further space in the building. The detailed use, and configuration, of this space has yet to be designed by the Trust.

Question 21

Councillor Carter to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Please could an update be provided on the delays to recycling collections by Swisco?

Response

Recent delays to recycling collections have been caused by a combination of operational pressures including staff availability, vehicle availability and the effects of recent hot weather. Recovery work is being prioritised, with resources being redirected to the areas most affected and round performance reviewed daily. SWISCo is also reviewing how residents are updated when delays occur, including updates through the Council and SWISCo websites, social media and customer contact channels.

Question 22

Councillor Mandy Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

What pro-active action has Torbay Council been taking to eliminate non-authorised traffic flow up and down Fleet Street?

Response

The Prohibition of Driving Traffic Regulation Order, which is in place in Fleet Street, Torquay, can only be enforced by the Police at the present time. The Police are

aware of concerns regarding the illegal use of the road and have been working with the Community Safety Team to explore responses, however it is accepted that resourcing such enforcement is a challenge.

The Council's Highways Team have considered the feasibility and merits of a barrier system to prevent illegal access, however this is challenging to achieve for several reasons:

- There are several competing access requirements to deal with, including access for loading between 6:00pm and 10:00am, access for emergency vehicles, access for cyclists and access for buses, which require access at each end throughout the day.
- An 'access only' exemption is required for vehicles needing to exit Braddons Hill Road West and the Terrace and Taxis also now require access from the Terrace to serve their Fleet Street Rank.
- A rise and fall bollard system may not be physically possible, due to the high number of utility services and other pipework, which is under the Street and within the depth required to install such a device. Diversions of services may be possible and investigation would be needed to assess, but this is likely to be very expensive and highly disruptive work to achieve.
- A rising barrier is another option, however, this would impact cyclists and would almost certainly become an ongoing maintenance issue as it would be susceptible to acts of vandalism.

There may be an opportunity in the future for Torbay Council to consider applying to Government to obtain powers to carry out enforcement of moving traffic offences, such as this, however it should be noted that investment and ongoing funding to provide the necessary resource and back-office functions to undertake monitoring and enforcement will be required with a low probability of cost recovery through penalty charge notices, if this were to be successful in preventing offences. There is currently no indication from Government as to when the next tranche of applications for local authority moving traffic enforcement powers will be invited and any application would need to be carefully considered in terms of resources. In the meantime, enforcement powers rest solely with the Police.

Question 23

Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

There is a significant risk of flooding on the section of Dartmouth Road that runs alongside Clennon Valley that could see the pumping station overwhelmed and Paignton town centre flooded. How is the Local Authority prioritising this risk and when does it plan to bring in an alleviation scheme?

Response

The flooding that occurred on Dartmouth Road last year was caused by a combination of fluvial flooding (tidal) and surface water. In addition, a South West Water CSO that discharges into the sea at times of intense rainfall is in same area.

The combination of a high tide and intense rainfall caused the flooding on the upstream side of a culvert that runs under the road (A379) and the Railway Line. The location is on a list of priority sites that Torbay Council is working with South West Water to provide long term mitigation. It is in a different surface water catchment area to Paignton Town Centre and hence does not create a flood risk to the Town Centre.

Third Round

Question 24

Councillor Harvey to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

The Council in recent years has offered a 'pay for an hour, stay for the day' scheme for car users accessing our town centres during the Christmas period. Will the Council implement a similar scheme to improve equitable access for bus users this Christmas?

Response

The Council recognises the value that affordable and accessible public transport can bring to residents and visitors. The seasonal offer is intended to support town centre activity, developing an equivalent bus travel offer would require funding, more complex ticketing arrangements and consideration of the geography served by the bus routes. The Council continues to work in partnership with bus operators exploring ways to improve the value for money of bus travel in Torbay.

Question 25

Councillor George Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Maidencombe residents requested from SWISCo the provision of bench seating on Maidencombe Green but this has been declined. I am informed one reason quoted was it may make the mowing of the green more difficult. Does the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking believe this is an adequate reason to decline the community a single bench and will he reconsider?

Response

SWISCo has no record of receiving, or refusing, a request for a bench at this location. In principle, operational considerations such as mowing would not normally be a reason to refuse a reasonable request for seating where a suitable location can be identified. If residents wish to pursue this, the Council would encourage the request to be raised directly with SWISCo so that it can be considered properly, taking account of site suitability, maintenance requirements and the benefit to the local community.

Question 26

Councillor Virdee to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Several residents have raised concerns that Torbay' RingGo Parking requires residents to stop their parking session. This often leads to overcharging despite parking for shorter periods which creates frustration from our residents. This is out of keeping with many of our neighbouring local authorities who use set times with the opportunity to extend. Will the Council commit to reviewing this practice?

Response

The RingGo start/stop parking option provides customers with flexibility by allowing them to park for as long as they need, rather than requiring customers to pay for the time they actually use rather than estimating their length of stay in advance. This can be particularly helpful where the length of stay is uncertain, as customers only need to stop the session when they return to their vehicle.

Customers are also able to set reminders to prompt them to stop their session if they wish to do so. The Council recognises the concerns raised and will continue to take these into account whilst considering the requirements of customers, businesses and visitors when reviewing parking arrangements in Torbay.

Question 27

Councillor Law to the Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities (Councillor Tranter)

On the 16th June 2026 Insight Alliance emailed all Councillors concerned about the "narrative and local rhetoric in the political and media space, elevating anxieties and raising safety fears amongst our ethnic minority communities in the Bay". They felt that the local authority does not have "a clear or coordinated approach in addressing these concerns" and could not see how existing strategies translate into meaningful actions. How does the local authority plan to learn from the Racism Review to ensure Torbay becomes an example of inclusive communities informed practice where all residents feel valued, heard and safe?

Response

Our Inclusion Strategy was published in 2025 and sets out the Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and its adherence to the Equality Act. The introduction of an Inclusion Strategy sits alongside an annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and sets a clear organisational commitment towards equality, diversity and inclusion.

Delivery of the Racism Review's recommendations has progressed well with clear advances in strategy, governance and workforce practice. Key areas of progress include recommendations covering culture and staff experience. This includes an updated recruitment website, the launch of mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training for staff and managers, which includes sections on unconscious bias and inclusive leadership.

An Inclusion Partnership has been established and acts as a critical friend, strengthening our engagement practice and supporting how we listen to communities.

Equality Impact Assessment completion has also improved across the organisation ensuring decision making is informed by potential impacts across the protected characteristics.

The Council engages extensively with its communities and takes an inclusive and community-centred approach to engagement, recognising that strong relationships with residents and partners are essential to understanding and addressing local needs. The Council works to engage with diverse communities through a range of methods, including through community listening events, formal consultation surveys, partnership working with voluntary and community sector organisations, and targeted outreach to underrepresented groups.

This seeks to ensure that engagement is accessible and meaningful, using clear communication, inclusive formats and appropriate support where needed.

While there are established strategies and partnerships for carers and people with autism and those with learning disabilities, no such arrangement exists for minoritised communities and other groups with protected characteristics. It is therefore proposed that we explore reinvigorating the Torbay Multicultural Network (or another relevant network/organisation) to bring together organisations and individuals from ethnically minoritised backgrounds.

The Council has shared this approach with the Insight Alliance.

Question 28

Councillor Mandy Darling to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

What action are Torbay Council taking to alleviate the severe traffic congestion caused by the works undertaken at the sea front which is causing great distress to both locals and visitors alike?

Response

Data has been shared by Stagecoach for the running times of the Service 12 to review how significant the delays that have been reported on Torquay Sea Front are. Additionally, ANPR surveys have been undertaken in July to understand more clearly what the journey times are, when delays are most likely to occur and then we will be able to make data informed decisions about how any delays can be reduced. The award-winning scheme at Torquay Strand was designed to increase access and useability for pedestrians and has been successful in doing so. Officers are working on the precise timings for the traffic signals and ensuring they operate as efficiently as possible for all users.

Question 29

Councillor Steve Darling to the Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth (Councillor Chris Lewis)

A few weeks ago, the Council auctioned off the Polsham Centre in Paignton, despite keen interest from Mencap Torbay in using this facility for their community services. Why did the Council not take account of the potential social value that this use of a former council building could have resulted in?

Response

The Council seeks to obtain best value through the disposal of assets. We were in negotiations with Mencap regarding the Polsham Centre however, the price that Mencap were prepared to pay was significantly less than the estimated value, and eventual sale price, of the asset.

Question 30

Councillor Carter to the Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking (Councillor Billings)

Paignton Town Centre has no direct bus route to the main entrance at Torbay Hospital. How are the Council working with Stagecoach to achieve such an outcome?

Response

The Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks, where possible, to increase the access residents have to key facilities. Officers are always reviewing options and seeking to address known gaps if capacity and resources allow. We are hopeful of being able to find a solution to this in the coming months.
