



## **Minutes of the Torbay Place Leadership Board**

**20 July 2026**

**-: Present :-**

Jim Parker (Chair), Anne-Marie Bond, Tracey Cabache, Steve Darling, Vince Flower, Laurence Frewin, James Grier, Nema Hart, Alison Hernandez, Stephen Kings, Nick Powe, Steve Reynolds and Councillor David Thomas, ,

(Also in attendance: Simon Bellamy, Jon Paul Hedge)

### **39. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Kirsty Brodest, Carolyn Custerson and Hannah Worth (who was represented by Matt Evans).

### **40. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Torbay Place Leadership Board held on 15 June 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

### **41. Local Government Reorganisation**

Anne-Marie Bond and Councillor David Thomas provided a detailed summary of the Government's decision regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), providing details of the expansion to Torbay's boundaries, the next steps toward the creation of the new Authority and the implications for other authorities throughout Devon.

The Board discussed a wide range of issues, including how boundary changes may affect financial arrangements, and Judicial Review timescales relating to potential challenges from other Authorities. Policing arrangements were discussed, and the Board noted the parallel Policing review and the implications of the abolition of the Police and Crime Commissioner role.

Members then discussed at length the future role of the Torbay Place Leadership Board, noting that the Board's role will become increasingly important within the new authority footprint. Every area within the new geography will have a Parish Council except Torquay and Paignton, and the Board may be well-placed to fill a strategic gap by providing a strong, place-focused voice. The Board may choose to develop its role as a channel into the new authority, and potentially into any future Strategic Mayoral Authority.

The Board discussed the need to develop a strong relationship with the shadow authority and eventual new Council, recognising LGR as both a challenge and an opportunity. Members noted the importance of ensuring that any future arrangements represent a partnership of equals, and discussed how the Board may best work with areas which are due to be incorporated into the new Authority.

Questions were raised regarding the following:

- How the Board might cover the wider area under new boundaries.
- Whether expansion of the Board's remit would ensure equality of voice with areas that already have established Parish Councils.
- Existing representation from many of the new areas, and whether additional strategic relationships may be developed.
- Arts Council England's work across the new footprint, including ongoing mapping of cultural assets.

Members discussed what the Board could realistically achieve between now and May 2027, and agreed that further work on mapping strategic relationships should be brought back to the Board for further discussion in September.

Concerns were raised about perceptions in newly incorporated areas that they may be "taken over", and the need for careful engagement with the existing Town and Parish Councils. Members noted the potential contradiction between strengthening Torbay's voice and expanding the Board's membership, and agreed that clarity of purpose is essential.

Further points included:

- Torbay's comparatively lower council tax rate, and the potential implications for newly incorporated areas.
- Lessons learned from other areas that have undergone similar reorganisations, noting that the Local Government Association has facilitated learning, though not specifically focused on Place Leadership Boards or similar Boards.
- Government indications that they do not support creating new Town or Parish Councils, though a community governance review could be initiated by the new authority to facilitate this. It was noted that communities can petition for such a review.
- The importance of supporting the new authority to drive prosperity, and ensuring that regeneration work does not stall, particularly given previous delays caused by Covid-19.

The Board discussed the potential impact of a new Prime Minister and the uncertainty around Government commitment to LGR. While the decision appears to have been made, some details, such as exact boundaries, may still change.

Members also discussed the future of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA) and the possibility of moving towards a Mayoral model, noting the CCA's interest in progressing from a foundation authority to a more advanced structure with additional powers and funding. The Board considered the

advantages and disadvantages of Torbay being part of a larger Strategic Mayoral Authority.

The Board discussed the future direction of partnership working and confirmed its intention to work with new partners and organisations whilst ensuring that Torbay's voice continues to be strongly represented and heard within emerging arrangements. The Board reiterated its commitment to ensuring that critical regeneration projects across Torbay continue to be promoted, overseen and delivered through agreed work programmes, recognising their importance to the area's economic and social development.

Members also noted the opportunity to develop a significant new arts, culture, health and wellbeing partnership, involving Arts Council England and a range of other strategic partners. It was agreed that work on this initiative should commence immediately. The Board agreed that a number of associated work programmes would be initiated and developed, with progress updates to be reported to the next meeting.

In reflecting on the proposed move towards a Torbay and South Devon unitary authority, the Chair emphasised that many existing Board members already operate across both Torbay and the wider South Devon area, noting representatives in the areas of tourism, education, policing, health services, employment services and religious leaders. The Chair thanked all partners for their support to date and highlighted that their continued engagement and collaboration would be even more important in the period ahead.

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Chair