

Budget 2026/27 – Summary Financial Sustainability Plans

As part of Torbay Council's medium term financial planning and budget setting a more strategic approach continues to be taken focusing on key areas of budget spend and risk across the Council, many of which have identified as budget pressures as part of regular budget monitoring.

Financial Sustainability Plans have been prepared for these areas, focusing upon actions that can make the biggest difference to the Council, both in terms of outcomes and financial impact. The Plans underpin the 2026/27 revenue budget and provide the basis for continued management of these pressures into 2027/28 and 2028/29.

There is an expectation that these plans will manage emerging pressures within the corresponding budgets, with definitive savings targets and budget reductions actioned (through budget adjustments) only if/when they are achievable and can be evidenced.

There continues to be focus on the following Financial Sustainability Plans, which are ongoing from the previous year and still relevant.

- Locality Model for children and young people
- Children's social care placements
- Home to school transport
- Housing needs
- Legal Services
- Events

Since last year new plans have been formulated in respect of the following areas:

- Assets
- SWISCO
- Planning Building Control and Land Charges

Summaries of the above Financial Sustainability Plans are shown in the table at the end of this document.

A Financial Sustainability Plan has yet to be finalised in relation to reviewing the Council's support to, and long-term sustainability of, the cultural assets of such as Torre Abbey and Cockington Court. This plan will be informed, and updated, to reflect recent announcements regarding the closure of TCCT.

As part of the 2026/27 budget setting process the following areas were discussed where it was felt there was further potential to either manage emerging pressures or make cost reduction:

- Influencing the Children's Services Provider market and possible direct delivery of services
- Review and revise the current Fostering model
- Review of the housing model – incl. grant funding, use of Temporary Accommodation
- Opportunity for further Council led housing in priority areas - e.g. care leavers
- Invest to Save potential of investment in Artificial Intelligence
- Review the Car Parking Strategy - optimising income / reduce operating costs
- Explore potential for any shared services opportunities in light of LGR
- Revenue and Benefits – service transformation

These will be reviewed over the coming months to assess whether Financial Sustainability Plans should be formulated to summarise the actions and outcomes expected in these areas.

TABLE SUMMARISING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

Financial Sustainability Plan (Responsible Officer/Cabinet Member)	Anticipated Outcomes	Associated Risks	Environmental Impact	Economic Impact	Equality Impact
<u>Locality Model for children and young people</u> (Nancy Meehan, Director of Children’s Services/Cllr Nick Bye, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services) Following a full Needs Analysis and Review of the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) provision within Torbay, alongside the increasing demand for specialist education support, consultation is underway on the proposed implementation of a locality model across the area.	This is designed to bring services together to support the children and young people of Torbay in their local community. This will help children and young people to thrive at school, be valued, visible, and supported to feel that they are included in their local communities, and are better prepared for a happy, healthy, and productive adulthood. Along with other benefits, the proposed model will be Needs Led; providing support or specialist provision without an EHCP or medical diagnosis. There will be localised decisions by local stakeholders about how children and young people’s needs can be best met. This will reduce the delays that families are experiencing in receiving the support that their children need to thrive and will allow the support to be received more rapidly and in their own communities. The proposed model aims to repair the current fragmentation within the education and SEND system to bring all stakeholders within communities together in Clusters. The aim is to bring about the required improvements for children, young people and their families. The model will make better and more effective use of the money available and therefore develop a more financially sustainable school system.	There is a risk that there is not wide support for the proposal. Whilst the proposed model covers children and young people of statutory school age (5-18) there are associated risks at both pre 5 and post-18. We need to ensure that by starting this model at age 5 that a cohort of children with speech, language and communication needs are not excluded from being 'school ready', meaning they may enter their primary school with unmet need. There's a risk that much of the work of the Family Hubs (focusing on age 0-2) may be 'undone' by not having enhanced provision aged 3-5 and this being an age gap which falls between two systems. We need to ensure that there are processes in place for the continuation of placements post-16 to avoid the potential for young people becoming NEET – not in employment, education or training. The cost of bespoke provision at South Devon College is significant within the High Needs Block. Both of these risks are being mitigated through reviewing post-16 provision within specialist schools. There is also a risk that there will be a change in demand for provision for different need types. This will be mitigated through a review of funding arrangement for need types and placements.	Organising schools in geographical and phase clusters will reduce the need for children and young people to travel beyond their local communities. This will reduce the demand for home to school transport.	The proposal is aimed at supporting children and young people so that they are better prepared for a happy, healthy and productive adulthood. We want to ensure as few young people as possible are not in education, employment and training once they reach 16.	The proposal will positively impact those aged between 5 and 18 and those who are carers, children and young people with a disability. A Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared as part of the consultation on the proposed Locality Model and can be found on Torbay Council’s website: Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Appendix.pdf The Equality Impact Assessment will be updated with the results of the consultation and will be considered when decisions are made.
<u>Children’s Social Care Placements</u> (Nancy Meehan, Director of Children’s Services/Cllr Nick Bye, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services) The cost of placing children in care, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, continues to be a significant pressure within Children’s Services – both with Torbay and nationally. Despite the overall numbers of cared for children being lower than previous years, significant shortages of suitable available placements are driving up costs within the market. The legislation on unregulated placements changed in September 2022	We want to see more children maintained within a family-based environment, including implementing robust and safe reunification models and early permanence through adoption. We are seeking appropriate accommodation for our children and young people (including those who are care experienced) which meets their needs, including working to increase the number of foster carers in Torbay. We are also continuing to focus on early help, prevention and the development of a sustainable Family Hub model to help	There remains a high financial risk to the Council as the Children’s Services budget has been impacted by national changes and the significant increase in cost for residential and unregulated/unregistered placements.	There will be no differential environmental impact.	Through having high aspirations for all of our children and young people, including those who have cared experienced, there will be a positive economic impact across Torbay	We would seek to see a positive impact on young people who are enabled to be maintained in family based placements wherever possible. Further details are included within the overarching Equality Impact Assessment for the Revenue Budget 2025/2026.

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and continues to result in further pressure on this budget. The lack of fostering placements is putting pressure on the placements budget as we are aware there is a national reduction of 9.7% of fostering households.	reduce the number of children who become cared for. Further, there are plans to review the targeted support in relation to learning disability placements and associated joint work with health partners.				
<u>Home to school transport</u> (Nancy Meehan, Director of Children’s Services/Cllr Nick Bye, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services) The Home to School Transport budget has increased by 104% from a budget of circa £2.14m in 2018/19 to £4.34m in 2023/24, whereas during this period the number of children in receipt of Home to School Transport has decreased from 711 to 642 A thorough review of provision is being undertaken and key areas for improvement have been identified, including: • An increase transport options, including use of minibuses, less use of single occupancy taxis and the promotion of independent travel. • Route planning and route optimisation • More robust check and control over contracts and payments • More collaboration and integration with other children and young people teams • Redesign of the service as part of the “one Children’s Service” vision.	We will review and consider the appropriate alternatives to home to school transport for children and young people, including directing parents to free bus transport, the purchase of bikes or direct payments to families and/or children and young people who are eligible. We will support children to travel independently where this aligns to their needs. This will have a positive impact on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities - promoting independence and life skills. We will consider whether there is a business case for an in-house fleet for some schools and routes. Route planning and route optimisation will be used to, where possible, amalgamate routes and the use of escorts. Robust oversight and governance will ensure decisions are taken in a consistent, transparent manner.	Without delivery of this Financial Sustainability Plan there remains a risk to the Council’s overall budget if the overspend on the home to school transport budget continues. The Council needs to be able to reasonably estimate and agree the budget for home to school transport. This is a statutory service and the Council needs to identify the means to ensure that the service is sustainable.	Promoting independent travel, have less single occupancy taxis and route planning and optimisation should reduce the level of carbon emissions associated with home to school transport.	Ensuring our children and young people have the skills, support and confidence to travel independently will have a positive economic impact across Torbay	We would seek to see a positive impact on children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities being provided with training and support to promote independence and life skills. Further details are included within the overarching Equality Impact Assessment for the Revenue Budget 2025/2026.
<u>Housing Needs</u> (Anna Coles, Director of Adult and Community Services/Cllr Alan Tyerman, Cabinet Member for Housing and Finance) The current level of the cost of living and the increasing cost of accommodation costs means that the affordability of housing for residents in Torbay is challenging. Numbers accessing the Housing Needs service and the unit cost of accommodation have increased resulting in a rise in expenditure	We want to see a reduction in homelessness and improved outcomes for households. We will work to identify alternative accommodation models which are more cost effective and have better outcomes, including preventing re-occurrence of homelessness. We will consider the provision of specialist accommodation where the market will not meet the needs of our community.	There are risks associated with the capacity of officers within the Council to develop business cases and, if approved, to acquire property. There is also a risk that there is no increase in the level of subsidy received by the Council in relation to homelessness.	There will be no differential environmental impact.	Supporting individuals, and families, to remain in stable, sustainable housing provision will have a positive economic impact.	All individuals, and families, will continue to be assessed based on their identified needs without prejudice.

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related to prevention activity and the provision of temporary accommodation. Nationally Torbay is an outlier for people losing their home through loss of a private tenancy. Those approaching the service also have higher support needs at almost double the England average. These two reasons alone impact on the requirement of the service and system to mitigate expenditure and improve outcomes for households. Due to the complex nature a series of strategic and operational interventions are being implemented with the following focus: • Prevention of homelessness • Length of stay in temporary accommodation. • Cost effectiveness of temporary accommodation. • Improved access to permanent homes.	We will ensure the effective use of alternative funding streams to support service delivery and provision.				
<u>Legal Services</u> (Matthew Fairclough-Kay, Director of Corporate Services/Cllr Jacqueline Thomas, Cabinet Member for Tourism, Culture and Events, and Corporate Services) Legal Services deliver a professional support function, therefore its non-staff cost base is low with little scope for efficiencies. Moreover, some areas of budget provision are very modest, and consideration needs be given to adequately resource a professional service. The pressures experienced by the department over time have resulted in reliance on (i) locum staff and (ii) the requirement to outsource work to the private sector. This is due to insufficient capacity or specialism within the established staff structure and linked to the challenges in recruitment over a long period of time. This has impacted on both the Legal Services budget (locums) and client department spend, where project codes are identified to pay for external legal advice and representation.	We are seeking to recruit to Legal Services alongside an agreed remuneration increase to better compete with the market and allied other elements in our offer to make the posts attractive and competitive. Further successful staff recruitment is intended to deliver value for money, by enabling a further reduction in locum spend. Alternative delivery methods such as shared services or shared commissioning has been explored but proven difficult to achieve, as neighbouring and wider authorities are themselves working at capacity.	There is a risk that increased costs from market supplements might not result in successful recruitment. Further, demand for legal support is likely to continue to rise in excess of capacity available.	There will be no differential environmental impact.	There will be no differential economic impact although action will ensure that Value for Money is delivered by the service.	There will be no differential equality impact.

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<u>Adult Social Care</u> Anna Coles, Director of Adult and Community Services/Cllr Hayley Tranter, Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities The ICO currently has a lack of focus on a community model to support reductions in acute beds, which has driven demand and cost challenges. Use of resources benchmarking identified that Torbay underperforms against a number of demand and cost metrics against its peers including: - High spend and percentage of working age people receiving long term care and support. - High spend and percentage of older people receiving long term care and support Observations from an LGA peer review and our delivery partner identified core opportunities for improvement and helped to shape a transformation programme.	Improved service outcomes and improved efficiency with a the following focus areas: *Service improvement (operational) – with focus on opportunities to reduce demand and costs; *Service improvement (commissioning) with focus on priority areas of provision to improve choice *Transformation (operational) – with focus on implementation of a new Client Management System and also resolving issues early and embedding new models of practice within front line teams. *Transformation (commissioning) – with focus on development of future operational models, alongside implementing change with priority markets.	Delay in delivering financial reviews impacts on understanding true costs. Gaps in leadership. Capacity and capability of internal teams to continue to deliver service improvement and transformation at pace. Cultural challenge of staff and care providers. Continuing high level of spend over and above the designated budget.	There will be no differential environmental impact.	There will be no differential environmental impact.	Any changes would consider the impact across all service users.
<u>Assets</u> (Malcolm Coe, Director of Finance/Cllr Chris Lewis, Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth)	Through the creation of a Capital Repair Fund and the 4-year Capital Programme, address the significant backlog of essential repair and maintenance works, compliance and health and safety issues across the Council's portfolio Creation of an Estates Revenue Reserve Fund from the Let Estate, to ensure there is provision to manage peaks and troughs of income whilst maintaining stability of revenue income streams generated from the let estate across financial years. Progress towards creating a carbon neutral estate.	There are risks associated with the capacity of officers within the Council to undertake all the necessary actions identified within the plan. The identified backlog maintenance significantly exceeds the funding available. High costs associated with achieving a carbon neutral estate.	Addressing essential repairs and maintenance works is likely to have a positive impact on the energy efficiency of those assets. Progress towards a carbon neutral estate will reduce our carbon emissions.	A review all non-operational and surplus assets will identify opportunities to create or increase revenue income, provide investment opportunities and/or deliver capital receipts through the disposal of surplus assets. Maximising revenue streams where appropriate, e.g. from reviews of all leasehold arrangements and obtaining full market rents wherever possible.	We would continue to consider any accessibility issues when undertaking significant repairs/ maintenance and changes to our assets

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<u>SWSICO</u> (Matt Reeks, Managing Director of SWSICO/Adam Billings, Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking) SWISCo have demonstrated good value in recent years, delivering against identified political objectives. However, they operate with a zero-margin budget so any cost pressures can have a significant effect on financial performance if they are not addressed. This review is to consider emerging pressures and how best to mitigate them.	The company is able to breakeven and manage the following emerging pressures: · Ageing Fleet – Increased repair and hire costs; · Increased safety features to our fleet; · Investment in staff welfare and PPE · Required community and financial outcomes from neighbourhood enforcement officers; · Effective management of supply chain costs/inflation · Addressing shortages in Heavy Goods Vehicle drivers; · Reduced agency spend through addressing long term absence/sickness; · Addressing increased material disposal costs/fluctuating commodity prices	Without delivery of this Financial Sustainability Plan there remains a risk to the Council's overall budget from overspends within SWSICO. Reputational / Health and Safety risks of maintaining the status quo	When replacing the fleet, consideration will be given to the feasibility of electric vehicles, which would help reduce emissions. SWISCO's financial sustainability is critical for the efficient and effective recycling of waste.	As one of the largest employers within Torbay, SWISO's success will continue to have a positive impact on local employment. SWISCO's ongoing maintenance of Torbay's many streets, roads, beaches, parks etc will have a positive impact of the community and on tourism.	There will be no differential equality impact from these plans.
<u>Events</u> Delivery of the Torbay Outdoor Event Strategy and the Torbay Destination Management plan contributes to the Council's ambition and priorities from the Community and Corporate Plan. Torbay Council committed a budget of £1m over a four year period which commenced from April 2024 and runs until the end of March 2028. A review is necessary to consider future sustainability of the events team and its activities.	Increased opportunity to access cultural, leisure and social activities across the Bay, increasing visitor numbers and attracting residents into town centres. Income from events cover all running costs.	Lack of staff capacity to improve process efficiency and focus on delivery of commercial activities; Income generated is insufficient to fund on-going spend commitments; Event spaces remain linted and the weather has an impact on site suitability - as well as the success of an event; Attracting the interest of relevant commercial entities to our events;	Ensuring sustainable transport options are fully considered; Effective management of major events – e.g. road closures, noise pollution, litter collection etc	Increasing visitor numbers and associated spend with the Torbay has a positive economic impact.	Equalities impact would be considered for each event being run.
<u>Planning Building Control and Land Charges</u> Alan Denby, Director of Pride in Place/Cllr Chris Lewis, Cabinet Member	The service is effective and efficient with charges that are appropriate , with income optimised and covering costs where possible.	That income generation for the service drives behaviours which undermine the Council's focus on delivery. This could be exacerbated if the experience of agents and applicants is poor.	Through the service's activities ensuring that environmental issues are fully understood.	The service needs to be able to respond and adapt to economic changes affecting demands on the team,	There will be no differential equality impact from these plans.

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for Place Development and Economic Growth The income levels in these areas of the Service fell below historic targets prior to a rebase of budgets. Economic conditions have resulted in the level of income for new developments being consistently lower alongside lower house-building nationwide and challenging development viability locally. A review of charges and income across the service is necessary					